Learning and Skills: Policy Summaries 2008/09

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

The purpose of Learning and Skills: Policy Summaries 2008/09 is to bring clarity, simplification and coherence to the communication of learning and skills policy. It provides a single, authoritative source of information that effectively underpins this year's Statement of Priorities.

The document has been prepared to provide an overview of all policies. It is written primarily for use by LSC partnership teams and is intended to inform their lead relationship management responsibility of working with local delivery and strategic partners. It will also be of interest to all LSC employees and to our partners and providers. The text represents the latest thinking on our policies at the time of publication.

For ease of reference, each policy area is presented as a short summary that provides a series of answers to basic questions.

- What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
- What is it about?
- What does it aim to achieve?
- How will it do that?
- What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The status of each policy area has been indicated above the title to highlight new or significantly changing areas. ‘Continuing steady state’ refers to policy areas that are still active but where no major changes have been implemented or are planned for the forthcoming year.

Apprenticeships – for consistent presentation the policy summaries for all the Apprenticeship areas have been grouped together in the Young People section.

We have listened to and acted on feedback resulting from last year’s publication and several changes have been made to the way we have prepared and presented the information. Your feedback and suggestions are welcome and will aid our continuous improvement.
Young People
14–19 Reform Agenda – an Overview

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- It is essential that this is delivered through working in partnership with local authorities.
- It is essential to the achievement of the September guarantee – the LSC’s commitment that all young people will be made an offer of learning by the end of the September after they complete Year 11.
- It is vital in reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- It is essential in achieving the aim of raising the participation age.
- It is vital to achieving the target for Level 2 attainment at age 19.
- It is central to the machinery of government changes for provision for 14- to 19-year-olds (or age 25 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)).
- There are likely to be significant changes for the LSC in future as a result of the machinery of government changes for 14- to 19-year-olds.

What is it about?

- Securing, with our partners, high-quality learning opportunities for 14- to 19-year-olds through schools, colleges and independent training providers to offer choice and provision that meet learners’ aims and aspirations.
- Meeting our duty towards young people (including learners with LDD up to the age of 25) under the Learning and Skills Act (LSA) 2000.

What does it aim to achieve?

The engagement or re-engagement of all young people in education and training that meets their needs and aspirations.

How will it do that?

- By working with our partners (local authorities and providers) to offer an appropriate choice of relevant types of provision for 14- to 19- (and 25-) year-olds, including Diplomas, GCSEs, Apprenticeships, Entry to Employment (E2E), Young Apprenticeships, Key Stage 4 (KS4) engagement, opportunities for young parents and parents-to-be, work-related learning and other individualised packages of learning.
- By working with our partners to provide appropriate learning infrastructure through 16–19 competitions, presumptions – the expansion of provision by further education (FE) colleges and school sixth forms to deliver 16–19 Diplomas – and mergers.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Achievement of the Public Service Agreement (PSA) target for participation.
- Achievement of the PSA target for Level 2 attainment at age 19.
- Achievement of the September guarantee.
- A reduction in the number of young people who are classified as NEET.
- Achievement of sufficient work placements to allow for effective delivery of the work-related learning component of the 14–19 reform agenda.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- It supports successful Diploma consortia for 2008 delivery.
- It supports consortia for future delivery.
- It offers strategic planning for Diploma entitlement in 2013.

What is it about?

- It works with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and through 14–19 partnerships to support the effective introduction of the new Diplomas.
- It supports the Diploma Gateway process to select consortia with high-quality provision.
- It maps the learning offer in areas to help plan strategically for the 2013 Diploma entitlement.

What does it aim to achieve?

- Successful delivery of the first five lines of the Diplomas, pre- and post-16, in September 2008 in chosen pilot areas.
- Strategic planning for increasing delivery towards 2013.

How will it do that?

It should satisfy the continued and developing need for high-quality applied and practical learning opportunities to boost the motivation of young people and contribute towards goals for participation and achievement. Successful delivery is dependent upon collaborative and partnership working. The LSC has a good history of making such arrangements work on the ground.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Continued approval of high-quality Diploma provision through a robust Diploma Gateway process.
- Close collaborative working in all areas, facilitated by strong strategic partnerships.
- The 14–19 reform agenda plans indicate agreed direction of travel to achieve 2013 Diploma entitlement.
- Capital and revenue funding should facilitate successful collaborative delivery.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Education Business Links

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- A DCSF report on work-related learning, to be published in autumn 2007, will give the direction of travel for this policy area.
- The policy intent is that the funding for education business links (EBL) will be moved to local authorities, with joint strategic responsibility held by the LSC and the local authority.
- The funding has remained with the LSC for 2008–09 while the detail of the transition arrangements is agreed.
- With the introduction of Diplomas in 2008 and the importance of work experience within a number of LSC programmes of activity – for example Young Apprenticeships, the Increased Flexibility programme and the school engagement programme – the integration of work-related learning activity and the use of funding to support EBL need to be fully included in the strategic thinking for a local area.

What is it about?

Education business links apply to the delivery of activity to support work-related learning, defined as: planned activity that uses the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work, including learning through the experience of work, learning about work and working practices, and learning the skills for work. Education business links funds cover four priority areas of activity:

- work-related learning in the curriculum;
- work experience;
- employer involvement in EBL activity; and
- professional development of staff.

What does it aim to achieve?

Education business links activity supports the delivery of work-related learning, which is a statutory national curriculum requirement for all KS4 students. This requirement is for schools to make provision for all students at KS4 to:

- learn through work, by providing opportunities for students to undertake work experience;
- learn about work, by providing opportunities for students to develop knowledge and understanding of work and enterprise; and
- learn for work, by developing skills for enterprise and employability.

How will it do that?

Education business links activity funds a brokerage system through an EBL consortium or some similar body. Independent providers work with employers to provide work experience placements for schools. The necessary Health and Safety and Criminal Records Bureau checks are covered as part of this service. The consortium also contracts for other work-related activity, for example professional teacher placements. The supply of high-quality work experience placements is a critical factor in the Government’s delivery of the 14–19 reform agenda, including the delivery of the new Diplomas.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

In 2006–07 this funding supported approximately 350,000 work experience placements for young people, 14,000 professional teacher placements, ranging from one to five days, and approximately 20,000 links to small and medium-sized employers.
Key Stage 4 Engagement

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The pilot programme, now in its roll-out phase, and with a national total of 19,000 places in 2008/09, is based on a curriculum template produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, reflecting the elements of the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT): functional skills and work-focused placement (either in a work-based learning setting or with an employer), based on a two-day out-of-school model.

- The programme is aimed at those young people (aged 14–16) who are disengaged from learning, and are in danger of not participating in learning or employment post-16; these young people will also be clearly underachieving and likely to benefit from a work-focused approach.

- Funded directly by DCSF through ring-fenced grants to local authorities, funding is based on the submission of a proposal by delivery partnerships, following regional LSC and Government Office approval, to DCSF for ministerial approval.

- The programme is flexible, ranging from short-term intervention to a longer-term support package.

- Proposals will require the support of the local 14–19 partnership.

What is it about?
The programme fits as a strand in the strategy for young people who are classified as NEET, and as an integral element of the 14–19 reform agenda.

What does it aim to achieve?

- To re-engage young people in learning and skills, with a view to reducing disengagement in KS4 in schools, reducing NEET figures.

- To contribute to the Level 2 at 19 PSA target by keeping more young people in learning.

How will it do that?
It engages partnerships at local authority level in tailor-made responsive programmes to support young people while keeping them in school and learning contexts.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Raised achievement at Level 1 and Level 2 at age 16.

- Reduction in exclusions and increased attendance at school.

- More positive attitudes to learning.

- Increasing positive destinations at age 16.
Apprenticeships: Young People and Adults – an Overview

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Apprenticeships, primarily a programme for employed learners, are the Government’s preferred route for employed learners aged 16 to 25.
- Apprenticeships also offer those over 25 the opportunity to achieve the skill level required by employers in over 200 job roles. The priority groups for those learners aged 25 and over are:
  - those without employment, including those on Incapacity Benefit, who are seeking to train or retrain in order to enter long-term employment;
  - individuals who are seeking to enter an atypical career; and
  - adults working within sectors that have been identified as local, regional or national priorities, who have gaps in their existing skills or knowledge, or who lack formal skills qualifications, including those who wish to complete an Apprenticeship after having achieved their national vocational qualification (NVQ) Level 2 or Level 3 through Train to Gain.
- From 2012 the Government will introduce an entitlement to an Apprenticeship place for every young person aged 16–18 who attains the entry qualifications required by the sector.
- By 2020 the LSC aims to achieve the ambition in Lord Leitch’s report, Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills (published by HM Treasury in December 2006), of 400,000 apprentices in learning in England.
- The points above require a sustained growth in Apprenticeship numbers in all regions.

What is it about?
The programme includes Apprenticeships at Level 2, Advanced Apprenticeships at Level 3 and, on a pilot basis, Level 4. Frameworks are developed and approved by sector skills councils (SSCs) or sector bodies and their employers. Every Apprenticeship must contain four mandatory elements: a competence-based element (normally an NVQ), key skills, an underpinning knowledge element and employment rights and responsibilities. Apprenticeship certificates are awarded by SSCs or sector bodies.

What does it aim to achieve?
The Apprenticeship programme has been developed to enable new entrants to the workforce, and existing employees looking to change roles or build on partial competence in a job role, to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to perform occupational roles to a standard agreed and laid out by the relevant SSCs and sector bodies. The completion of an Apprenticeship framework shows both current and potential employers that the holder has achieved full competence in the skills covered by the Apprenticeship and has attained the level of transferable skills required by all Apprenticeships.

How will it do that?
Funding and targets are agreed with regional offices and the National Employer Service, which then allocates them to providers and employers according to national, regional and local priorities. The LSC will continue to fully support the costs of learners aged 16–18. For Apprentices aged 19 and over, employer contributions have been reviewed as indicated in Priorities for Success – Funding for Learning and Skills (published by the LSC in October 2005). The contributions will be brought in line with the Government’s wider policy on fees, which will mean increasing the employer contribution to 50 per cent by 2010/11.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The success of Apprenticeships continues to exceed expectations. Apprenticeship framework achievement rates have improved from 40 per cent in 2005 to over 63 per cent in 2007. Some 102,000 apprentices have achieved their full framework in the year to date, significantly exceeding the target of just over 70,000.

The key performance measures are:
- number of apprentices starting;
- number of apprentices in learning; and
- achievement rate – from 2007/08 this will be the new measure of success.

Improvements in retention and achievement create pressures on the available budget, which have been contained through targeted rate reductions where overlaps between the competence qualification and the knowledge element were identified, and by reducing funds in the wake of the reduction in administration required by the LSC.

The target for 2008/09 is still under discussion.
Young Apprenticeships

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The Young Apprenticeship programme will be inviting proposals for cohort 5 in 2008–09 from delivery partnerships, in the same sector areas as in 2007–08. It is expected that some 9,000 places will be available. Proposals will need the support of the local 14–19 partnership, and must be endorsed by the relevant SSC. A national requirements statement for cohort 5 of the programme will be available from November 2007, and will outline the programme requirements.

- Distinctive elements of the programme are: the sector-related qualifications used, the 50 days of sector work placement, and the practical learning methodology used for teaching.

- This policy has changed: the pilot activity will use Diploma components to deliver the sector learning elements. This will be available in four sectors: Health and Social Care, Engineering, Creative and Cultural, and Construction. Around 1,000 places will be reserved for proposals from those consortia offering the Diploma that would also like to deliver the Young Apprenticeship programme.

What is it about?

It contributes to the Apprenticeship recruitment target, and is an integral part of the 14–19 reform agenda.

What does it aim to achieve?

- To introduce young people to sector-specific learning opportunities and to raise achievement at KS4.
- To provide a pathway into the Advanced Apprenticeship programme post-16.
- To accelerate progression through the Apprenticeship programme.

How will it do that?

Forming a part of the 14–19 reform agenda, delivery partnerships are invited to submit proposals for funding to a joint LSC and SSC process. Based on a clear definition of the requirements of the programme and on regional approval after endorsement by the relevant SSC, the programme has a funding stream that is currently managed by the LSC.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Some 95 per cent should achieve a Level 2 vocationally based qualification.
- The programme should deliver 50 days of sector work placement.
- It should receive positive responses from employers and students.
- There should be 50 per cent progression into full Apprenticeship at age 16.
- There should be accelerated progress through the Apprenticeship programme to Level 3.
Pre-Apprenticeships

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Pre-Apprenticeships will be designed to assist young people aged 16 and 17 who wish to enter an Apprenticeship but have not yet attained the entry standard laid down by the relevant SSC.
- In 2007/08 regions piloted pre-Apprenticeship programmes in preparation for their mainstreaming as part of the FLT.
- Pre-Apprenticeships are required to deliver the Apprenticeship entitlement, due to come into effect in 2012/13.
- Within the progression pathways, the pre-Apprenticeship pathway will be tailored to the needs of the individual and to the entry levels of the employment sector and Apprenticeship framework preferred by the young person. This will be endorsed by the appropriate SSC.
- Pre-Apprenticeships will be part of the developing FLT and will include vocational, personal, knowledge and transferable skills.

What is it about?

Pre-Apprenticeships will assist the LSC to increase the participation rate of young people by providing a pathway for entry to Apprenticeships. This will increase the number of young people entering Apprenticeships.

What does it aim to achieve?

The policy aims to ensure that every young person leaving school can access a programme of education and/or training that will enable them to achieve a Level 2 qualification.

How will it do that?

By improving vocational and personal skills, knowledge and transferable skills to the level required to enter an Apprenticeship, the programme will prepare learners for employment and further learning.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- The number of young people achieving the Entry Level for an Apprenticeship in their chosen sector.
- The percentage of young people starting a pre-Apprenticeship that progress to an Apprenticeship.
Programme-led Apprenticeships

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Programme-led Apprenticeships (PLAs) allow young people who cannot find an employer, or who prefer to start in an off-the-job setting, the chance to follow the same curriculum as an Apprenticeship.
- There are two types of PLAs, described below.
- Programme-led Apprenticeships are an important part of the Apprenticeship entitlement.
- In time, all full-time vocational courses that are intended to prepare young people for a skilled job and that are covered by an Apprenticeship framework should be converted into PLAs.
- Regions should manage the number of PLAs and the sectors in which they are offered, in order to avoid an oversupply of part-trained apprentices for whom no employers can be found.
- Programme-led Apprenticeships should be delivered by providers who demonstrate high levels of progression to a full Apprenticeship.

What is it about?

There are two types of PLAs.

- Those funded through work-based learning (WBL): these PLAs provide a legal definition for learners who are placed with employers but not yet employed. This identification enables them to claim Education Maintenance Allowance.
- Those funded through FE: these PLAs, introduced in 2004/05, identify learners in FE who have enrolled on full-time vocational programmes with the intention of progressing to employment, preferably through an Apprenticeship.

Those funded through work-based learning

LSC policy is to continue to reduce the number funded in this way, as we believe that employment from the start of an Apprenticeship is the best route to success.

Those funded through further education

There are five reasons for offering these PLAs.

1. To ensure that vocational programmes offered by colleges, and intended to prepare young people for employment, also offer a curriculum aligned to Apprenticeships, including key skills

This greatly assists the learner in progressing to employment, preferably with an Apprenticeship. Aligning the curriculum ensures that young people progress to full competence at the best possible rate. Evidence shows that this maximises the motivation of learners and improves the probability that they will succeed in finding employment. It also avoids unnecessary repetition of learning and/or assessment, and delivers a significant saving to the LSC.
Alignment of the curriculum through PLAs will contribute to the improved completion rate of Apprenticeships and reduce the cost of the WBL programme. Learners on PLAs progressing to Apprenticeships will already have achieved parts of the Apprenticeship, so providers do not draw down additional funding.

2. To focus colleges’ attention on helping young people progress to employment
Success for learners in the target cohort means getting a job, preferably with an Apprenticeship, and not just achieving their qualifications. Too many colleges are paying too little regard to progression, with the result that many young people achieve qualifications but cannot find a job in the sector in which they have trained.

3. To prepare for the Apprenticeship entitlement
With the entitlement comes a requirement to find Apprenticeship places for all young people aged 16–18 who wish to take up their entitlement. We cannot hope to exactly match supply to demand. PLAs offer a buffer between supply and demand, helping in the event of an economic downturn affecting Apprenticeship numbers.

4. To enable LSC staff to match local demand from employers to the supply of vocational courses in FE
By focusing on progression to jobs, it will become clearer if colleges are training large numbers of young people in sectors where there are no job opportunities.

5. To provide opportunities for atypical entrants or for those who may not yet be confident enough to move into employment
It is not possible to achieve an Apprenticeship entirely through a PLA; a period of employment, to be determined by the relevant SSC, must be undertaken before achievement is completed and rewarded.

What does it aim to achieve?
Programme-led Apprenticeships allow learners who cannot find an employer, or who prefer to start learning in an off-the-job setting, the opportunity to start an Apprenticeship.

How will it do that?
Programme-led Apprenticeships should not stand alone but should be followed by an employed phase, during which time the apprentice demonstrates practical skills in a real working situation.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
- Number of learners progressing from a PLA to an employed Apprenticeship (group 1 and group 2).
- Percentage of learners completing a PLA and progressing to a full Apprenticeship.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Responsibility for the delivery of the area prospectus is jointly held by the local authority and the LSC. Specific funding for the area prospectus was delivered through the local authority's flexible funding pot in 2007/08.
- Area prospectuses are currently linked by an interim national portal hosted on the DCSF website.
- In 2006 and 2007 the LSC provided a support programme to improve the quality of prospectuses and to address issues, including cross-boundary difficulties.

What is it about?

- The proposal to establish an online prospectus of learning opportunities for 14- to 19-year-olds in each local authority was announced in December 2005.
- An LSC audit indicated that all local areas would deliver, at the very least, a basic version of the prospectus by autumn 2007.
- Further clarification is intended to help the prospectus reach its full potential.

What does it aim to achieve?

The rationale for the prospectus is that:

- it will widen choice for young learners by making the local learning market transparent;
- it will provide independent and impartial information on options to young people, their parents and advisors;
- it will help to encourage participation in education post-16;
- it will provide an excellent means of updating, reviewing and progressively enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of the local offer to young people; and
- it will be a driver for change.

How will it do that?

- The prospectus is a key element of the Government’s intention to develop a curricular entitlement for all young people. It helps young people choose a qualifications pathway that suits them and that can be the basis for progression to further learning, higher education and employment.
- The prospectus will set out the courses and programmes that each school, college and other provider wishes to offer young people. The prospectuses are intended to enable young people (supported by their parents and guidance professionals) to make informed choices about where they would like to undertake their learning, selected from the full range of available local courses.
- The prospectus is also an essential tool for learners choosing Diplomas offered by partnerships of schools, colleges and training providers.
- It is also a planning tool and driver for making local delivery arrangements work. It enables local authorities, the LSC, and other strategic partners better to identify and manage 14–19 learning provision, support demand-led planning and improve local information, advice and guidance services.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- An LSC audit indicated that all areas had a prospectus in place for September 2007.
- Area prospectuses are currently linked by an interim national portal hosted on the DCSF website.
- The policy aims to deliver continuous improvement through 14–19 partnerships and DCSF development of a performance framework in 2007–08 and through work to overcome boundary and operability problems.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- It provides an assessment of the performance of 14–19 partnerships using quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- Checks are undertaken once a year.
- Outcomes are used both to help partnerships themselves to improve and to assist DCSF in identifying areas in need of support.
- The first progress check took place in 2006, initially led by Government Offices but now with greater LSC involvement at regional and partnership level.

What is it about?

- It provides an indication of 14–19 partnership performance against seven quantitative indicators and eight qualitative indicators.
- Partnerships self-assess against qualitative indicators and are able to use an LSC-developed toolkit.
- There is regional moderation of outcomes and scoring by Government Offices and the LSC.
- The outcomes are not published.

What does it aim to achieve?

The purpose of progress checks is to:

- support local 14–19 partnerships in evaluating their performance and identifying those aspects of their work that need closer attention;
- identify which local areas are most in need of help and support in implementing the reforms; and
- provide a national perspective on the implementation of the 14–19 reform agenda, including progress in relation to national targets and trajectories.

How will it do that?

Fifteen key indicators aim to give a comprehensive picture of an area’s performance in implementing the 14–19 reforms and should be used to develop the 14–19 plan. Self-assessment is also important in identifying areas where partnerships should improve.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The progress check process will take place annually in September or October. Following previous rounds in October 2006 and May 2007, the October 2007 refresh of the May indicators will provide a baseline for assessing progress. A self-assessment toolkit, developed by the LSC and Government Offices, will be available from November 2007.
School Sixth Forms: Challenge and Support

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- It follows a ministerial request for the LSC to work collaboratively with local authorities to challenge and support secondary schools over student outcomes from school sixth forms.
- It is a key part of 14–19 partnership discussions with local authorities.
- Its outcome will be a set of priorities agreed with local authorities for those sixth forms they maintain.

What is it about?

- Incorporating school sixth forms into wider challenges and supporting developments for the school system and post-16 education outside schools.
- Working with local authorities to focus on sixth form quality and improve outcomes for young people.

What does it aim to achieve?

The overall objective is to enhance coverage of sixth form quality and student outcomes through collaborative and strategic action at 14–19 partnership level. It focuses on improving provision and learner outcomes, irrespective of the provider.

How will it do that?

Action has been taken following a ministerial review in December 2006 and a subsequent letter to Mark Haysom, Chief Executive of the LSC. This enables the LSC, through the 14–19 partnership, to be assured that schools recognise and act upon underperformance and that 14–19 partnership objectives are met. It is for each region to define the extent of priorities, working with local authorities and through schools improvement partnerships (SIPs).

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Activity focuses on continuing to build on our strategic partnerships with local authorities.
- The outcome is to be a set of priorities agreed with local authorities and taken forward by SIPs for those sixth forms maintained by the local authority. It will be important to review the outcomes of SIP involvement at the end of the process.
- The overall aim is to focus more effectively on the contribution of sixth forms to achieving national and local goals, including learner entitlements, participation, progression and achievement aspirations, with particular focus on the need to reduce the number of young people who are classified as NEET.
Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities – an Overview

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- It is essential that this is delivered through working in partnership with local authorities.
- It is vital in reducing the number of young people who are classified as NEET.
- It is vital in achieving the aim of raising the participation age.

What is it about?

- It meets our duty towards young people (including those with LDD up to the age of 25) under the LSA.
- It secures, with our partners, high-quality learning opportunities for 14- to 25-year-olds through schools, colleges and independent training providers, to offer choice and provision that meets learners’ aims and aspirations.

What does it aim to achieve?

- Economic participation for young people and adults with LDD.
- Delivery of the key recommendations set out in *Learning for Living and Work: Improving Education and Training Opportunities for People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities* (published by the LSC in October 2005), *Progression through Partnership* (published by DfES, DH and DWP in 2007) and the LSA in relation to the development of local provision, funding, choice and partnership working.

How will it do that?

- By working with our partners (local authorities, providers, employers and key stakeholders) to facilitate an appropriate choice of local, relevant, high-quality types of provision, equality of opportunity and appropriate employment opportunities, ensuring that access to funding is not a barrier to success.
- By challenging providers to deliver to increased numbers of people with LDD, through regional and local commissioning plans.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- A reduction in the number of young people with LDD who are classified as NEET.
- A reduction in the number of people on long-term Incapacity Benefit, moving them to sustainable work placements.
- An increased number of adults with basic skills.
- An increase in the number of learners with LDD participating in education and training.
- Transparency and clarity on the appropriate use of the respective budgets of central government, its delivery agents and local delivery partners.
- The establishment of protocols for collecting, sharing and acting upon information on people with LDD across government departments, their agents and local delivery partners.
Funding for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities at Specialist Providers, 2008/09

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• The LSC has a statutory duty in regard to learners with LDD aged 16–25 under section 13 of the LSA.
• Providers recruit from outside their locality, sometimes nationally.
• This policy supports a small learner cohort – the learning and support needs of many learners with LDD can be met within other strands of FE provision.
• Funding is separately identified within the grant letter.

What is it about?

The policy ensures that learners aged 16–25, with high levels of learning and support requirements, can access FE, and are funded through a nationally consistent structured process involving the LSC working with providers and external agencies, particularly local authorities, to deliver the process.

What does it aim to achieve?

It seeks the engagement of learners aged 16–25, whose learning and support needs prevent them from accessing FE in more mainstream settings. Many such learners would otherwise be part of the group who are classified as NEET.

How will it do that?

It will do that by securing specialist provision, through a recognised national process, from independent specialist providers.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

• Learners contribute to achievement of Level 2 and Level 3 PSA targets.
• Achievement of PSA targets for participation.
• A reduction in the number of young people who are classified as NEET.
• The successful transition of learners into further learning opportunities or employment.
Applications from New Specialist Organisations to Provide LSC-funded Learning Services for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• This process is only for providers whose provision is dedicated to this learner cohort and where recruitment may occur from several locations across the country.

• If an organisation fails to receive approval, the LSC will not usually consider a further application within 12 months.

• The process is co-ordinated with national and regional offices and can take up to 10 months.

• The application must reflect the recommendations made in Learning for Living and Work, the LSC’s national and regional priorities and elements of the appropriate forthcoming regional commissioning plan.

• Providers must offer high-quality learning provision. Either the provision must not currently be available in the local area, regionally or nationally, or else the existing provider base does not possess sufficient capacity to deliver the volumes required.

What is it about?

• It meets our duty towards young people (including those with LDD up to the age of 25) under the LSA.

• It secures, with our partners, high-quality learning opportunities for 14- to 25-year-olds through schools, colleges and independent training providers, to offer choice and provision that meets learners’ aims and aspirations.

What does it aim to achieve?

It seeks to deliver the key recommendations set out in Learning for Living and Work, Progression through Partnership and the LSA – to provide high-quality, relevant, local provision that meets the needs of learners with LDD.

How will it do that?

It will do this by working with our partners (local authorities, providers, employers and key stakeholders) to enable learners with LDD to receive an appropriate choice of local, relevant, high-quality types of provision.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

• An increase in the number of learners with LDD participating in education and training.

• A reduction in the number of young people with LDD who are classified as NEET.
Skills Competitions, Including WorldSkills

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
• The LSC has undertaken to encourage individuals, employers and those who receive LSC funding to become involved in skills competitions. In England there is a pyramid structure of competitions by sector, progressing from local to national and on to WorldSkills events.
• The WorldSkills competition is the biggest skills competition in the world and is held every two years in one of its member countries. WorldSkills 2009 will take place in Canada; WorldSkills 2011 will take place in the ExCeL Centre, London. Chris Banks, Chair of the LSC, is an Ambassador of the WorldSkills competition.

What is it about?
WorldSkills sets world-class standards in over 40 skills categories, ranging from cabinet-making to web design. Young people from 48 member nations test themselves against tough international standards. The prizes are gold, silver and bronze medals.

What does it aim to achieve?
• By promoting participation in skills competitions, including WorldSkills events, the LSC aims to raise the profile of skills.
• Competing at the highest level in a WorldSkills competition builds the skills and confidence of competitors, leading to better career prospects and personal development.
• Employers who support a competitor have found that they attract an increased number of highly skilled job applicants to their business.

How will it do that?
• By promoting the benefits of skills competitions.
• By communicating details of skills competitions.
• By marketing the positive outcomes from skills competitions.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
• The number of learners participating in skills competitions.
• The number of employers supporting skills competitions.
• The number of funded providers entering learners in skills competitions.
• The number of medals won at WorldSkills events.
Learning and Skills: Policy Summaries 2008/09

(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Adult Information, Advice and Guidance

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• There are two types of information, advice and guidance (IAG) supported by the LSC – discrete and embedded IAG.

• Discrete IAG services are contracted by the LSC and comprise nextstep (local face-to-face service) and learndirect advice (national telephone and web-based service).

• Embedded IAG services are provided within every learning environment: further education (FE), work-based learning (WBL), personal and community development learning (PCDL), the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) and Train to Gain (TtG).

• As signalled in Lord Leitch’s report, the intention is to replace the existing discrete services with a universal adult careers service (fully operational from 2010/11) that will bring together nextstep and learndirect advice, working with Jobcentre Plus. The new service will also support the introduction of skills accounts.

• This will lead to changes in how LSC-funded IAG services are organised, funded and delivered in the future.

What is it about?
The availability of high-quality, local IAG services for learning and work contributes to the success of national policies for learning and skills development. The number of adults involved in learning is expected to increase over the next few years, widening participation in learning and raising levels of achievement. To make informed choices, people need access to high-quality, comprehensive and impartial information and advice about local learning and work opportunities and their relevance to the labour market.

The long-term ambition underpinning the creation of a universal adult careers service, working with Jobcentre Plus, is to ensure that everyone is able to access the help they need when taking stock of their goals and ambitions. The new adult careers service will help each individual put together the package that best helps them to:

• make the links between jobs, training, childcare, living costs and so on;

• be signposted to wider services such as health, transport and employment law;

• promote the successful management of their own skills and career progression; and

• get the most out of their learning and encourage progression.

What does it aim to achieve?
It seeks to improve access to learning and improve learner retention, achievement and progression into sustained employment.

How will it do that?
The core client group for this policy are those individuals who have yet to achieve their first full Level 2 or Level 3. Enabling these individuals to have access to high-quality IAG helps them to make informed choices about the learning and work options available to them. In the future, however, all adults will be able to access the adult careers service either online, over the telephone or face to face. The service will be co-located with Jobcentre Plus, where appropriate.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The success criteria for discrete IAG services in 2007/08 include the following.

• An overall national target for advice of 350,000. This includes 315,000 advice service customers yet to achieve a Level 2 qualification and 35,000 advice service customers with a full Level 2 qualification but yet to achieve a full Level 3, referred from Jobcentre Plus, learndirect advice, or to meet regional or local skills priorities.

• Some 95 per cent of information and advice service sub-contractors to be accredited to the matrix national quality standard for IAG provision.

• Some 92 per cent of customers in receipt of advice services to be satisfied with the service they receive.

In addition, contractors are monitored against the following key performance indicators.

• At least 45 per cent of advice service customers yet to achieve a Level 2 qualification to participate in further learning and/or work, as appropriate.

• At least 17 per cent of advice service customers yet to achieve a Level 2 qualification to be aged 50 or over.

• At least 15 per cent of advice service customers yet to achieve a Level 2 qualification to have a self-declared learning difficulty and/or disability.

It is expected that there will be similar success criteria and key performance indicators established for 2008/09.
Adult Safeguarded Learning – an Overview

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- A total budget of £210 million is available in 2008/09 to support Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL).
- ASL has four programme elements.
- In 2008/09 there is an expectation that the budget will support a minimum of 630,000 learners.
- The reform of ASL will continue during 2007/08.
- The same level of funding to support ASL is expected to be allocated in both 2009/10 and 2010/11.

What is it about?
The working description of ASL is ‘learning for personal fulfilment, civic participation and community development’ that is achieved via the four main programme elements:

- family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN);
- wider family learning (WFL);
- neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC); and
- personal and community development learning (PCDL).

What does it aim to achieve?
The Government and the LSC have reaffirmed their continuing funding commitment to support learning for its own intrinsic value – for personal fulfilment, civic participation and community development. This commitment includes supporting a wide range of courses in each geographical area for cultural, leisure, community and personal fulfilment purposes, which may be offered by local authorities, colleges and voluntary and community groups. ASL also aims to foster family learning and family literacy and numeracy, and to encourage more learners from deprived communities to engage in learning.

How will it do that?
The ASL budget is to be used to support the design and delivery of a wide range of high-quality opportunities in every geographical area. The intention is to widen participation in this type of learning and, in particular, to focus some of the activity specifically on deprived areas and disadvantaged groups.

Funding to support ASL in 2008/09 will be distributed by LSC regions and is not expected to be allocated on a significantly different basis to that of the previous years. There will, though, be more flexibility within the overall budget when planning the mix and balance of provision across each of the four component areas.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
Refer to the success criteria included in the individual policy submissions for each of the four programmes within ASL.
Family Programmes

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• Family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) and WFL are part of ASL and, as such, are safeguarded until 2010/11.
• Family literacy, language and numeracy is based on Skills for Life provision and contributes to LSC priorities and Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets.
• Family literacy, language and numeracy provision should involve progression.
• The provision is delivered mainly by local authorities.
• Learner numbers should be maintained year on year.

What is it about?

Family programmes aim to encourage family members to learn together, as or within a family. Suitable programmes will include opportunities for inter-generational learning and, wherever possible, lead both adults and children to pursue further learning. The term ‘family’ may be interpreted to include any adults and children participating together.

What does it aim to achieve?

There are two clear strands to family programmes.

1. Family literacy, language and numeracy programmes are designed for those with Skills for Life needs and aim to improve:
   • the literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents;
   • parents’ ability to help their children; and
   • children’s acquisition of literacy, language and numeracy skills.

2. Wider family learning programmes are specifically designed to enable adults and children to learn together and/or enable parents/carers to learn how to support their children’s learning by:
   • developing the skills or knowledge of both the adult and child participants; and
   • helping parents/carers to be more active in the support of their children’s learning and development and to understand the impact of that support.

How will it do that?

Family programmes are often more successful in reaching individuals who would not automatically attend a course of adult learning. The provision was singled out for particular praise in the Adult Learning Inspectorate’s chief inspector’s report in 2005 and 2006. The programmes contribute to a number of key national, regional and local strategies, including:

• Skills for Life;
• Level 2 targets (including professionals working with children, as mentioned in the 2006/07 grant letter to the LSC);
• widening participation and social regeneration;
• Every Child Matters and parental involvement in school;
• extended schools; and
• parenting and family support.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

• Maintaining or increasing learner numbers.
• Increased contribution to PSA and LSC targets.
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC) is part of ASL.
- The delivery of NLDC activity is strongly focused on the voluntary and community sector (VCS).
- NLDC can include activity to build capacity to deliver learning in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Up to 75 per cent of NLDC funding may be focused on Skills for Jobs activity within the target group.
- There is a £10 million capital element to NLDC.

What is it about?

A primary purpose of NLDC is to support local VCS organisations in developing their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

What does it aim to achieve?

- To enable VCS consortia to deliver training and education opportunities in their communities, with a particular focus on workless people wanting to improve their skills and return to work;
- Offer pre-employment support and training to prepare adults for employment;
- Encourage innovative, accessible First Steps learning in local communities (for example, by extending successful outreach activities focused on neighbourhood and civil renewal; active citizenship skills; building knowledge and behaviours); and
- Train or retrain local people to develop roles in community leadership or as ‘community champions’.

In addition, the funding will contribute to the successful implementation of Skills for Jobs by targeting low-skilled adults aged 19 and over, who are not currently in employment but who want to work. Within this broad category, the priority is to meet the needs of:

- Local disadvantaged communities; and
- Individuals facing specific barriers and significant disadvantages.

These barriers include being disabled, being from an ethnic minority, being over 50, and being a lone parent.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- A steadily increasing number of individuals supported through NLDC activity.
- An increasing number of providers developing their capacity to work with the target groups of disadvantaged learners.
- A contribution to the overall success of Skills for Jobs.
Personal and Community Development Learning

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Personal and community development learning (PCDL) funding is one of the four elements of ASL and is safeguarded until 2010/11.
- The provision is planned by PCDL partnerships convened by the LSC.
- An important aim of the policy is to (at least) maintain the level of learner numbers participating in PCDL activity.
- Within the overarching principle of general access to PCDL provision, one of the aims is to focus an appropriate proportion of the budget on supporting disadvantaged learners.

What is it about?

Personal and community development learning is described as learning for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and for enjoyment. The learning is also developed with local residents and other learners to build the skills, knowledge and understanding for social and community action. There is no requirement that learners must necessarily progress to other learning or achieve accredited outcomes, but providers should have systems in place to signpost learners to further learning, as appropriate.

What does it aim to achieve?

The reform of PCDL signalled in the White Paper Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances (published by DCSF and DIUS in March 2006, updated July 2007) aims to reinvigorate the availability, range and quality of learning for personal fulfilment, civic participation and community development.

The policy reforms also aim to widen participation in PCDL by all adults, regardless of their prior educational achievement, and ensure that adults in areas of deprivation do not lose out. In this way, PCDL aims to support the wider benefits of learning in the community, including its contribution to broader government policies such as health (mental and physical well-being) and community cohesion.

How will it do that?

In 2006/07 ministers asked the LSC and stakeholders to reinvigorate this type of learning through the establishment of local partnerships. These were to look beyond just LSC-funded learning, and include a wide range of recreational, health-related and cultural learning funded through other sources. Responsibility for informing the PCDL offer in each local area resides with these partnerships.

There is considerable evidence to show that, although PCDL may not have the more obviously quantifiable impact of vocational programmes, its value can be no less significant to the wider economy.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

A timetable of work for full implementation of PCDL policy for 2007/08 has been agreed with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and will be shared separately with regional LSCs and partnership teams.

This policy will have been successful if all adults believe they have had the opportunity to learn to stimulate and support their own well-being or to improve their community. Partnerships will agree local indicators of success that will be reflected in the funding agreement providers have with the LSC. These might include:

- increases in learner satisfaction levels, possibly assessed by learner surveys;
- increases in the amount and/or quality of available provision;
- increases in the levels of participation in particular areas or with specific groups; and
- evidence that funding has been levered in from other sources.

Better management information, based on the collection of more relevant data from 2007/08, will support improvement in developing and measuring success criteria. A request has been submitted to the Information Authority, asking that PCDL providers from 2008/09 record and return a fuller data set than previously to assist better monitoring, nationally and locally, of the success of the policy reforms.
First Steps Provision

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- First Steps provision (FSP) is not part of ASL.
- FSP is learning that is offered as a planned, initial entry point into learning.
- Learner progression to further, formal learning (including progression pathways within the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT)) is an intended outcome.
- It is anticipated that FSP will, over time, be fully assimilated into the FLT.
- The assimilation of FSP would be subject to the provision matching the technical specifications of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

What is it about?
The identified budget for FSP is designed to support providers in actively engaging adults in initial learning activity, with the stated intention of helping them to progress to more formal learning.

What does it aim to achieve?
First Steps provision aims to:
- enthuse and build the confidence of learners who are returning to learning (particularly at Entry and Level 1) to progress to and achieve Skills for Life and Level 2/3 qualification outcomes; and
- continue to support the re-engagement of learners within the context of social inclusion.

How will it do that?
A discrete budget of £37.5 million has been identified to support the delivery of FSP in 2008/09, and providers receiving a share of this budget will be required to include First Steps learner numbers within the provider summary statement of activity section entitled ‘Number of FE learners undertaking Level 1 and Entry’.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
- To increase the number of learners actively participating in this type of learning.
- To demonstrate progression to other forms of learning.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

The steps taken in 2006/07 and 2007/08 to redirect adult funding towards government priorities will continue in 2008/09. We will (in summary) continue to:

- redirect funds to the highest priority provision;
- move funding away from provision that should be paid for by employers or individuals, including funding for specific stand-alone health and safety learning aims and for updating of qualifications for compliance with other health and safety regulations;
- move away from funding additional or optional units beyond the minimum required to achieve a qualification, including those required to achieve a second pathway; and
- move funding away from short courses below nine guided learning hours, except if they are approved by the Secretary of State, are developed and funded as part of ASL or are accredited by Ufi.

However, we need to understand that, in continuing to redirect adult funding in this way, we must also be clear about our wider priority groups of learners and the different types of priority provision necessary to support their learning needs.

What is it about?

The wider adult offer supports the process of achieving an appropriate balance between provision that directly contributes to the LSC’s PSA targets and that which supports our wider priorities and ambitions in creating a culture of learning.

This approach was strengthened in Lord Leitch’s report, which sets out the actions to be taken to raise the nation’s skills base, build productivity, increase social inclusion and improve economic competitiveness. As such, this policy area has evolved into the wider adult offer, which now identifies, in summary, our key priority groups and types of priority provision that will deliver the wider Leitch ambitions.

Priority groups of learners (not mutually exclusive) include:

- low skilled;
- those yet to achieve a full Level 3;
- those not in employment but wanting and able to work;
- offenders;
- those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities;
- others at risk of exclusion from learning; and
- those seeking to access ASL.

Priority provision (including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)) includes:

- Apprenticeships19–25;
- Apprenticeships over 25;
- Level 2;
- Level 3;
- Skills for Life;
- Foundation Learning Tier (including engagement and progression pathways)
- ASL;
- Skills for Jobs provision; and
- higher-level learning.

What does it aim to achieve?

To provide learning, planning and performance colleagues and partnership teams – involved in both strategic discussions with providers and the allocation of funds – with a clear understanding of the LSC’s priority groups of learners and priority provision. This is to support national consistency in approach, help create a culture of learning, promote employability and social inclusion, and thereby to accelerate the achievement of the Leitch aspirations.

How will it do that?

The policy direction is intended to increase the focus of substantial levels of public funding for FE and training on key government priorities, as set out in Raising our game: Our Annual Statement of Priorities (October 2006) and the grant letter, and reflected in the PSA targets for Skills for Life and Level 2 achievements for adults. In order to achieve these targets, rebalancing public and private contributions will be increasingly important. Redirection of provision will also result from the planning and commissioning process, so that more provision aligns with targets and our wider priorities.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Provision is planned and purchased to align more closely with targets and wider priorities.
- The LSC funds a rich, diverse and aspirational portfolio of provision across appropriate levels, while taking into account the need to support participation, promote progression and increase achievement across agreed targets and priorities and within a demand-led system.
Offender Learning and Skills Service

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The policy for the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS):
- develops and reforms the way in which provision for offenders in custody is planned, organised, delivered and funded;
- widens the scope, range and availability of learning provision for offenders in the community;
- ensures that the learning offer for all offenders is explicitly linked to and aligned with other services and interventions; and
- supports improvements in the quality of provision to ensure that all offenders are able to benefit from existing provision and developments within the post-16 sector.

What is it about?
A disproportionately high number of offenders have limited skills or qualifications and are often among the most socially deprived. Helping them to achieve qualifications and skills relevant to employment is a key factor in their social mobility, and this will be the focus of our delivery. Within this we will:
- improve the quality and content of learning and ensure that it is geared to maximising individuals’ chances of gaining sustained employment when they re-enter the community;
- increase the number reaching Level 2 and continue to address the huge literacy and numeracy need through Skills for Life qualifications;
- further develop our cross-departmental and cross-agency working to support transition from custody to community; and
- enhance the service by increasing the appropriate use of the LSC’s mainstream budget and by leveraging in other sources of available funding.

What does it aim to achieve?
The policy aims to ensure that offenders have the underpinning skills for life (literacy, language, numeracy and basic IT skills), and have developed work skills. It will enable them to meet the real needs of employers in the area where they live or will settle after their sentence is completed. Getting and holding down a job has been shown to be one of the key factors in reducing re-offending and this benefits individuals, their children and families, the communities in which they live and the wider society.

How will it do that?
The main stakeholders in the new OLASS arrangements include:
- the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS);
- the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF);
- the Ministry of Justice; and
- the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The main operational focus is coming from:
- the LSC;
- the National Offender Management Service (including HM Prison Service and the National Probation Service);
- the youth justice board (YJB);
- youth offending teams;
- Jobcentre Plus; and
- the Connexions service.

The Offender Learning and Skills Service is a means by which existing delivery services are brought together and focused on the particular needs of a specific group of learners. The budget that meets most of the costs of OLASS is held by the LSC (with a significant sum controlled also by the YJB); but the explicit intention, recognised by all the partners, is for them to act in a collaborative manner, making the effect of the OLASS arrangements greater than the sum of its parts.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
From August 2006 to July 2007 we have achieved:
- a 4 per cent increase in participation levels;
- a 96.3 per cent delivery against contract;
- 42,892 receiving Skills for Life provision;
- 106,830 receiving all remaining provision (of whom 10,593 were in information and communication technology-related learning); and
- improved inspection outcomes.
Higher Education Strategy

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

This should be read in conjunction with the policy on Higher-level Skills (see Employers – Higher-level Skills, page 59).

• The LSC published its higher education (HE) strategy in May 2006. The strategy was developed to support the delivery of the widening participation agenda for HE and the expansion of Higher-level Skills provision for people in work, to open up clear and effective progression pathways for them.

• The strategy forms a national framework, within which both the LSC’s policy on Higher-level Skills and its regional/area HE action plans may develop.

What is it about?

• The LSC’s annual grant letter directs the Council to work with the HE sector to help the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) achieve the HE PSA target of increasing the participation rate of 18- to 30-year-olds in HE to 50 per cent by 2010. Lord Leitch’s report commits to an increased focus on Higher-level Skills.

• The HE strategy sets the context within which the LSC can work with HEFCE and the FE system to achieve these objectives.

What does it aim to achieve?

The strategy aims to achieve the joint objectives of:

• working with HEFCE across the widening participation and Higher-level Skills agendas; and

• with the FE system, supporting both the preparation of individuals to progress to HE, and the delivery of HE within FE.

How will it do that?

The strategy identifies four key themes – partnership, provision, participation and progression – around which the LSC’s contribution to the HE agenda is focused, with particular emphasis on:

• collaborative working with HEFCE at national and regional level to enhance and increase the provision of higher-level vocational learning and skills (HLVLS) in line with the aspirations expressed in Lord Leitch’s report;

• continuing to work with HEFCE, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Qualifications Assurance Agency and the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) through the Joint Forum for Higher Levels. This will enable us to meet a ministerial remit for a common approach to credit across FE and HE (this links to the Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme);

• development of a Higher-level Skills vision and strategy to incorporate the ambitions in Lord Leitch’s report;

• collaborative working with HEFCE at national and regional level to continue to support the development of lifelong learning networks (LLNs) and particularly the active involvement of FE providers in LLNs and the consolidation of progression agreements;

• collaborative working with Foundation Degree Forward through the memorandum of agreement to ensure progression from Diplomas to HE for young people; and

• collaborative working with HEFCE and DIUS through the joint progression strategy.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Action plans are already being developed in response to the HE strategy, and collaborative working between the LSC and HEFCE at national and regional level continues to evolve and progress. HEFCE and the LSC have produced a framework for collaborative working on HLVLS and will develop a detailed programme of work for early 2008. The LSC and Foundation Degree Forward have signed a memorandum of agreement, and the work to be taken forward within this is now subject to agreement.

Success criteria will be:

• establishment of mechanisms through which HEFCE and the LSC can ensure transparent decision-making across a shared landscape of provision;

• rationalised qualification landscape at Level 4 and above for ‘non-prescribed HE’;

• increased levels of active engagement by the LSC and FE providers in LLNs;

• trials of common approaches to credit across a sample of LLNs and other appropriate practitioners; and

• clear progression routes established from Diplomas to HE.
UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme (UK VQRP) covers the development of sector qualification strategies (SQSs), the development of the QCF and funding approaches that can support qualification reform. Following testing and trialling, it is anticipated that the QCF will be ‘open for business’ from August 2008, and that the LSC will align funding with provision identified as priority by sector skills councils (SSCs) and accredited into the QCF. It is planned that by 2013 the QCF will have replaced the current National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as the regulatory framework in England.

What is it about?
The UK VQRP consists of six programmes of work:
• sector qualification reform (led by SSDA);
• framework development (led by QCA);
• planning, funding and delivery of provision for learners (led by the LSC);
• rationalisation of existing qualifications (led by the Federation of Awarding Bodies and the Joint Council for Qualifications);
• communications (led by DIUS); and
• evaluation of the impact of VQ reform (led by SSDA on behalf of the UK VQ research group).

The work aims to develop a more responsive, flexible and demand-led qualifications system, whereby SSCs will identify key provision through SQSs and qualifications will be unit based with credit accumulation and transfer.

Also included is work around:
• the new Level 2 and Level 3 design principles;
• the alignment of public funding with priority qualifications;
• developing employers and providers to have provision accredited into the QCF; and,
• the SSC approval of reformed vocational qualifications.

The FLT programme of work is also dependent on the development of the QCF.

What does it aim to achieve?
• The reform and rationalisation of sector qualifications and other learning provision, so that they reflect employer and learner needs, providing recognised and valued levels of skills both within and across sectors.
• The development of a UK credit and qualifications framework so that vocational qualifications accredited by the appropriate regulatory bodies reflect the above output and, in particular, avoid unnecessary duplication.
• Funding and delivery arrangements to support the above.

How will it do that?
The LSC leads on Sub Programme 3: The Planning, Funding and Delivery of Provision for Learners and is an active partner in both sector qualification reform and QCF development. It supports the development of the QCF through public funding of tests and trials until July 2008.

Sub Programme 3 contains four work strands:
• funding to support the new framework;
• business processes to support the new framework;
• performance measures to support the new framework; and
• transition planning.

The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) is commissioning a provider support and development programme as part of the fourth strand of work on transition planning.

As part of the work, the LSC is trialling a process in 2007/08 (implementation from August 2008) of working with 10 SSCs in order to align public funding with priority qualifications in the QCF (and switch funding from non-priority qualifications). This year’s Statement of Priorities will include an outline of the sectors and the priority qualifications involved in the initial round for 2008/09. An evaluation of the LSC’s proposals is expected in April 2008 and will inform the process for 2009/10.
The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the LSC, SSDA and DIUS are working together to trial the new definition of a ‘full’ Level 2 (Level 2 design principles) in the context of QCF tests and trials (and also to develop Level 3 design principles). The key principles include the requirements that:

- all ‘full’ Level 2 qualifications within the QCF are endorsed by the appropriate SSC to ensure that they meet the needs of employers and are economically valuable; and
- the new Level 2 framework will be composed of component qualifications encompassing vocational skills, personal learning and thinking skills and functional skills (literacy, numeracy and ICT).

The LSC also intends to trial approaches to unit funding and supporting incremental achievement in the context of the QCF. The result of this work is expected in April 2008 and will inform future funding approaches.

**What are the achievements and/or success criteria?**

- A wider range of achievements recognised for a wider range of learners than those currently on provision, leading to a qualification within the current NQF.
- More clarity for both employers and learners over the offer, value and currency of vocational qualifications in the QCF.
- An increase in the number of learners undertaking and completing accredited outcomes.
- More employers satisfied that qualifications gained by existing and prospective employees contribute to the raising of skills levels.
- A rationalised set of qualifications in the QCF, with fewer qualification titles than within the current NQF.
Foundation Learning Tier

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

The Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) is the generic term used to describe all learning below Level 2. Ultimately, the FLT will comprise units and qualifications below Level 2 within the QCF.

In 2007/08 work will continue on developing progression pathways within the FLT. Progression pathways will provide the vehicle for a more focused and strategic approach to Entry Level and Level 1 provision for young people and adults, in order to raise achievement and improve progression to Level 2.

In 2008/09:
- the first validated progression pathways (incorporating three curriculum areas of vocational and subject-based learning, functional skills and personal and social development learning within the FLT) will be available;
- progression pathways will build from units and qualifications in the QCF; and
- some aspects of existing programmes, including Entry to Employment, foundation learning in FE, First Steps and appropriate aspects of other adult provision, will start to be assimilated into the FLT.

Full implementation of the FLT will be completed by 2010, with a comprehensive range of progression pathways.

The LSC is currently considering procurement options for the purchase of progression pathways. As such, progression pathways may, in future, be procured using open and competitive tendering through the LSC’s commissioning process, within the business cycle.

Policy changes

This policy has changed as preparation for phased implementation has commenced. The basis for implementation will be the validation process for progression pathways, consisting of three elements:
- programme content – accredited units and qualifications combined into a coherent programme within an agreed specification;
- principles for the delivery of Entry and Level 1 progression pathways – ensuring that progression pathways can be built on and delivered through flexible learning programmes, taking account of a wide range of learner needs and focused on personalised learning; and
- provider requirements – a model to identify and audit evidence of a provider’s capacity, appropriateness and readiness to deliver progression pathways.

The LSC will continue to support some QCF provision at Entry and Level 1 outside progression pathways, but the nature, volume and extent of this ‘stand-alone’ provision have yet to be determined.

What is it about?

- The FLT encompasses the reform of provision at Entry and Level 1 into units and qualifications within the QCF.
- The development of a set of progression pathways (that is, pre-Apprenticeships; progression to Level 2; progression to sustained employment).
- A provider support and development programme (delivered through QIA) to help providers both prepare for and deliver progression pathways.
- A timescale for phased implementation.
- A communication strategy to disseminate FLT developments to the sector.

What does it aim to achieve?

It seeks improved achievement at Entry and Level 1 and improved rates of progression to Level 2 (or other agreed, positive destinations).

How will it do that?

- A curriculum offer that recognises a broad range of achievements at Entry and Level 1 through units and qualifications that have a clear purpose within the QCF.
- Clear and appropriate progression routes through validated pathways that support progression towards Level 2 and other positive destinations (for example, supported employment and independent living skills) for those who might not be able to reach Level 2.
- An offer better matched to learner needs through a robust initial assessment process and coherent, personalised programmes, supported by appropriate and continuing information.
- Clear funding mechanisms that support participation, achievement and progression within the context of ongoing funding reform across England, including an entitlement for adults to a progression pathway to Level 2 as resources allow.

Young People Adults Learner Support Employers Supply Side List of Acronyms
What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- A full set of progression pathways in place across Entry Level and Level 1, supported by clear funding arrangements by 2010.
- A revised unit and qualification offer, based on credit, appropriate to learners and employers and aligned with strategic skills priorities.
- A greater number of learners progressing to Level 2.
- A greater number of learners achieving units and qualifications below Level 2 from the level they entered learning.
- An improved progression rate from Entry Level and Level 1 provision into employment and FE.
- Robust networks of providers working collaboratively across communities to deliver progression pathways.
- Clear models of effective initial assessment established, and clear and agreed roles and responsibilities of partners involved in initial assessment.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Economic Development

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Learning and skills should be clearly aligned with, and directly contribute to, neighbourhood renewal planning, local area agreements, city strategies, city regions, employment and skills boards and the regional economic strategy.
- This is a major policy thrust across government.
- This policy area developed a much higher profile in 2007, with greater emphasis placed on it by DIUS, DWP and Communities and Local Government.

What is it about?

- The biggest contribution the LSC can make to economic development is to focus the energy and investment of the FE sector on skills and qualifications that relate to employment and progression.
- Training opportunities funded by the LSC should support present jobs and also those that will be needed in future. This policy should be read in conjunction with Skills for Jobs.

What does it aim to achieve?

It seeks to equip individuals, particularly those who are disadvantaged in the labour market, with the skills required to secure sustained employment and progress in work, thereby contributing to employer needs. This will be achieved most effectively through the alignment of skills provision with partners’ activities.

How will it do that?

In support of economic growth and prosperity, the Government’s ambition is that 80 per cent of the working-age population should be in employment. Currently, the level in England is 75 per cent. To achieve this target, 2 million more people need to find and stay in work.

The LSC will help achieve this by:

- building on our understanding of and contribution to local drivers and priorities, including economic diversification, the regional economic strategy and inward investment activity;
- aligning our planning and investment with that of our partners, especially Jobcentre Plus and local authorities, through local area agreements (LAAs), city strategies and emerging multi-area agreements, and employment and skills boards;
- developing joint employment and skills delivery plans to raise employment rates in the most disadvantaged communities;
- commissioning and using research and analysis with partners to inform future strategy and planning; and
- ensuring skills supply matches demands for quality and flexibility.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The LSC locally has started to align the planning of provision to focus on the most disadvantaged communities through LAAs, which are now implemented in every local authority. The involvement of the LSC in these partnerships varies, and a more consistent approach is required to ensure that skills provision is available for those hardest to help.

A major achievement is that the LSC is a key player in the 10 city strategy pathfinder consortia, which are providing a test-bed for models to integrate employment and skills. The LSC will need to continue to work with partners to understand the provision required in the pathfinder areas and to integrate this with the forthcoming regional commissioning plans.

We need to procure provision that can be delivered flexibly (with start dates throughout the year), that meets local needs and that is focused on the priorities of the local labour market. Some activity may not contribute directly to PSA targets but will prepare individuals for future learning, particularly around Skills for Life and gaining a first full Level 2.
Skills for Jobs

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• This is a key policy development to link skills more closely with employment, with a particular focus on those with low skills (below Level 2).

• For many people, low skills are a key barrier to gaining sustained employment and progression.

• The LSC and its providers need to develop a focus on improving low skills and helping individuals to improve their employability, to secure jobs and to progress.

• Providers should consider the range of training that would meet the needs of disadvantaged groups and individuals to improve their chances of getting a job. Furthermore, based on sound knowledge of the local labour market, providers should consider the recruitment and skills requirements of employers with vacancies.

• A responsive and flexible course offer, with start dates throughout the year and opportunities to continue the programme if learners get a job part-way through their course, will be important. Progression, once in employment, through continued individual engagement or employer-led training, will be a significant aspect of helping people to sustain employment and improve their career prospects.

What is it about?

Skills for Jobs is an umbrella term referring to activity that helps low-skilled people to get a job. Various programmes and funding streams form part of Skills for Jobs, for example the employability skills programme, skills coaching trials and specifically commissioned Skills for Jobs activity.

In addition, particular funding streams, such as the European Social Fund and NLDC are increasingly being focused on supporting those facing disadvantage in the labour market and helping them to make the transition into work.

Some aspects of Skills for Jobs are part of a national programme, for example the employability skills programme and skills coaching; others are designed to meet local needs. Key outcomes from Skills for Jobs activity are the number of participants, the sustained jobs gained and further engagement in learning.

There are 2.8 million adults who are not working, are not qualified to Level 2 and are typically facing a range of other significant barriers, in addition to low skills, that make it hard for them to gain and sustain employment. The chances of being employed fall dramatically when individuals have no qualifications (less than 50 per cent of individuals without any qualifications are working, compared to 75 per cent where individuals have a Level 2 qualification).

Skills for Jobs will be embedded in the LSC’s forthcoming regional commissioning plans, and the LSC will have a new performance indicator based on the impact of learning and skills on sustained employment.

What does it aim to achieve?

Skills for Jobs aims to equip disadvantaged, low-skilled adults who are not working with the skills required to enter and sustain employment, and to progress in work, thereby contributing to employer needs. In addition, providers should expect to be able to link pre-employment activity to post-employment continuing development through programmes such as Train to Gain, making it a seamless journey for the individual and the employer.
A key aim of Skills for Jobs is to ensure that, where individuals commence learning pre-employment, they have opportunities to progress in learning once they have secured a job. Skills for Jobs activities will link to Train to Gain, enabling businesses to employ individuals already on the path to gaining recognised qualifications and provide access to further learning and support in work to achieve a Level 2.

How will it do that?
This will be achieved most effectively by providing individuals with a tailored programme of pre- and post-employment support, and by the alignment of skills provision with the needs of the local labour market.

This policy direction is part of a long-term trend to move individuals from welfare benefits into sustained employment through upskilling. Skills for Jobs forms part of the Leitch implementation plan, World Class Skills, which responds to Lord Leitch’s report by seeking to integrate skills and employment more effectively. The approach will form a key response by the LSC to the DWP Green Paper, In work, better off: next steps to full employment (published in July 2007).

The LSC is committed to the integration of employment and skills and to bringing about significant change in the way learning and training are delivered for individuals and employers. This will improve the prospects of the most disadvantaged in society and enhance their chances of gaining sustained employment.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The LSC locally has started to align the planning of provision to focus on the most disadvantaged communities through LAAs, developed by local strategic partnerships, which are now implemented in each local authority area.

LAAs, city strategy pathfinders and emerging employment and skills boards are key leads on local economic and employment development and the skills issues impacting on these. Skills for Jobs activity is planned in the context of these wider developments, and will contribute to informing procurement of flexible provision that meets local need.

Jobcentre Plus and the LSC are likely to be key sources of information about the local labour market, and joint planning processes are built into the well-established joint local delivery plans of the two organisations.

The key outcomes from Skills for Jobs are the number of individuals engaged on substantial Skills for Jobs activity, the number gaining a sustained job and the number continuing to engage in learning beyond Skills for Jobs.

Skills for Jobs will ensure progression from the FLT, enabling adults to continue on their established pathways.
New Deal for Skills

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
- New Deal for Skills refers to a number of different initiatives aimed at the low skilled (broadly, those without a first full Level 2).
- It focuses on moving people from welfare benefit to employment through upskilling.
- It is part of the long-term policy of integrating skills and employment.
- It seeks to reach disadvantaged groups, including low-skilled women, black and minority ethnic customers, people aged over 50 and people with disabilities.
- It includes trials of skills coaching, skills passports and the adult learning option (ALO).

What is it about?
- Trialling new ways of tackling long-standing barriers that prevent low-skilled individuals from entering and remaining in employment.
- Participation in skills coaching and the ALO is voluntary.
- Skills coaching trials provide an intensive guidance service for Jobcentre Plus customers in 20 LSC areas, co-located in Jobcentre Plus offices whenever possible. Skills passport trials form part of skills coaching.
- It encompasses recommendations in the Welfare to Workforce Development report from the National Employment Panel, published in March 2004.
- Further commitments to support skills development for low-skilled women, black and minority ethnic customers and older workers.

What does it aim to achieve?
New Deal for Skills focuses on moving people from welfare benefit to employment through upskilling. A key element is diagnosis of individual skills gaps and referral to appropriate training and support. This supports the Government’s ambition that 80 per cent of the working-age population should be in employment (currently 75 per cent in England). Skills play a crucial part in raising the employment rate.

How will it do that?
Currently 2.8 million people without Level 2 are not working and claim benefits from Jobcentre Plus. Incapacity Benefit customers are a key customer group for the skills coaching trials, supporting the aspiration to reduce the number of people on Incapacity Benefit by 1 million over a decade.

There are three specific commitments.
1. Improving information, advice and guidance, including the development of a skills coaching service co-located with Jobcentre Plus.
2. Developing a skills passport.
3. Creating a skills offer designed around, and driven by, consumers rather than producers of training.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
- Supporting benefit recipients to identify and address their skills gaps so as to gain sustained employment, including effective access to LSC provision.
- External evaluation indicates that the trials are effective in raising the confidence levels of customers and supporting them to improve their employability skills and gain access to appropriate learning opportunities. The skills passport and learning brokerage elements are associated with an increased likelihood of entering employment. Skills coaching is also effective in reaching disadvantaged customer groups, such as black and minority ethnic customers, lone parents and people with disabilities. Outreach has been implemented to support referrals from Jobcentre Plus personal advisors.
- A final evaluation in October 2007 will help inform development of the new universal adult careers service, for example lessons learned from co-location with Jobcentre Plus, the use of a skills diagnostic and ongoing support.
- ALO pilots operate in five areas, and seek to assess the value of a training allowance and additional funding support to help Jobcentre Plus customers achieve their first full Level 2. Initial take-up has been low, but the trials continue until autumn 2008. An external qualitative evaluation will assess the impact of the ALO.
- Both trials have highlighted some issues with the responsiveness of LSC provision and the achievement of a sufficient level of referrals from Jobcentre Plus. Reporting arrangements are in place to identify and then address gaps in provision – each trial completes a monthly return to the LSC National Office, and identifies action taken to address the issue.
Skills for Life

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• This policy covers the areas of literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) provision. The policy exists to offer a coherent approach to providing people with the basic skills they need to succeed in life and at work, and ensure that the provision available is of the highest quality.

• The LSC’s key priorities for adults, including Skills for Life, should not be seen as isolated policy interventions. They are linked together to ensure that learners are engaged and supported through a learning journey that takes them to their highest possible level of achievement and to equip individuals with the skills required for life and sustained employment.

• The future of the Skills for Life strategy is currently being reviewed, following publication of World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England.

What is it about?
The Skills for Life strategy, introduced in 2001, aims to improve the basic literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults in England. The Government set a PSA target to improve the skills of 2.25 million learners by 2010, with a milestone of 1.5 million learners by 2007.

What does it aim to achieve?
The challenge of the Leitch ambition means that there is even more to be achieved. World Class Skills states that, by 2020, 95 per cent of adults are to have the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy.

We have made excellent progress towards the PSA Skills for Life target, having exceeded the milestone of 1.5 million Skills for Life achievements by the end of July 2007.

By 2011 it should be possible to make the following progress: 222,000 Level 1 literacy achievements per year and 165,000 Entry Level 3 numeracy achievements per year would mean that 89 per cent of adults would be qualified to at least Level 1 literacy and 81 per cent would be qualified to at least Entry Level 3 numeracy.

The aim is that, by achieving these milestones, adults in England will be on course to be equipped with the basic skills needed for sustained employment in the 21st century. However, it is important to note that these ambitions are far more stretching than the previous target. Although the 2010 PSA target must not be overlooked, efforts must now concentrate on reaching the aspirations outlined in Lord Leitch’s report.

How will it do that?
In order to achieve the ambitions in Lord Leitch’s report, the LSC will work with providers and partners to ensure that provision is available to, and suitable for, the hardest-to-reach learners. To ensure that learners have access to nationally transferable qualifications, the LSC will continue to work with providers to ensure that a minimum of 80 per cent of all Skills for Life enrolments are on to approved qualifications.
A renewed focus on numeracy provision nationally will be central to achieving the 2010/11 milestones, while a strong commitment to literacy and language provision will be maintained. Learning and achievement at lower levels are also important in order to enable progression towards the functional levels identified in Lord Leitch’s report, and providers must ensure that appropriate provision is available.

Certain groups of learners will remain central to the policy. These include the low skilled in the workplace, Jobcentre Plus customers, offenders and those with numeracy needs.

For those in the workplace, Train to Gain (TtG) will develop further, and provide Entry Level basic skills qualifications.

Jobcentre Plus customers will continue to be a priority group, with specialist provision available for these learners through Skills for Jobs, including the employability skills programme. This provision is in addition to the mainstream provision used to deliver to those on income-related benefits.

The full ambition for numeracy outlined in Lord Leitch’s report is particularly stretching. It requires approximately 310,000 Entry Level 3 numeracy achievements a year in order to reach the 2020 target, with a milestone of 165,000 achievements in 2010/11.

To support the drive to address the numeracy challenge, DIUS has commissioned the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching of Mathematics to lead on the delivery of a national numeracy strategy by March 2008. The LSC will continue to plan for numeracy provision and focus strategies around engaging substantially more learners to improve their numeracy skills. We therefore expect all providers to offer numeracy assessments for their literacy and language learners and to direct them towards the most appropriate numeracy provision.

English for speakers of other languages will continue to be considered a sub-set of literacy qualifications, and is central to promoting social cohesion. The success of, and high demand for, ESOL provision led to funding policy changes being implemented for 2007/08. ESOL provision is no longer eligible for automatic fee remission, and this policy will remain for 2008/09. Free tuition will continue to be available to priority groups, including people who are unemployed or receiving income-based benefits.

In Raising our game: Our Annual Statement of Priorities for 2007/08 (published by the LSC in August 2007), we announced the development of a new suite of international ESOL qualifications that were being accredited by QCA – ESOL for Work. These shorter, work-focused qualifications are available at Entry Level 3 and Level 1 in 2007/08, but should cover all levels for 2008/09. ESOL for Work qualifications will continue to be funded using a listed rate with programme weighting 1.0.

As stated in the Addendum to Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2007/08 (published by the LSC in August 2007), international English-language qualifications are ineligible for public funding and providers are expected to charge full cost. The one exception to this was the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) band 6/7; this qualification will also become ineligible for public funding from 2008/09.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Achievement of the 2010 Skills for Life PSA target.
- Achievement of 220,000 Level 1 literacy qualifications and 165,000 numeracy qualifications in 2010/11.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Union Learning

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Trade unions play an important role in supporting learning and skills in the workplace, in particular through the activities of the growing number of union learning representatives (currently 18,000), but also through negotiating channels such as workplace learning agreements and collective learning funds.

- Unionlearn and trade unions are actively supporting employers to sign up to the skills pledge and participate in TtG. They are also signposting and supporting employees to take up training opportunities. TtG brokers and providers should take account of the work of unionlearn/trade unions and work with them to ensure that the maximum number of employees participate in TtG-brokered provision.

- National and regional partnerships should include, where possible, unionlearn/trade unions to ensure that the maximum number of employers and their employees benefit from learning through LSC initiatives.

What does it aim to achieve?

- To create new workplace partnerships between employers, trade unions and employees.

- To help improve employment relations through better skilled and motivated staff who contribute to higher-performing companies and organisations.

- Trade unions will work with employers to develop workplace learning agreements and help them sign up to the skills pledge.

How will it do that?

Unionlearn has a powerful role in promoting training in the workplace, through the network of trained union learning representatives, and has been tasked with supporting the growth of that network from 18,000 to 22,000 in 2010.

The union learning representatives are proving to be particularly effective in targeting people with low skills or low confidence in their own ability to learn and benefit from training.

Trade unions will work to promote TtG with employers and employees, signposting and helping the maximum number of learners to access training – particularly Skills for Life learning, full Level 2 and Apprenticeships.

Trade unions also have representatives on key skills boards, such as the London employment and skills board and the SSCs. When considering the balance and mix of provision, TUC education courses for trade union representatives, in particular union learning representatives, are a priority for LSC funding.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- LSC/TUC protocol revised to reflect the challenges of Lord Leitch’s report and reflect the formation of unionlearn and the strengthening of the LSCs regional structure.

- National LSC/TUC TtG protocol implemented by each LSC and unionlearn region, putting in place strategies that recognise where unions can be of particular benefit in positively influencing employees and employers in their approach to training and employee development.

- Working with unionlearn and unions to influence a greater number of employees accessing training through TtG.

What is it about?

- Delivering our skills ambition, and the concomitant dramatic increase in participation and achievement, will require increased action and investment in skills from government, employers, trade unions and individuals. It will also require a strong partnership in every area, and this includes working partnerships between the key public agencies and trade unions.

- National and regional working with TUC/unionlearn and individual unions on our shared priorities, which include Skills for Life, IAG and TtG.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• Ufi’s remit is to provide high-quality adult learning, prioritised for those people with few or no skills or qualifications who are unlikely to participate in traditional forms of learning.

• Ufi also intends to ensure that learning is delivered innovatively through the use of new technologies. Ufi provides information, advice and guidance to adults on a range of learning and work opportunities by means of a helpline and website service; and through UK online centres it provides everyone in the UK with free, local access to a computer and the internet, as well as help and advice on using them.

• The financial memorandum (the nationally held contract between Ufi and the LSC, established in August 2004) covers three areas of work:
  – learndirect courses;
  – learndirect advice; and
  – UK online.

• Funding and targets are agreed by the LSC National Office and regions. The main areas of priority course provision are Skills for Life and full Level 2 qualifications.

• Under the agreed funding and targets, learndirect provision is reviewed as part of the regional and local planning dialogues to ensure that provision meets local priorities.

What is it about?

Ufi was established in 1998 by government to meet an identified need. The Department for Education and Skills reviewed the service in 2003, and, as a result, Ufi’s funding was transferred to the LSC as a single national contract in August 2004.

What does it aim to achieve?

• Through learndirect courses, to involve hard-to-reach learners and those who would not engage in more traditional methods of learning. Learndirect provision is reviewed as part of the regional and local planning dialogues to ensure that provision meets local priorities.

• Through the IAG, to offer independent information and advice to adults.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Through learndirect courses, Ufi is the LSC’s largest single provider of first Skills for Life national test passes, achieving in excess of 55,000 in 2006/07 and contributing over 3,000 full Level 2 qualifications. Through the IAG call centres and website, Ufi provides approximately 11 million advice sessions annually, 2 million of which were to pre-Level 2 callers in 2005/06.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The LSC needs to deliver over 290,000 first full Level 2s in 2009/10, an increase of 75.5 per cent on 2006/07 planned numbers. A significant proportion of these first full Level 2s (190,620) are planned to come through TtG.
- Adult Level 2 is the equivalent of 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C or a professional qualification such as a national vocational qualification at Level 2.
- Not all of the LSC-funded first full Level 2 achievements will count towards the target, as the target recognises only those that are economically active in autumn 2010.
- The LSC is committed to growth among the group of learners who have not previously achieved at Level 2 (known as ‘firstness’) from 38 per cent to 60 per cent and success rates (up to 70 per cent) in mainstream adult Level 2 learning by 2010.
- The Level 2 entitlement is an entitlement to free tuition to study for a first full Level 2 qualification. Most adults eligible for the entitlement will study for their first full Level 2. However, in some circumstances learners may be in a position to bypass Level 2 and study at Level 3. Such learners are termed ‘Level 3 jumpers’.

What does it aim to achieve?

Achieving the adult Level 2 PSA target will be an important step in transforming the skills base of the workforce. It aims to enable unskilled or low-skilled adults to gain the platform for employability skills, represented by a full Level 2 qualification, that they need for sustained and productive skills. The LSC’s adult Level 2 strategy has three main aims:
1. To provide a platform for sustainable, progressive employment.
2. To increase workforce productivity.
3. To deliver in sufficient numbers to meet the adult Level 2 PSA target.

How will it do that?

LSC will deliver the key aims by:
- reprioritising LSC funding to increase the percentage of full Level 2;
- planning, funding, marketing and delivering publicly funded learning and skills for adults; and
- making the distinctive needs of this group of people a priority.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The success criteria will be measured by the number of adult Level 2 qualifications achieved by 2010 compared to the PSA target.

What is it about?

The attainment of first full Level 2 qualifications represents the critical threshold of employability and progression for many individuals. It is about making sure that employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses and individuals have the skills they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled.
Learner Support for Young People and Adults
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Applications for Care to Learn (C2L) are assessed by the helpline, assessment and payment body (HAPB). HAPB makes payments to childcare providers to cover childcare costs and to learners for assistance with travel costs. It also provides a telephone help service.
- Learning providers are required to monitor attendance for the scheme and notify the HAPB so that payments can be made. Learning providers also assist with marketing and raising awareness of the scheme through their student support function.

What is it about?

Care to Learn helps young parents to participate in learning by covering the costs of childcare while they learn. Any publicly funded learning can be undertaken. Up to £160 per week per child is payable (£175 in London) to cover the costs of childcare and travel to and from the childcare provider. Payment for childcare is made directly to the childcare provider on behalf of the learner. The childcare provider must be Ofsted registered. Support from the scheme is not income-assessed, but the parents must be under 20 at the start of their learning to be eligible.

What does it aim to achieve?

The key objective of C2L is to raise participation in learning by young parents, and to lift them out of the cycle of poverty by equipping them with skills and qualifications.

How will it do that?

In 1999 the Government launched the teenage pregnancy strategy, which set out a national strategy for England to:
- halve the rate of conceptions among under-18s;
- set a firmly established downward trend in the conception rate among under-16s by 2010; and
- minimise the social exclusion experienced by teenage parents.

The C2L scheme provides significant funding to young parents to help them return to school, college or work-based learning. In doing this, the scheme contributes to the Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to get 60 per cent of teenage parents into education, employment or training by 2010. Targets have been set for C2L take-up as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Targets for Care to Learn

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Target numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>6,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>6,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>6,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These numbers are drawn directly from the overall PSA target.

Care to Learn is marketed through agencies that assist young parents (for example, student support services at learning providers, Connexions, midwives and health visitors) rather than directly to young people.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

An independent survey report, Impact of Care to Learn by S. Dench (published by the Institute for Employment Studies in December 2006), shows that the programme is making a real difference to young parents undertaking learning; it enables them to get good qualifications while increasing their confidence and improving their ability to compete in the marketplace. Of those surveyed, 88 per cent claimed they would not have been in learning at all if they had been unable to access C2L. Most of these were ‘young mums’, of whom over 90 per cent were studying towards a qualification — including nearly 40 per cent at Level 2 and 25 per cent at Level 3.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Dance and Drama Awards

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

The Dance and Drama Awards (DaDAs) are part of the wider government offering to gifted and talented young people. This work contributes to LSC Priority 1: to successfully raise demand, participation and achievement in learning. This embraces raising the quality and improving 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.

What is it about?

A number of awards, covering the largest portion of the course fees, are allocated nationally to each participating independent school by the LSC. The school must then grant those awards to the most talented applicant(s) at audition. Those learners in receipt of an award may also apply to the income-assessed Student Support Fund for help with their fee contribution and living costs. Applications for this are made to, and eligibility is assessed by, the HAPB.

What does it aim to achieve?

The key principles of the DaDAs are that:

- access to training should be based on potential to succeed in the profession and not ability to pay; and
- those with lower household incomes receive more financial help.

Awards qualifications were designed in partnership with the performing arts sector to offer training that leads to direct entry to the profession.

Awards are available only at schools that demonstrate they offer very high-quality training to meet the needs of the sector (Ofsted Grades 1 or 2).

How will it do that?

The awards were introduced to make dance and drama training accessible to all young people showing the talent and potential to succeed in the profession, following extensive and high-profile lobbying from the sector.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The DaDAs will enable talented learners to access high-quality dance and drama provision that will give them the skills they need to obtain employment in the performing arts sector.
Education Maintenance Allowance

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Applications for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) are assessed by the HAPB, which is also responsible for making the payments to learners and providing a telephone helpline service. Learning providers are required to monitor the learner’s attendance on a weekly basis, and notify the HAPB if the learner does not meet the agreed weekly attendance requirements. Learning providers also assist with marketing and raising awareness of the scheme through their student support function.

- Area partnership teams are responsible for ensuring an effective communication strategy is in place for their area, and for facilitating meetings with schools, colleges and work-based learning providers to ensure the effective delivery of the EMA.

- A number of changes are planned for the 2008/09 academic year. We are modifying the bonus regime to further encourage young people from low-income backgrounds to participate in post-compulsory learning. Payments are made on a something-for-something arrangement, where the learner must meet agreed criteria in order to receive payment. The allowance is paid in three bands – £10, £20 and £30 per week (subject to financial assessment) – and is payable to learners aged between 16 and 19. Periodic bonuses may also be paid for good progression against agreed learning goals.

What is it about?

The Education Maintenance Allowance is intended to encourage more young people from low-income backgrounds to participate in post-compulsory learning. Payments are made on a something-for-something arrangement, where the learner must meet agreed criteria in order to receive payment. The allowance is paid in three bands – £10, £20 and £30 per week (subject to financial assessment) – and is payable to learners aged between 16 and 19. Periodic bonuses may also be paid for good progression against agreed learning goals.

What does it aim to achieve?

The key objectives of the EMA are focused on young people from lower-income backgrounds and aim to:

- increase participation;
- improve retention;
- reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- increase the proportion of 19-year-olds with a full Level 2 qualification; and
- encourage progression to higher education (HE) or skilled employment.

How will it do that?

The Education Maintenance Allowance encourages improved participation, retention and achievement among young people from low-income households by helping them with the costs associated with being in learning – for example, books, equipment and transport costs.

The marketing campaign for the EMA targets young people in Year 11 and their parents. It includes television, press and radio advertising and runs in the following ‘bursts’: February–March, May–June and July–August. A PR campaign for the scheme is ongoing. The EMA advertising will be integrated with the national skills campaign.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Statistics for participation in 2005/06 showed an increase of 2.2 percentage points for 17-year-olds, building on the increase of 1.7 percentage points seen in 16-year-old participation during 2004/05. These were in line with the increases expected from the roll-out of the EMA and were the largest annual increases in participation for over 10 years.

The EMA has also been found to have a positive impact on retention – increasing learners’ commitment to their course and reducing dropout rates among recipients. Anecdotal evidence from teachers and lecturers has reported a positive impact on behaviour, as well as attendance.
Hardship Payments

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Funding for hardship is allocated to LSC regions. The regions are then responsible for making funding allocations to the learning providers (in the case of colleges and HE institutions) or the local authority (in the case of schools) in their area. Applicants apply for support directly to their learning provider or local authority, which provides support at its discretion and in accordance with LSC published guidance.

- The area partnership team ensures that the relevant schedule is in place prior to releasing funding, responds to hardship queries from providers and local authority, which provides support at its discretion and in accordance with LSC published guidance.

- From 2008/09 the discretionary funding previously allocated for residential bursaries will be withdrawn and replaced by the national Residential Support Scheme. As noted below, the hardship policy is currently being evaluated and reviewed, which may lead to future changes.

What is it about?

The purpose of hardship payments is to provide exceptional support to students who are aged 16 and above and who are experiencing financial difficulty with meeting the costs associated with learning. The priority must always be to support disadvantaged learners (as defined by the Social Exclusion Unit). Hardship payments may be available to learners studying LSC-funded further education (FE) in colleges, external institutions, HE institutions, school sixth forms and sixth form colleges. With the exception of asylum seekers aged 19 and over, where a learner has been accepted on to, and is studying, a programme of learning funded by the LSC, they will be eligible to apply for hardship support.

What does it aim to achieve?

Hardship support aims to increase participation and retention in post-16 education and is targeted at disadvantaged learners. For young people, the support helps to tackle hardship that falls outside the scope of the EMA. For adult learners, it is often the only form of support apart from an Adult Learning Grant (ALG).

How will it do that?

By helping learners to overcome the financial barriers associated with learning, for example the cost of books, equipment and additional transport support.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

During 2005/06 just over 457,000 awards of hardship payments were made.
Residential Support Scheme

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Applications for the Residential Support Scheme (RSS) are assessed by the HAPB, which is also responsible for making payments for the learner’s accommodation and providing a telephone help service.
- The student’s ‘home’ local LSC area partnership team must confirm that a similar course is not available locally.
- Payments are made by the HAPB to the college in termly instalments. The college checks that the learner is in attendance before using the funds to pay the landlord directly.
- We expect that the travel element will be removed in 2008/09.
- Learning providers assist with marketing and raising awareness of the scheme.
- In 2008/09 the scheme will include the residential bursary funds and colleges, to produce a single national residential support programme that will broaden access through most colleges. We expect this to provide a standard approach to support for all colleges and provision.
- The scheme was previously a pilot residential scheme.

What is it about?

The RSS provides financial support with accommodation costs for those students aged 16 and above who:

- need to study away from home because their course is not available locally; or
- are undertaking a specialist programme of study that, due to the requirements of the course, requires the learner to be resident.

Most students applying to the scheme will be studying for a first full Level 2 or 3. However, support for repeat qualifications will be provided if:

- the student is aged 16–18 and seeking to study a second Level 2 that is vocational (and their first Level 2 was not); or
- the Level 3 course has an existing Level 3 qualification as an entry requirement.

In exceptional circumstances, support may be provided at Level 1. Support is awarded following an income assessment. The maximum income to be eligible for support is £30,810.

What does it aim to achieve?

The RSS aims to facilitate access to provision with a focus on first full Level 2 and 3. It is targeted at learners from a lower-income background. It is particularly advantageous for students studying specialist provision and/or living in remote areas.

How will it do that?

The RSS helps learners with the costs of their accommodation if they need to follow a course of learning that is beyond reasonable daily travelling distance from their home.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The RSS helped over 475 learners in 2006/07.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Help with Transport Partnerships

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The LSC funds transport partnerships through local authorities. Local authorities receive the funding authority from the LSC and provide details of spend on behalf of the transport partnership through a series of annexes. Annex D provides spend information, detailing the use of the partnership funds in the academic year.
- The LSC produces annual transport support guidance, which the local authority must have regard to.

What is it about?

A discrete funding allocation is given to local authorities to fund local authority-led transport partnerships. This is to support the development of strategic and innovative solutions to home/college transport issues, primarily for learners aged under 19 (up to at least age 21 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD); ideally the maximum age for this group should be 25).

What does it aim to achieve?

The policy seeks to remove transport issues as a barrier to participation in learning, through partnership activity.

How will it do that?

Help with transport partnership funding is allocated directly to the local authority to fund innovative partnership solutions to local transport issues, ensuring transport is not a barrier to provision for learners aged under 19 (up to 21 for learners with LDD, and, as good practice, up to 25).

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The policy and funding are intended to ensure that each local authority area is able to adopt a collaborative approach to improving transport support and provision for these learners. The transport partnership should include stakeholders, as identified in the guidance, and must identify and respond to local and national transport issues. The transport partnerships have an LSC-funded web-based forum for sharing good practice and for networking.

Local authorities must produce their transport policy statements in consultation with the transport partnership and, as such, these should be current, comprehensive and informative for learners.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Two policies form the adult childcare offer:
  - Sixth Form Childcare Scheme; and
  - 20+ Childcare.
- Applications for the Sixth Form Childcare Scheme are assessed by the HAPB, which is also responsible for making the payments to the childcare provider and providing a telephone help service.
- Learning providers are required to monitor attendance for the scheme and to notify the HAPB if learning is not attended. Learning providers also assist with marketing and raising awareness of the scheme through their student support function. Payment for any travel element of the funding may be made by the HAPB to the learning provider, who passes it on to the student.
- Funding for discretionary 20+ Childcare is allocated to LSC regions. These are then responsible for making funding allocations to the learning providers (in the case of colleges) or the local authority (in the case of schools or sixth form colleges) in their area.
- The area partnership team ensures that the relevant schedule is in place prior to releasing funding, responds to discretionary 20+ Childcare queries from providers and collates the annual dLS Management Information return at a local level. The provider completes the Learner Support (L34) section of the ILR when a learner is to be supported through 20+ Childcare. Non-completion of L34 may result in a reduced future allocation.
- The 20+ Childcare policy is currently being evaluated and reviewed, which may lead to future policy changes.

What is it about?

Sixth Form Childcare Scheme

Adult learners aged 20 and over and attending a school sixth form or sixth form college may be eligible for payments made from this nationally administered childcare scheme, providing they have a dependent child aged under 15 (16 if the child has disabilities) for whom they are responsible for providing care. A maximum award of £160 can be made for each child per week (£175 per week if the parent is living in one of the London boroughs). This weekly maximum includes a travel allowance to cover additional costs associated with travelling to the childcare provider. Part-time learners are eligible to apply for pro-rata funds. Funding can be made available for a maximum of three years. The funding is subject to income assessment of the learner’s household income and will pay up to 100 per cent of childcare costs, within the weekly maximum, if earnings are below £30,502.

Discretionary 20+ Childcare

The purpose of discretionary 20+ Childcare funding is to provide childcare support to students aged 20 and above, who are experiencing financial difficulty. The priority must always be to support disadvantaged learners (as defined by the Social Exclusion Unit). With the exception of asylum seekers aged 19 and over, where a learner has been accepted on to, and is studying, a programme of learning funded by the LSC, they will be eligible to apply for discretionary 20+ Childcare support.

What does it aim to achieve?

Adult childcare support aims to increase participation and retention in adult learning by ensuring that parents are not excluded from learning because they cannot afford the cost of childcare.

How will it do that?

It helps adult learners who are parents with the costs of childcare while they are in learning.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- The Sixth Form Childcare Scheme helped over 650 learners who are parents to participate in learning in 2006/07.
- During 2005/06 just over 46,000 awards of 20+ Childcare funding were made.
Adult Learning Grant

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
Applications for Adult Learning Grant (ALG) are assessed by the HAPB, which is also responsible for making the payments to learners and for providing a telephone help service.

Learning providers are required to monitor the learner’s attendance and notify the HAPB if learning is not attended, on a weekly basis. Learning providers also assist with marketing and raising awareness of the scheme through their student support function.

What is it about?
The Adult Learning Grant is available nationally throughout England from September 2007. It is intended to help adults studying full time (more than 450 guided learning hours a year) with the costs associated with learning. The grant pays up to £30 per week (subject to financial assessment) for full-time learners aged 19 and over who are studying for their first full Level 2 or first full Level 3 qualification.

Applications are income-assessed, with upper income thresholds for 2007/08 of £19,513 for a single learner or £30,810 for a learner with a cohabiting partner. It is not available for people who receive out-of-work benefits, such as Jobseeker’s Allowance.

What does it aim to achieve?
The key objectives of ALG are to:
- increase participation;
- improve retention;
- improve attainment at Levels 2 and 3; and
- encourage progression to HE or skilled employment.

How will it do that?
The Adult Learning Grant encourages improved participation, retention and attainment among adults on low incomes by helping them with, for example, the cost of books, equipment and transport to their place of learning.

The scheme is targeted at learners who did not achieve their first full Level 2 or 3 qualifications the first time round. The marketing campaign, including press and radio advertising, runs from July to September 2007, and again in January 2008. The ALG marketing and communications activity is integrated with the national skills campaign.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The Adult Learning Grant makes a real difference: take-up in 2007/08 is expected to be 17,500 beneficiaries; take-up in 2008/09 is anticipated to increase to 25,000.

The impact of the pilots has been evaluated, with the following major findings:
- ALG accelerates learning: over a quarter (27 per cent) of recipients said they would have studied part time without ALG, rather than full time with it.
- ALG improves retention: 17 per cent of recipients said they probably or definitely would have dropped out of the course without ALG. On average, 93 per cent of ALG learners stay in learning – compared with an overall average of 70 per cent in FE. An increasing number of learning providers are reporting 100 per cent retention rates for their ALG learners.
- Over 20 per cent of learners who use ALG to study at Level 2 go on to study at Level 3.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The LSC operates the Career Development Loan (CDL) scheme in partnership with three high-street banks: Barclays, the Co-operative Bank and the Royal Bank of Scotland. The LSC notifies each participating bank of its maximum loan portfolio each financial year, and publishes guidance for the banks, to inform the administration of the CDL scheme.
- Applications are made directly to the chosen bank and any loan agreement reached is between the applicant and that bank. The bank performs its own credit check and the decision to grant a CDL is ultimately at the discretion of the participating banks. The learning provider must be registered with the CDL scheme to be able to accept CDL-supported learners. Checks on providers applying to join the CDL register have recently been strengthened and improved.

What is it about?

Career Development Loans are commercial bank loans to help pay for learning. The LSC supports learners by paying the interest on their loan while they are in training, and the learner starts repaying the loan one month after their training ends. Loans of between £300 and £8,000 may be applied for to help fund up to two years of training (or up to three years if the course includes work experience). The money may be used to cover the costs of fees and equipment, and some living expenses. Fees payments are made directly to the learning provider by the bank when the learning provider confirms that the applicant has started on the course. Payments to cover other course costs and living expenses, if applied for and granted, are made directly to the applicant.

Many types of learning provision, available from both private and public providers, are eligible under this scheme. Applicants must be aged 18 or over.

What does it aim to achieve?

The loans are intended to increase the amount of vocational learning being undertaken, to encourage more individuals to take responsibility for their own learning, and to encourage financial institutions to view learning as an investment worthy of a loan.

How will it do that?

Career Development Loans contribute to the Government’s commitment to help individuals help themselves to develop their skills through learning. They help individuals to cover the costs associated with their learning, while placing responsibility for the choice of learning, learning provider and repayment of the loan when learning is complete, on the learner.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Since the scheme began in 1988 there have been 246,024 loans and a total of £945 million has been lent by the banks.
- Career Development Loans provide excellent value for money. An annual investment of about £20 million of public money supports around 13,000 new loans to a value of around £64 million a year, representing about £150 million of added value to the economy each year.
Employers
Adult Learner Accounts

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Adult Learner Accounts (ALAs) are a powerful way of increasing rates of participation and achievement, as they provide an opportunity to target support and resources at particular groups or areas.
- Through ALAs, learners will be able to access a variety of free services that will support them in making the right choices about their learning. They place learners in the driving seat by providing:
  - free independent information, advice and guidance;
  - the choice of a wide range of providers and courses;
  - full details of the value of individuals’ courses plus details of public support;
  - funding that follows the learner; and
  - ongoing advice and support with progression.
- During 2007/08 the LSC is trialling ALAs in the South East and East Midlands. During the trial, an additional 4,000 adults will be supported to acquire full Level 3 qualifications. Providers able to offer ALAs have been selected through a competitive tendering process. This has encouraged new providers to enter the market and has also increased the funding available to successful providers. Independent information, advice and guidance are being provided by learndirect and local nextstep providers.

What does it aim to achieve?

Adult Learner Accounts place learners at the heart of the learning and skills system and enable them to acquire the skills that improve their employability and so make the most of their potential. Going forward, skills accounts will form an integral part of employment and skills services. A successful skills account service will enable support to be targeted where it is most needed and will mean that learners are able to:
- make informed decisions about how they can gain the skills they need;
- choose from a wide selection of providers and courses;
- easily access comprehensive independent information, advice and guidance; and
- see the value of their learning and the financial support available to help them meet the costs.

How will it do that?

Marketing and communications activity is targeted on areas where there is low participation or particular skills needs. Independent information, advice and guidance are available through learndirect and nextstep providers. The market is being opened up through competitive tendering, so that providers best able to meet learners’ needs are able to access public funding.

Learners opening an ALA receive a welcome pack, which includes their account number, details of how the accounts work and the learning options available to them. Learners will receive regular bank-style statements setting out the value of their learning, plus details of how the costs are being met. In this sense, the account is virtual, as at no time does public money leave the further education (FE) system.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The success criteria are:
- increased participation, particularly among groups with traditionally low participation rates;
- increased retention and achievement: as learners see the full value of the course they are undertaking, including contributions from themselves or their employer, they may be more motivated to complete their course;
- better value for money; and
- increased employability, as more learners gain Level 3 qualifications.

During 2008/09 the LSC will continue to develop policy first announced in 2007/08 to ensure that it informs the development of skills accounts and the Government’s priorities relating to the integration of employment and skills services. During 2008/09 the scope of the ALA trial will change to ensure that we continue to learn the lessons necessary to make skills accounts a success.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Sector Skills Agreements

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

A sector skills agreement (SSA) is an action plan developed by a sector skills council (SSC) and resulting in a series of plans with key stakeholders. Working closely with SSCs, the LSC supports priorities by aligning public funding with priority qualifications identified by SSCs within the sector skills agreements and the resulting action plan of the sector qualification strategy (SQS). The LSC has made a commitment within Raising our game: Our Annual Statement of Priorities for 2007/08 to commission only those qualifications that employers want, as set out in the sector skills agreements.

To note
- The reports on Stages 1, 2 and 3 will highlight key messages and actions for the sector.
- The final (Stage 5) report is a published document.
- The LSC will respond formally to the SSA with recommended actions.
- In formulating its response, the LSC consults with all regions and other national policy leads.
- Final versions of all reports and recommendations are available on the relevant sector pages of the intranet.

What is it about?
The SSA is a five-stage consultation undertaken by all SSCs to identify employer needs within the sector. Stage 1 is a statement of what the SSCs have (through research and employer consultation) identified as key skills issues for employers. These are often, but not always, available at regional level. Stage 2 is a summary of what provision is available to meet skills needs (both publicly funded and that bought by employers) and how well it is achieving this aim. The LSC supplies individualised learner record (ILR) information to inform this analysis. Stage 3 sets out the gaps between demand and supply and a range of actions for partners, including the LSC, to respond to in order to close these gaps. The final stages are agreed actions signed off by all stakeholders.

The SSA has a life span of three or four years. Action plans will identify sector priorities for regional commissioning further identified as part of the SQS.

What does it aim to achieve?
- To articulate clearly employers’ future needs using other skills policies as drivers.
- To drive forward changes in supply of skills in line with employer demand.
- To engage employers and the skills system in changing as needed to address these skills.

To note
Lord Leitch’s report proposes the reform and empowerment of SSCs with an emphasis on the SSA process and SSCs working with employers to rationalise and approve vocational qualifications.

How will it do that?
It will do this by driving changes in what the LSC funds and commissions. It is proposed that this year’s Statement of Priorities will set out a key overarching message that it is the LSC’s intention to focus public money on priority qualifications.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The LSC aims to commission provision and to provide funding in line with priorities evidenced by SSCs in the SSA and demonstrated by increased employer demand. Currently, three phases of SSAs are completed across 15 SSCs; the remaining 9 are at various stages and are due for publication by March 2008. As a result, 10 SSCs have an SQS signed off or at final draft.

The LSC has recently commissioned an evaluation to understand how publicly funded provision has changed as a result of the SSAs; it will consider the impact SSAs have had on engagement in economically valuable provision and improving overall employability, and how implementation of the SSAs has changed the way providers are able to respond to employers’ skills needs. The evaluation will primarily track the initial phase of SSAs and therefore the uptake of three priority qualifications – Business Improvement Technique (BIT), on-site assessment and training, and the IT qualification – by LSC providers.
Train to Gain – the Service

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The Train to Gain (TtG) service will grow in budget by almost 50 per cent in 2008/09 and by a further third in 2009/10. In future procurement rounds, providers will be required to achieve the New Standard in order to obtain a contract. The role of providers in promoting TtG to employers will expand as they become skills advisors for the service.

What is it about?
Train to Gain is a service for employers that helps them to improve their productivity by developing the skills of their workforce.

What does it aim to achieve?
The TtG service provides employers with a skills diagnostic service and enables employers to access a wide range of skills support, including first Level 2 and 3 and basic skills qualifications, Higher-level Skills and leadership and management.

How will it do that?
This is achieved by engaging employers in skills activity and enabling their employees to receive a range of training and support, including first Level 2 and 3 and basic skills qualifications. The skills pledge, whereby organisations make a high-level commitment to train and develop their staff, can play an important role in engaging employers.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
• The number of employers engaged.
• Employer satisfaction within the skills brokerage service.
• The number of Level 2 and basic skills starts and achievements.
Train to Gain – the Skills Pledge

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• Employers and organisations make a whole-organisation commitment – from the top down – to train and develop their staff. This commitment will be delivered by TtG skills brokers – the National Employer Service and local regions.

• The skills pledge has five stages: a statement of intent; diagnostic; action planning; making the pledge (a certificate is issued); and fulfilment (delivering against the skills pledge commitment).

• The minimum skills pledge commitment is for basic skills and a first full Level 2 for all the workforce (this is the core pledge). Employers and/or organisations can pledge to train and develop their staff beyond the core, for example Level 3/4, management and development and Apprenticeships. Skills brokers will support employers in accessing public funding and linking to training providers, as appropriate.

• A number of other partners and stakeholders are also involved in driving up demand for increased numbers of employers and organisations to make the pledge. We are working closely with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), SSCs, Investors in People UK and others to ensure that strategies and actions are aligned, and to develop other routes for stakeholders and employers to make and engage with the skills pledge.

• We are also working with colleagues across the LSC to align the skills pledge with other national policies, for example Level 2 action planning, joint investment framework with strategic health authorities, local employer partnerships and the jobs pledge.

What is it about?

• To address UK skills performance, with an emphasis on UK plc.

• To drive and support LSC priorities and contribute to Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets.

• It is fundamental to implementing Lord Leitch’s report.

• If UK skills levels do not improve, the Government may mandate employer engagement at Level 2. A decision will be made in 2010.

What does it aim to achieve?

• To improve the UK’s productivity, competitiveness and share of the global market.

• To raise the profile of skills and lever greater employer engagement and investment in training and development, beyond the provision eligible for public funding.

• For employers, to deliver a more highly skilled workforce – a route to higher productivity, greater competitiveness and profitability.

• For learners and/or adults, to provide better skills and economically valuable qualifications – a route to better jobs, career progression, higher incomes and greater social mobility.

How will it do that?

• The skills pledge may be a driver and an entry point for TtG, or it may be an outcome of employer engagement through TtG or through any other employer engagement interface.

• We are also working with a range of partners and stakeholders who have a remit and/or role in the skills pledge to generate demand for it and to introduce skills pledge commitments.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

• The LSC’s role has been to respond to interest in the skills pledge, but it is now moving to a more proactive role. We do not currently have targets for the skills pledge; however, our role is still evolving and is to be clarified.

• Currently we are averaging 70 referrals to the skills pledge each week. Ministers would like to see between 500 and 1,000 referrals each week.

• Success measures are still being agreed, but will most probably include the outcomes of the Labour Force Survey and other analyses that take place to measure the increase in skills (particularly Level 2) within the UK.

• In the shorter term, success will be measured by the ability of the National Employer Service and the regions to respond to incoming referrals and to bring in skills pledge commitments, and by their ability to generate skills pledge commitments.

• In the medium and longer term, success will start to focus on the progress that employers are making towards fulfilling their skills pledge.
Train to Gain – Leadership and Management

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Leadership and management forms an integral part of the skills brokerage service. Skills brokers will consider leadership and management needs while carrying out the organisational needs analysis (ONA) of the business.
- A leadership and management training module for skills brokers has been developed to support them with this activity. Regions are encouraged to ensure that this module is delivered to all skills brokers.
- For businesses employing between 20 and 250 people, a grant of up to £1,000 may be available to support the managing director (or similar) in activities described in an individual training plan. This money should be match-funded (in cash) by the employer.

What is it about?

- Skills brokers should have the knowledge and expertise to identify leadership and management skills needs within businesses.
- Grants of up to £1,000 may be available for businesses employing between 20 and 250 people to support the managing director (or similar) in activities described in an individual training plan.

What does it aim to achieve?

- To equip a greater number of leaders and managers of small and medium-sized businesses with the expertise to identify skills needs in their business and deploy resources to optimum effect.
- By investing in the leadership and management needs of a business, the LSC will be preparing organisations for further development and effective deployment of the skills of their workforce, thus having a positive impact on productivity.

How will it do that?

Increased investment in the leadership and management development of key managers within a business can have a positive impact on the organisation’s performance. Evaluation of the LSC’s leadership and management programme showed that investment in these skills has an effect on a business in terms of improved working practices, improved business growth, improved quality standards and, importantly for TtG, increased investment in training and skills.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The leadership and management programme will be successful once the beneficiaries of the programme are identifying and investing in the skills needs of their workforce.

Success within the current academic year will be shown by:

- an increased number of skills broker referrals to the leadership and management programme;
- full utilisation of the leadership and management budget within each region.
Train to Gain – Level 3 Trials

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The trials have been extended to all English regions and will offer an additional product to TtG to allow employers an opportunity to train their staff to Level 3. The current government subsidy is set at 62.5 per cent (reducing to 50 per cent in the next academic year).
- The trials are available to all providers through the TtG procurement process and should be delivered in assess–train–assess methodology.
- The trials have recently been extended to include all employers (removing the previous cap of 250 employees) and are not now restricted to first Level 3s (this will be reviewed at the end of the current academic year), but they should be full Level 3s.
- The trials will be supported by sector-specific activity with SSCs to generate demand and interest in Level 3 through Level 3 sector action plans.

What is it about?

The idea is to increase take-up of Level 3 qualifications and encourage progression.

What does it aim to achieve?

- Increasing the investment of employers in Level 3 by offering training significantly tailored to their needs through TtG.
- Stimulating development of provider capacity to deliver flexible work-based Level 3 learning.

How will it do that?

- By providing subsidised training at Level 3.
- By working with skills brokers and employers to communicate the benefits of Level 3 to businesses – such as increases in productivity.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Increased number of Level 3 achievements resulting from the trials.
- Satisfaction rates for both employers and learners to be at the same level as those for the employer training pilots for Basic Skills and Level 2.
- Participation in the trial by employers who did not previously offer training towards a Level 3 qualification.
- The development of cost-effective methods of delivering flexible and responsive Level 3 learning, with providers demonstrating a willingness to offer these.
- Evidence that learners are progressing into higher-level jobs, employers are better able to fill vacancies for Level 3 type jobs and are deploying the skills of their workforce more effectively. Fewer skills gaps at Level 3 in the trial regions.
Train to Gain – Higher-level Skills

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• Higher-level Skills forms an integral part of the skills brokerage service. Skills brokers will consider Higher-level Skills needs while carrying out the ONA of the business. If Higher-level Skills are not considered within the ONA, a holistic, independent, impartial analysis of the skills needs within the business will not have been carried out.

• A Higher-level Skills training module and a Foundation Degree training module for skills brokers have been developed to support them with this activity. Regions are encouraged to ensure that these modules are delivered to all skills brokers.

• The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has funded Higher-level Skills pathfinders in the North East, North West and South West. In these regions, TtG teams and skills brokers will be working with the pathfinders to ensure that appropriate referral mechanisms exist between the pathfinders (who will be developing provision to meet employer needs) and the skills brokers. In regions outside the pathfinder areas, TtG teams are encouraged to work with each Higher Education Regional Association to ensure that links between higher education (HE) and TtG are established. The HEFCE/LSC ‘Ways of Working’ document should form the basis for these discussions and further development of protocol.

• At an organisation-wide level, the LSC is currently in the process of developing its vision and strategy in relation to Higher-level Skills. This activity is in response to the Leitch implementation plan and will take forward the HE strategy. It will consider all elements of Higher-level Skills, including the relationship with TtG, Apprenticeships, Foundation Degrees, leadership and management, specialist networks and academies (this list is not exhaustive).

What is it about?

Skills brokers will have the knowledge and expertise to identify Higher-level Skills needs within businesses (that is, above Level 4) and be able to refer to appropriate skills solutions. Ultimately, this ensures that Higher-level Skills needs are addressed within current LSC skills policy.

What does it aim to achieve?

A greater number of businesses will identify Higher-level Skills needs and will be effectively signposted to appropriate skills solutions. By identifying the Higher-level Skills needs of a business, the LSC will be preparing businesses for future skills needs, and will have a positive impact on productivity and thus competitiveness (as described in Lord Leitch’s report).

How will it do that?

Skills brokers will identify where there is a need for improved Higher-level Skills within businesses. The aim is also to identify future skills needs, as outlined in Lord Leitch’s report.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

• Success within the current academic year means an increased number of skills broker referrals to HE.

• In the longer term, the ambitions in the Leitch implementation plan are realised.

Adult Apprenticeships, see Young People – Apprenticeships: Young People and Adults – an Overview, page 7
National Employer Service

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The LSC’s National Employer Service (NES) works directly with large employers on behalf of the whole LSC.
- The LSC aims to engage, through NES, 50 per cent of the 600 employers who employ more than 5,000 people in the UK.
- Regions are asked to direct any enquiries from large employers – for example, on the skills pledge, Apprenticeships or TtG – to NES.

What is it about?
The LSC wants to engage these large employers as champions and deliverers of the ambitions in Lord Leitch’s report among their own workforces and within their supply chains.

What does it aim to achieve?

- Very large numbers of successful learners: because some of these employers have more than 100,000 employees or, as customers, can influence the policies of their suppliers, relatively few high-performing contracts will be able to deliver very large numbers of Apprenticeships and Level 2s.
- Employer engagement and ownership: the contracts only deliver very large numbers if employers take full ownership of their skills plan, embedding national standards into their in-house training programmes and measuring the benefits to their business.
- Influence: large employers are extremely influential in shaping government policy and perceptions of the LSC, and we need them to experience good service and support.

How will it do that?

- The NES’s relationship with these employers is generated by the skills pledge – once committed to it, they need advice on how to fulfil their commitment.
- The NES offers direct LSC funding contracts where there is a minimum of 200 learners, rising to 10 per cent of the workforce over three years. Contracts cover all LSC programmes, learner eligibility is the same as in the regions and employers holding funding contracts are required to demonstrate capability and are subject to audit and Ofsted inspection.
- The NES provides employers with an extensive practitioner development programme and advice service, to build the expertise and confidence of employers to embed national standards and get what they want from the post-16 education system.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- Targeted large employers make the skills pledge and invest more in developing the skills of their workforce in line with national standards.
- Very large numbers of learners of all ages achieve national qualifications to a minimum Level 2.
- Large employers speak up for the LSC and the skills system, enhancing the LSC’s reputation.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

New Standard for Employer Responsiveness and Vocational Excellence

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- There is a new SSC/LSC voluntary quality standard.
- The New Standard replaces the Centre of Vocational Excellence programme.
- It is open to all providers, who should apply via the New Standard website.
- It links to the employer responsiveness element of the Framework for Excellence.

What is it about?

It seeks to improve the responsiveness of providers to employers.

What does it aim to achieve?

- To ensure that employers can find training providers focused on delivering high-quality, responsive provision that meets their needs.
- To equip providers with a development tool for improvement in this area.

How will it do that?

- It uses an independent quality assurance process.
- It is backed by employers and employer representative bodies and is aligned to SSC standards.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- The policy was standard tested in spring 2007.
- It has been available since 18 June 2007.
- The New Standard will increase employers’ confidence and investment in training.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• National skills academies (NSAs) will, in the main, deliver LSC-funded provision through LSC-approved providers, such as Apprenticeships and TtG.

• Providers will need to be New Standard accredited or be working towards accreditation.

• Providers will negotiate LSC contracts for NSA provision within overall LSC allocation and normal business cycle processes.

• Providers delivering NSA-specific provision will become NSA sites for the sector.

What is it about?

By leading and investing in NSAs, the programme offers employers the opportunity to exercise direct influence over both the content and the delivery of skills training for their sector.

What does it aim to achieve?

• To ensure that employers can rely on a high-quality external training system in England, should they wish to use it, where providers are focused on delivering high-quality, responsive provision that meets the needs of employers and individual learners.

• To provide opportunities for employers to invest in NSAs, to create leading, world-class provision in each sector of the economy.

How will it do that?

• By creating specialist networks with more than 230 providers (FE/work-based learning), specialist schools and universities.

• By capacity building more than 300 staff to deliver the highest standards of industry training within the first three years of operation.

• By receiving commitments from more than 120 major employers.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

• Four NSAs have had business plans approved: Construction, Manufacturing, Financial Services, and Food and Drink Manufacturing.

• Four NSA business plans are currently being assessed: Creative and Cultural, Hospitality, Nuclear and Process Industries.

• Four proposed NSAs are developing business plans: SkillsActive, SkillsSmart Retail, Pro-Skills and Newham College + SkillsFast.

• A network of 12 NSAs should be established by 2008 in key major sectors.

• Twelve specialist networks should be created within each academy by 2009 to deliver the key products and services of the academy and become ‘quality’ providers within a national region or local setting.

• Employers must invest financially in NSAs, leading and driving high-quality, responsive and relevant training to the sector.
Supply Side –
Strategy
Commissioning Research and Evaluation

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
Research and evaluation will underpin decisions at all levels across the organisation. It will be commissioned through the new framework agreement, which will be managed by the national research and evaluation team. For consistency, all areas, including the evaluation of Train to Gain (TtG), will be carried out as part of national evaluation, not in a separate manner, and all research and evaluation work will be published and made available.

What is it about?
We will use our research and evaluation to underpin decisions at all levels across the organisation:
• in policy direction and implementation;
• in commissioning, planning and investment decisions locally and regionally; and
• in reviewing performance and impact of policies.
And we will further develop our evaluation to measure the impact of our policies on wider social and economic goals.

What does it aim to achieve?
It is critical that the LSC commissions research in a joined-up and strategic way. This means that policy can be developed with all of the necessary knowledge of the current environment to make sure that the decisions made are the correct ones. All research and evaluation commissioned by the LSC must fit with its strategic goals. It also means we can secure best value for money.

It is important that all of our evaluations of policies are carried out in a way that is seen as accurate and transparent, in order to ensure the credibility of the LSC. It is also crucial that evaluations continue to develop to include more detail on the overall impact and/or benefit of the policy being evaluated.

How will it do that?
The LSC is near to completing the re-tendering of the preferred suppliers list through a new framework agreement. Once the framework is in place, the intention is that all research and evaluation will be procured through it. The research and evaluation team will manage the process to ensure that all research and evaluation is carried out consistently and that it will meet our corporate aims. The national team will lead on this for the LSC National Office, and regional research managers will lead for local LSCs.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
Our research and evaluation is seen as robust and leading the sector. Research and evaluation can clearly articulate the impact and benefits of our work.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The planning approach will support the establishment of a demand-led system, the delivery of targets and priorities, and our new relationship with colleges and providers.

LSC plans
This year’s Statement of Priorities 2008/09 sets out our national targets, investment priorities and planning approach. Local area statements of need will replace local annual plans. These statements will set out a brief description of the key actions and challenges for local areas and feed into regional commissioning plans that will set out what the LSC will secure with public funding and how much of this we will negotiate or tender for.

14–19
The LSC will not have any independent 14–19 plans. We will agree joint plans with local authorities as a key element of children and young people’s plans.

Providers
The focus is on relationships, not plans. From 2008/09 we will no longer agree development plans with providers. A clear line of sight must be maintained between national priorities and targets and providers’ delivery. A differentiated approach is to be applied, based on performance; for example, a light touch for high-performing providers.

What is it about?
The planning framework provides the mechanism for the LSC to secure provision that will deliver our targets and meet our priorities, as set out in this year’s Statement of Priorities 2008/09 and regional commissioning plans.

What does it aim to achieve?
Regional commissioning plans, published in December 2007, will set out the provision the LSC wants to secure for the following academic year. On the basis of the plans, local teams will commission provision either through negotiation and dialogue with existing providers, or through an open and competitive tendering process, in which existing and new providers can secure funding for delivery. By May 2008 the LSC will have agreed with providers the provision that is to be delivered in 2008/09.

How will it do that?
• Dialogue with providers should be strategic, complex and wide-ranging, underpinned by a light-touch process.
• Quality underpins our planning approach.
• The planning process will be supported by the planning and modelling system, which will record providers’ planned delivery for the next academic year.
• We will agree a summary statement of activity with each provider for provision secured through both a negotiated and a tendered route. The summary statement of activity combines each provider’s key delivery volumes and associated funding into a simple statement. This statement will form the basis of our funding agreements with providers.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
Through our planning process, the LSC will:
• ensure that there is breadth, depth and quality of provision in place for learners and employers to access;
• ensure that supply meets demand and need; and
• encourage the best colleges and providers to flourish.
Strategic Performance

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

• A systematic approach to monitoring performance through the regional and national review process held twice a year informs how well we are delivering against targets and priorities and shows where we are succeeding and where we need to do more.

• Delivering Learning and Skills: National Progress Report 2007 sets out the impact of our investment. This complements Better skills, Better jobs, Better lives: The LSC’s Annual Report and Accounts for 2006–07, which provides budgetary details. Together, they provide important information that helps to shape this year’s Statement of Priorities 2008/09.

• The 2007 regional progress reports provide a detailed regional analysis (all drawing on the same core key data sources) and provide a consistent vehicle for engaging with regional partners on emerging issues, to help shape and inform regional commissioning plans.

• The policy builds on the approach for 2006/07. The key policy change is that we have added a regional dimension to the Progress Report, to ensure a consistent evidence base across the LSC.

• In 2007/08, we will combine the autumn regional reviews with regional plan presentations to provide the Chief Executive with a holistic view of current performance and planned activity. These briefings will take place during January and February 2008.

What is it about?

The progress reports provide the evidence base for informing future LSC investment decisions, at both national and regional level, that will deliver our targets and meet our priorities, as set out in this year’s Statement of Priorities 2008/09 and the forthcoming regional commissioning plans.

Regional and national reviews are the process by which regional and national directors are held to account by the Chief Executive for performance against plans and targets.

What does it aim to achieve?

• The progress reports offer clear, consistent and full articulation of performance, in terms of volumes of learners, types and levels of qualifications, contextualised by an analysis of the changing picture of the labour market and workforce.

• This will establish a consistent evidence base for each region.

• Reviews with regional directors and national directors are used to gain a comprehensive understanding of performance and strategically review issues on the ground. This provides a critical focus for business improvement.

How will it do that?

• The evidence of our performance, as set out in the progress report, will provide a vehicle for discussion and engagement with key stakeholders, so that they are able to understand the impact of our investment in preceding years and/or investment decisions might be changed to improve the performance of the system.

• Formal reviews are held every six months with regional and national directors. The Chief Executive challenges areas where performance can be improved. In preparing for these reviews, regional directors will conduct reviews of the local areas in their region.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

• Development and policy change are based on clear evidence.

• Commissioning decisions set out in regional commissioning plans are founded on clear evidence.

• Regional and local parties are engaged in a dialogue about issues for their area.
Reorganisation or Mergers of Further Education Corporations

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The current policy and procedure relating to the reorganisation of further education (FE) corporations will change when the provisions of the Further Education and Training Bill are implemented.

- The Bill will transfer the powers to establish and dissolve FE corporations (under sections 16 and 27 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992) from the Secretary of State to the LSC. Once the relevant provisions of the Bill come into force, the guidance on mergers will be rewritten to reflect the transfer of powers and to update the criteria for assessing merger proposals.

- To ensure a smooth transition for existing planned merger activity, there will be discussion with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) about the timing of the commencement of the provision relating to the reorganisation of FE corporations. Effectively, that means that any merger proposals that are already in development prior to the transfer of powers can continue and be agreed under the new arrangements; that is, the decision will be taken by the LSC. This arrangement prevents any delay to the publication of new proposals during the transitional period.

- The Bill is now expected to return to the House of Commons for consideration in October 2007. If the Bill subsequently receives Royal Assent, there will be a minimum of two months before the relevant sections may be brought into force by way of commencement orders. This means that the current arrangements are likely to remain in force for the remainder of 2007.

- In type A merger situations, where the existing corporations are dissolved following the establishment of the new corporation, there is normally a gap (which could be up to six months) as the new corporation has to be established in advance and its governing body must first meet and agree to accept the liabilities of the dissolving corporation. It is therefore very important that careful consideration is given to any proposal that requires orders to be laid in the next few months. We must ensure that administration of these proposals is closely managed during this period.

What does it aim to achieve?

The policy exists to:

- ensure that the LSC meets its responsibilities in respect of the establishment and dissolution of FE corporations;
- ensure that the pattern of providers and delivery structures is monitored; and
- assess if the current configuration is meeting the needs of learners and employers.

How will it do that?

The LSC will monitor activity around mergers.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Successful mergers should be carried out swiftly, efficiently and consistently, and the overall pattern of merger and new models activity be kept under regular review.

What is it about?

The processes and procedures for the establishment and dissolution of FE corporations, and ongoing monitoring of merger activity.
Learning and Skills: Policy Summaries 2008/09

(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Third Sector Engagement

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The Government sees the third sector as critical to the transformation of public services, including learning and skills. It is made up of charities, social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives, as well as the traditional voluntary and community organisations. The LSC has a policy called ‘Working Together’, published in May 2004, which outlines the specifics of our commitment to the sector, and an advisory group made up of third sector providers who advise the LSC National Council on the implementation of the strategy. The LSC web page is regularly updated to provide a current overview of the work with the sector.

What is it about?
The reason we consider the third sector as a specific provider group is that we know that this sector is capable of reaching groups of learners that other FE providers find difficult to reach. We also know that this group has had problems with easy access to our funding in the recent past. In order for us to reach some of our targets, we need to find better ways of working with this sector.

What does it aim to achieve?
We aim to ensure that we reach new learners we otherwise would not reach through the mainstream system by using third sector providers.

How will it do that?
We have to ensure that our commissioning and procurement system is open to the third sector. Additionally, we will listen to the voice of the sector in identifying the methods of delivery that work best for these learners.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
• We aim to see an increase in contracts with the sector, as well as its involvement in policy formation.
• We aim to find a way of consulting with the third sector publicly as an integrated part of our business cycle process.
Skills Campaign – Integrated Marketing and Communications

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The skills campaign is an integrated 3–5-year communications plan that will evolve over time.

What is it about?
It is about improving the attitudes and aspirations of employers and individuals to learning by encouraging a greater level of investment in learning and skills.

What does it aim to achieve?
Skills campaign objectives include:
• making learning and skills more desirable;
• improving access to opportunities;
• delivering strong, relevant, tested and consistent messages;
• raising the profile and reputation of FE and the FE delivery network; and
• encouraging people and employers to contribute more towards their learning experiences, including, for some, financial investment.

How will it do that?
Campaigns across the LSC and the learning and skills sector will be aligned, in terms both of strategy and messaging.

Strategy alignment
The LSC is co-operating with partner organisations, such as learrndirect, to ensure that the communications strategy, media activity and response-handling procedures are synchronised for maximum effectiveness.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
Good progress has been made in addressing the alignment of marketing and communications across partners in learning and skills. Campaigns have been collated and then mapped across the respective audiences, messages, channels and spend for all post-16 partners. Co-ordinating this work across partners has allowed us to see the ‘total picture’ of marketing and communications across the sector in advance of campaigns taking place.

While it is recognised that there is more to be done to complete the picture, this information is invaluable for strategic planning across marketing and communications and has already resulted in efficiencies in procurement and messages.

The skills campaign first-year targets (based on a pre-launch tracking study by Millward Brown, a highly respected international research organisation) will measure increases in ‘spontaneous awareness’ and ‘intention to participate’ among targeted audiences, as shown in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3: Projected levels of ‘spontaneous awareness’ for targeted audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Current level (May 2007)</th>
<th>Projected target (June 2008)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All adults</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Level 2</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average awareness level across July 2007 to June 2008

Table 4: Projected levels of ‘intention to participate’ in learning for targeted audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Current level (May 2007)</th>
<th>Projected target (June 2008)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All adults</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Level 2</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average awareness level across July 2007 to June 2008

Targets for subsequent phases and years will be set based on first-year findings.
Establishment of Nine Regional Councils

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

This is a new policy. However, it will need to be reviewed in the light of the machinery of government changes. Specifically, we need to review our membership ‘ambitions’ and the remit of the regional council. This thinking is taking place now, in conjunction with DIUS and with the current regional chairs and regional directors.

The policy is about streamlining the LSC’s governance arrangements and aligning them with the recent changes to the executive structures. It is also about strengthening our regional working, and increasing local flexibility in the way we engage with stakeholders. This means replacing the current 47 local LSCs with nine regional councils. This has required a change in the law and the Further Education and Training Act 2007 has now been passed following delays. These delays have meant that we have been unable to start the recruitment process for the new regional councils. The Act now empowers us to commence this process and it is likely that the advertising for members will begin in late January 2008, with a view to having the nine regional councils established by June 2008.

What is it about?

The nine regional councils are intended to provide leadership to the LSC, the FE system and its partners for the benefit of learners and employers. They are intended to be employer-led and be composed of ‘key influencers’ within the region from key sectors such as FE, local government, regional development agencies and trade unions. They will strengthen our relationships with key partners regionally, and provide leadership to local partners. They will provide challenge and support to the regional directors and their teams, and are accountable to the LSC’s National Council.

What does it aim to achieve?

Key aims are that the regional councils will enhance the LSC’s reputation and credibility across the nine geographical regions. Revised governance arrangements will enable greater clarity on their remit and accountability for improved results.

How will it do that?

The councils will forge strong and effective partnerships. They will challenge and support the regional directors and their teams. They will be involved in monitoring the delivery of objectives, agreeing key strategic plans and reviewing their effectiveness, including delivery of learning for 14–19, Apprenticeships and TtG. They will make decisions relating to capital and competitions, and help to shape a system that is demand led.

To note

In London, the regional council’s remit will not include adult skills, due to the existence of the London Skills and Employment Board, chaired by the Mayor of London.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Success criteria include:

- strong employer-led regional councils;
- greater LSC influence and leadership;
- enhanced LSC reputation and credibility; and
- improvement in results.
Supply Side – Quality
(NEW)

Framework for Excellence

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
This is a new quality and performance framework that will apply to colleges and work-based learning providers from summer 2008, and to all providers from summer 2009. Area teams will use it as the basis for their single conversation with providers. In particular, the framework scores will inform funding, planning and commissioning decisions, and will provide the trigger for intervention. It is being piloted by 100 providers in 2007/08. It will converge with the Common Inspection Framework to provide a single framework for the FE system.

What is it about?
The Framework for Excellence (FfE) is a central feature of the FE White Paper, supporting its overall themes, including economic mission, employability, and learner and employer choice. It aligns with the Further Education and Training Bill 2006, with legislation covering the 14–19 phase and the Every Child Matters agenda. In view of the existing performance management, accountability and improvement arrangements for schools, FfE will not apply to school sixth forms. However, assessment of performance and quality of each school sixth form and other post-16 institutions should be ensured, as far as possible. The LSC is currently working with DIUS and local authorities to develop accountability arrangements for school sixth forms, focused on a small set of consistent data.

The implications of recent changes in the machinery of government are being explored. However, it is clear that, irrespective of such changes, learners and employers will need information to inform choice; providers will need information to manage and improve their businesses; and information will be required to commission provision and, if necessary, intervene to maintain standards. The FfE has been designed to provide this information. The ‘provider responsiveness to employers’ element of FfE is intimately linked to the New Standard. This framework will be an element in performance management, and improvement of the FE system will be a key step towards a self-regulating sector.

What does it aim to achieve?
It will:
• inform choices made by learners and employers and increase accountability to them;
• support provider management and improvement; and
• inform planning, funding and commissioning decisions by public bodies.

How will it do that?
Learners and employers will have access to the variety of information they need, from overall performance ratings to detailed information at course, programme and employment sector levels. The FfE will increase accountability to learners and employers by making their feedback central to one of its three dimensions. It will support provider management and improvement because:

• it is based on what outstanding providers already do;
• it will provide clear and unambiguous standards of excellence; and
• it will enable colleges and providers to compare their own performance with robust, validated benchmarks for the sector.

The FfE will provide robust and holistic information on quality and performance to support decisions by public authorities. At a system level, it will rationalise and simplify quality and performance frameworks in the incorporated FE system.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The main criterion is to achieve roll-out of the FfE on time.
Identifying and Managing Underperformance

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
Identifying and Managing Underperformance sets out:

• how underperformance is identified;
• what actions the LSC should take as a result; and
• the level of support that will be given to colleges and providers.

This includes our activity in relation to Notices to Improve applying to the 2008/09 academic year.

What is it about?

• Quality assurance.
• Quality improvement.
• Performance in relation to commissioning provision.

What does it aim to achieve?
The policy seeks to outline the LSC’s overall approach to identifying and managing underperformance, and to eliminate inadequate provision from the FE system.

How will it do that?

It outlines arrangements for and applies to the 2007/08 commissioning discussions and provision in 2008/09 and:

• introduces more formal underperformance management in relation to the financial health of colleges (see also Supply Side – Finance, Financial Intervention Policy, page 90) (Notices to Improve);
• introduces new minimum levels to provision already in scope, and also to new provision;
• combines LSC activity and policy on post-inspection activity into a single source; and
• strengthens the link between health and safety and the quality agenda.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The activity will be judged against the target of eliminating inadequate and unsatisfactory provision across the FE system by 2008. The LSC also seeks to have a major impact on those organisations where performance was just satisfactory or not showing any improvement.
(NEW)

Intervention

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The policy is part of the LSC’s overarching approach to managing underperformance and eliminating inadequate provision. The policy sets out the actions that may happen at a number of stages when underperformance is identified and includes guidance as to how powers of intervention will be exercised.

What is it about?
Through the production of an intervention policy statement, the LSC aims to ensure that there is a clear and transparent process for managing the performance of the FE system and improving the quality of the learning it provides.

What does it aim to achieve?
A shared understanding of the standards of provision expected in the FE system, and the actions that will be taken to address provision that fails to meet those standards. The policy is a public statement of how the LSC will operate, in practice and process, any legal powers it has received under the FE and Training Act 2007.

How will it do that?
The intervention powers aim to ensure that the LSC is appropriately empowered to deliver the Government’s commitment to eliminate inadequate provision and to have an impact on those organisations where performance is just satisfactory or not showing improvement.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
Implementation of the intervention policy will contribute to the target to eliminate inadequate provision throughout the FE system. The policy will be widely communicated and will require consultation.
Personalisation – Learner Voice

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- Personalisation must be embedded within existing systems and not be a bolt-on, with more focus on self-assessment and change to the culture of providers. It should ensure links with broader developments, for example regarding both learners and employers as customers, so ‘customer orientation’ is a strong driver for quality improvement.

- There will be an improved focus on learner responsiveness through inspection within FfE. For providers, effective learner involvement activity can support delivery of the five Every Child Matters outcomes, which are incorporated into the Common Inspection Framework.

- The LSC will be required to check that all providers have a learner involvement strategy in place from September 2007.

What is it about?

There is a requirement to support providers to give every learner an experience that really meets their needs – getting them on the right course or programme; making sure that teaching on the course responds to their needs; and supporting them in overcoming any barriers to successful completion, where appropriate building on the power of new technology and e-learning to provide personalised approaches.

What does it aim to achieve?

The policy aims to achieve:

- a real sense of co-production – the learner as an active partner;
- not individualisation, but learning in the social context;
- learner voice, including collective learner voice;
- learners supported to choose the right course – assessment of need and ability, consideration of ambitions and long-term goals, impartial information, advice and guidance services;
- teaching and learning carefully tailored to individuals’ needs – appropriate use of e-learning, initial and formative assessment, identification of and intervention to address problems/barriers;
- pastoral support, particularly at key points of transition and moves to different institutions, links to learning to improve achievement, broadening horizons;
- tailored support for learners with complex needs, care leavers and so on; and
- progression.

How will it do that?

The policy will be an integral part of:

- the development of pastoral support;
- national learner panels;
- Framework for Excellence;
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework;
- information and guidance;
- the development of materials to support the expert learner;
- FE governing bodies, which must include at least two learner governors; and
- LSC national and regional councils, which must include a learner representative.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

- All providers should have a learner involvement strategy.
- Increased success rates at local and national level.
- Increased learner satisfaction.
- Increased progression into further skills and sustained employment.
- Employer recognition of increased skills.
- Increased participation by under-represented groups.
Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

The White Paper, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances, set out the Government’s commitment to have a well-qualified and professional workforce across colleges and LSC-funded providers. Major reforms came into force on 1 September 2007, including:

- new initial teacher training (ITT) pathways and qualifications leading to associate teacher, learning and skills (ATLS) status and qualified teacher, learning and skills (QTLS) status (including specialist routes for Skills for Life);
- a requirement for all teachers, tutors, trainers and lecturers to fulfil at least 30 hours of continuing professional development each year, with reduced amounts for part-time teachers;
- a requirement for all teachers, trainers, tutors and lecturers to be registered with the Institute for Learning, their professional body; and
- a new leadership qualification (principals' qualifying programme) for all new college principals.

The LSC at a local level will need to be aware of colleges' and providers' progress towards achieving the reforms listed above. Evidence would be provided by inspection and Lifelong Learning UK's (LLUK's) analysis of staff individualised record returns. The LSC would not expect to check whether staff were registered or qualified.

What is it about?

Equipping our Teachers for the Future (published by DfES in 2004) set out proposals to address weaknesses in ITT identified by Ofsted in 2003. These regulations take forward reforms to professional qualifications for FE teachers outlined in that document and address commitments made to professionalise the FE workforce in the FE White Paper, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances.

Key changes from these regulations include:

- the introduction of new qualifications for FE teachers, based on new professional teaching standards;
- the introduction of an initial award that confers a licence to practice for all teachers, as well as certificate and Diploma qualifications for teachers in associate and full teaching roles;
- that the teacher’s responsibilities determine which level of qualification is required (that is, for a full or associate teaching role), not the number of hours to be taught;
- the introduction of professional status (QTLS and ATLS), with professional formation as a condition of gaining this; and
- a revised time limit of five years to gain QTLS or ATLS, to allow all those in the sector, including part-time teachers, sufficient time to qualify.

What does it aim to achieve?

These reforms are part of the drive to further professionalise the FE workforce. The Government is committed to having a fully qualified workforce and expects each college or provider to ensure that all their teaching and training staff achieve, or are working towards, qualifications by no later than 2009/10.

How will it do that?

Final publication of the regulations will be through Parliament. The Department for Innovation, Universities and Schools will disseminate further information on regulations via LLUK and other channels of communication.

As announced in Equipping Our Teachers for the Future, an additional £30 million is being made available to all LSC-funded providers in 2007–08, to strengthen the ITT support infrastructure around mentoring, assessment and teaching observation.

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills is currently working with the LSC to finalise arrangements for paying this money. We expect the funds to reach the 1,500 or so colleges and providers across the sector by the end of October. The amount of additional ITT funding made available will be related to a college’s overall LSC funding. The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) will provide advice on the areas where the money should potentially be deployed, drawing on lessons learned and good practice from the ITT pilots.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Improved ITT is an essential step in realising our ambitions for professionalising the FE workforce, in anticipation of meeting both the 14–19 and future skills challenges outlined in Lord Leitch's report and the recently published World Class Skills (July 2007).
Single Equality Scheme

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The single equality scheme (SES) describes how the LSC will:

- embed equality and diversity within all aspects of our work and deliver our statutory requirements; it is effective until April 2010;
- develop equality and diversity impact measures (EDIMs). These are a key way in which providers and the LSC will demonstrate how we are delivering successes that are representative of the diversity of the communities we serve. Through normal dialogue as part of the business cycle, partnership teams should support providers to set EDIMs which contribute to national priorities, as well as EDIMs in the context of their own learners and communities;
- assess all policies for their impact on equality. Where a policy is specific to a region or area, equality impact assessments should be led by that region or partnership team. Since most policies are developed nationally, most equality impact assessments will be led nationally, with active involvement from regional and area partnership staff to identify regional and area dimensions to the application of a national policy;
- encourage providers to fulfil their legal obligations, and develop EDIMs and plans that contribute to the achievement of our targets.

What is it about?
The objectives of the scheme are aligned with our national priorities, so that it will operate strategically and in the mainstream of our work. The new scheme links closely into the LSC's agenda for change programme, which aims to positively transform the learning and skills system in England. The scheme brings together the requirements placed on the LSC as a public body to meet key equality legislation and states how we intend to meet these requirements, both as an organisation and within the education sector.

What does it aim to achieve?
The aims of the SES are to:

- demonstrate unequivocally our commitment to promoting equality and diversity, showing how this commitment is clearly related to our strategic priorities and targets, and incorporated into our business cycle;
- make the best use of our systems to ensure that they integrate action for equality and diversity into all aspects of our work and define lines of accountability;
- make clear what we require from those we work with in this area and avoid duplication or confusion; and
- demonstrate how we intend to fulfil statutory requirements to actual and potential learners, employees, providers and other stakeholders.

How will it do that?
Our strategy is designed to place equality and diversity at the heart of what we do, so that we develop a system in which all can benefit and no one is excluded. The scheme includes a timetable of equality and diversity action aligned to our business cycle. It also includes a comprehensive action plan, which specifies how each action responds to our legal duties. Additionally, regions are producing their own plans to take the SES forward.

The scheme clearly outlines responsibilities and accountabilities at national and regional levels. Harnessing the talents of all employees will equip us to work with learners, employers, providers and other stakeholders to promote equality and diversity. Every member of the LSC's staff will have a contribution to make to the objectives of the scheme. National directors are responsible for each section of the action plan, and our regional directors will share these responsibilities, ensuring commitment and accountability at the most senior levels.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
Success is:

- the delivery of learner successes that contribute to our targets and organisational priorities and are representative of the diversity of the communities we serve;
- the use of robust data disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, learning difficulties and/or disabilities and age, to inform policy and planning;
- all existing and new LSC policies to be equality impact-assessed by 2009; and
- a provider base that gives priority to equality and diversity.

The policy is new, and incorporates the goals of our equality and diversity strategy 2004–07, as well as new legislative requirements for disability, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and religion and belief. It was published in April 2007 and is effective until 2010.
Strategy for Sustainable Development

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- From Here to Sustainability: The Learning and Skills Council’s Strategy for Sustainable Development was published in 2005. It commits the LSC to action in four key areas: positioning the sector; buildings and estates; curriculum; and community. Progress is to be reviewed in 2007 and in 2010.

- The momentum behind sustainable development has grown steadily since 2005. Latest developments include a Climate Change Bill in the Government’s draft legislative programme and a commitment in the Leitch implementation plan to place sustainable development at the heart of skills provision.

- Colleagues should be aware of the LSC’s strategy and the contribution the FE system can make to local and regional sustainable development, climate change strategies and action plans. Many providers are already using our strategy as a framework for their own approach to sustainable development.

What is it about?

Sustainable development is an approach to life and work that will allow everyone to have a good quality of life – environmentally, socially and economically – without ruining the capacity for future generations to have the same. In a day-to-day sense, it means a change of culture and behaviour by individuals and organisations.

What does it aim to achieve?

The strategy aims to:

- change how we think and behave as an organisation so that we become an example of good practice for sustainable development;
- maximise the contribution the FE system can make to sustainable development through supporting providers to change, and through working with national, regional and local partners.

How will it do that?

Our sustainable development action plan for 2007/08 sets out five key actions to support the delivery of the strategy.

1. Undertake an internal survey of sustainable development activity within the LSC and develop a capacity-building programme for LSC staff.

2. Develop a set of indicators for the LSC that will enable us to demonstrate progress in moving towards being an exemplar organisation for sustainable development.

3. Work with the FE system to facilitate the sharing of good practice.

4. Contribute to the development of sustainable communities and a sustainable economy through working with local authorities and regional development agencies to align strategic plans and actions.

5. Work with stakeholders to support and challenge progress towards the milestones for 2007 and 2010.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Key milestones for 2010 are:

- to embed sustainable development skills in education and training programmes, so that all learners are able to acquire these skills;
- to produce plans and policies that integrate the principles of sustainable development in all areas of work;
- to identify and train appropriate and sufficient champions for sustainable development;
- to understand and manage the risks and opportunities of supporting sustainable development; and
- to monitor and report on the contribution of the FE system to sustainable development.
Technology for Learning

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

Technology for learning (formerly Provider for the Future) is the LSC’s contribution to the delivery of the Government’s e-Strategy, ‘Harnessing Technology: Transforming learning and children’s services’.

Digital technologies have already brought about massive changes in human capabilities. The LSC provider network must keep pace with these changes, otherwise the provision of learning and skills may be perceived as out of date, irrelevant, and ultimately unattractive and de-motivating for learners and employers who live and work in a digitally enabled world.

The use of technology is an integral part of the successful implementation of many LSC and government strategies, programmes and policies. The effective and appropriate use of digital technology has:

- made a significant impact on the rates of engagement, recruitment, retention and achievement of learners;
- contributed to the development of flexible, accessible and available learning opportunities that are more attractive for learners and employers;
- allowed practitioners more productive time with learners;
- reduced the costs of the administration and assessment of learning;
- ensured a more consistent quality approach to the delivery of learning;
- contributed to the improved image and reputation of the sector to learners and employers; and
- allowed the personalisation agenda effectively to be taken forward.

To ensure that these and other positive benefits are realised by all of the sector, this policy and programme of funding will continue to ensure the availability of independent expertise, effective practice, benchmarking tools and capital to assist in the purchase, development and innovative application of technology in the learning and skills environment.

What is it about?

The policy objective is to ensure that the LSC provider network makes innovative and appropriate use of technology to meet the needs of all learners and practitioners. While the implementation of policy continues to have a positive impact on the provider base, it is estimated that, at the present time, only 20 per cent of publicly funded providers can confidently be said to fit into this category.

What does it aim to achieve?

This policy will support providers by offering a clear vision of how the existing and future uses of technology in the delivery of teaching and learning can improve efficiency savings, retention, achievement, progression and the overall learner experience. The policy will also align with the LSC’s funding methodology in order to avoid creating barriers to the effective application of learning technologies.

How will it do that?

The policy sets out the benefits of investing in the use of technology and is underpinned by a national capital and revenue budget to support an agreed programme of activity that in 2008/09 will continue to include, but not be limited to:

- a range of support services through the Joint Information Systems Committee (for example, access to the JANET education research network, regional support centres and other advisory services);
- the provision of an online resource that will store specific guidance documents and signpost providers to examples of effective practice and other support services; and
- the dissemination of effective practice in the use of technology, including the development of regional showcases and resources.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Since 2001 the LSC has invested £300 million on infrastructure, materials and workforce development. According to the latest research, 20 per cent of the sector has effectively embedded the use of technology across their learning, teaching and business processes. Although 60 per cent of providers are enthusiastic about embedding technology, they still need further support.

By 2010/11 the policy aims to have:

- helped at least 80 per cent of all LSC providers to firmly embed the use of technology; and
- demonstrated that the services and capital investment funded by the LSC has had a significant impact both on the achievement of this outcome and in the retention, achievement and progression of learners.

This policy continues to evolve, in order to keep pace with the developments in the application of technology in learning and skills provision. The latest iteration was shared for consultation throughout October 2007 and will be published in November.
Supply Side – Funding
Demand-led Funding

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

- The new funding arrangements for 2008/09 will include separate funding models for 16–18 provision, 19+ adult learner-responsive provision and employer-responsive provision, as well as a new national funding formula. The 16–18 model will feature strategic commissioning with no reconciliation; 16–18 Apprenticeships will be planned and budgeted through this model, but funding will be calculated using the employer-responsive model.

- The 19+ adult learner-responsive model will feature strategic commissioning with mid- and end-year reconciliation. The employer-responsive model will encompass TtG (Skills for Life, full Levels 2, 3 and above, and employer-based national vocational qualifications currently funded through the FE funding system) and Apprenticeships. Funding earned by providers will be based on actual delivery, with monthly payment in arrears.

- The new funding formula will be based on standard learner numbers, a national funding rate, a provider factor and additional learning support. The provider factor will be calculated individually for each school, college and provider, and will reflect the relative costs of delivery as well as quality. As indicated in the demand-led consultation, it will include elements for average programme weighting, disadvantage, area costs and success rates.

What is it about?

While there have been significant improvements in skills attainment, the UK still has skills deficits. Lord Leitch’s report makes eight recommendations, the chief of which builds on the commitments in the White Paper, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances, to move to a system that is demand led. The direction and speed of travel towards a demand-led system were confirmed by the Government in its response to Lord Leitch’s report, World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England (July 2007).

What does it aim to achieve?

The aim of this policy is to support the move to an FE system that is demand led. It must be designed and delivered to meet the needs of the customers, individuals and employers, and supply only high-quality provision to increase productivity and employability.

How will it do that?

The proposed reforms will include funding principles that place the learner and employer at the centre of the system, give them greater purchasing power, and provide opportunities for new and existing providers of high-quality provision. In 2008/09, the LSC will implement three new funding models designed to support this wider reform programme and to take forward the commitments in the FE White Paper.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

A report on the outcomes of the demand-led consultation has been published. Ministerial approval to proceed with implementing the new funding models in 2008/09 has now been given. Good progress is being made to resolve the remaining outstanding issues relating to the implementation of the new demand-led funding models.

In future, we will develop our IT systems to support the new funding models, run further training events for regional colleagues on the new funding models, and publish detailed descriptions of funding models and funding guidance. We are aiming for the successful implementation of all three funding models in 2008/09.
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

The new European Social Fund (ESF) programme 2007–2013 has begun, and the LSC expects to begin delivery of its part in early 2008. The current ESF programme is still running, but delivery should end by July 2008. The LSC procurement has started for the new programme in advance of 2008/09 in order to meet EU critical expenditure dates, but the rest of the programme will align with the LSC business cycle thereafter. Activity through the LSC will support, enhance and more closely align with national government and LSC priorities, and therefore an ESF commissioning strategy has been agreed, whereby the ESF supports primarily TtG, Skills for Jobs, and Entry to Employment/Foundation Learning Tier activity to support those not in employment, education or training.

What does it aim to achieve?

The ESF plays a significant role in assisting the LSC’s policy remit. It helps individuals to improve their skills and employment prospects by tackling long-term unemployment, providing training and education advice, promoting lifelong learning and encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit in the workplace. It is also designed to improve the role of women in the labour market and, where they exist, to break down barriers to education, training and employment for those at a disadvantage. The ESF provides the LSC with approximately £200 million of additional budget each year to assist our hardest-to-reach learners. This supports progress towards our Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets, and aligns with both EU and LSC policy.

How will it do that?

The LSC and Jobcentre Plus are the two main co-financing organisations in the current and new programmes. Co-financing enables the LSC to secure ESF funding to support LSC priorities, and to explore innovative and different methods of achieving success.

Activities funded by the ESF are contracted by open and competitive tendering based on value for money. Provision is generally delivered by a wider provider base than mainstream, and includes a large proportion of voluntary and community sector organisations. ESF policy guides regions through ESF legislation and LSC policy approaches to the areas benefiting from ESF. The current programme will continue to deliver activity until July 2008, and the new programme is expected to start delivering in February 2008.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

The ESF has added substantial impact to our PSA targets, both direct and indirect, addressing barriers to harder-to-reach learners and increasing their retention and achievement rates. Totalling almost £600 million over the life of the current programme, ESF activity delivered through LSC co-financing has also contributed substantially to the successful delivery of the ESF programme in England. In future, the LSC is seeking to secure approximately £200 million per calendar year in the new programme, to support and enhance our key priorities.

The criterion for success will be the securing of sufficient funds through ESF to make a difference to the lives of those at disadvantage, by enabling them to approach, access and succeed on mainstream learning, skills and employment programmes.
Supply Side – Capital
Building for Skills – the National Capital Strategy

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

A primary role for the LSC is to invest capital funds to develop world-class educational buildings in which to deliver the world-class skills ambition. To achieve this, the LSC is implementing a major programme of capital investment. A principal action will be to increase the rate of renewal and modernisation of the FE estate in line with the reprioritisation of participation budgets arising from Lord Leitch’s report.

The new Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) has confirmed that post-16 capital funding, excluding higher education, will continue to be administered by the LSC, to ensure stability and continuity in the programme of modernisation of the FE estate. This will include the 16–19 joint capital fund for new learner places.

What is it about?

Growing evaluation evidence confirms the impact and importance of capital investment in supporting learning to give young people and adults the skills, attitudes and qualifications they need to prepare for productive, rewarding high-value employment in an internationally competitive, modern economy. The LSC’s national capital strategy describes how the LSC’s capital programme will be targeted to support the delivery of its key aims and priorities.

What does it aim to achieve?

In responding to the FE White Paper and the priorities identified in Lord Leitch’s report, the LSC will use its capital investment programme to support the achievement of the following objectives.

- To drive the expansion and reorganisation of provision, when and where appropriate, in order to secure capacity for high-quality Diploma programmes and to deliver on the ambitions in Lord Leitch’s report.
- To secure the right organisational solution in each local area, drawing on the expertise and knowledge of the LSC’s network regional and partnership teams.
- To ensure that qualifying 14–19 capital projects in the FE sector are appropriately funded and promote collaboration between providers and partners to deliver the 14–19 curriculum.
- To prioritise the capital support necessary to enable high-performing FE and sixth forms to expand their provision, to fund the outcomes of 16–19 competitions, and to support new policies as they are introduced, such as extending compulsory participation in education or training to age 18.
- To support vocationally excellent providers, national skills academies and re-accredited centres of vocational excellence, in particular.
- To encourage new providers (including training providers) to secure substantial, new, high-quality provision by extending eligibility, as appropriate, for capital funds, and holding 16–19 competitions.
- To ensure that regional capital strategies reflect regional and local plans to improve choice, quality and diversity, and that those strategies in turn drive the approval criteria for individual capital proposals.
- To support innovation in sustainable design and construction.
- To support colleges in improving their expert client capabilities in the processes for developing and procuring new premises and facilities.

How will it do that?

The LSC is implementing a major programme of capital investment. This programme will further accelerate the modernisation and renewal of the FE estate, provide new places in colleges for 14–19 learners and adults, new places in leading schools for 16- to 19-year-olds, and assist other post-16 providers to increase their levels of capital investment.

Underpinning the Framework for Excellence, which aims to spread success and eliminate failure across the post-16 sector, the LSC will continue to promote an enhanced rebuilding and modernisation programme to provide world-leading facilities vital for the delivery of the 14–19 entitlement and high-quality training that meets the needs of employers and individuals.
The LSC strongly believes that all learners should experience teaching and learning in modern, fit-for-purpose learning environments appropriate to the learning paths they are following. The LSC has a duty to help ensure that learning opportunities are maximised through the investment of capital funds, in order to raise the participation, retention and attainment of young people.

The FE White Paper, published in March 2006, set out a comprehensive programme to transform the FE system into an efficient and effective powerhouse for economic prosperity and social mobility. Capital investment is a vital part of implementing the key reform principles and outcomes to develop an FE system that is focused on equipping people with the skills needed for employment and in which institutions are more specialised.

Lord Leitch’s report, published in December 2006, sets out his view of what needs to be done to ensure that the UK has a world-class skills base by 2020. Leitch offers a vision for a UK with world-class skills, where higher skills levels are driving higher productivity, economic success and social mobility.

Capital investment is a vital part of implementing the key reform principles and outcomes set out in the FE White Paper and Lord Leitch’s report. The LSC will target its funds to promote these developments. Approval criteria for individual capital proposals will need to reflect the reprioritisation of participation budgets to deliver the Leitch ambition, and employer definitions of ‘fitness for purpose’.

The following governance changes are likely during 2007–08:

- a more strategic role for the LSC’s national capital committee in overseeing capital policy, implementing the national capital strategy and determining very large capital applications; and
- delegation to the proposed regional councils, possibly via dedicated regional capital committees, of the right to approve the majority of capital project applications.

The LSC recognises that supporting and developing the FE sector will continue to be a priority for its capital funds. It also recognises, however, that there is an increasingly important role for capital investment in helping to stimulate the market and to support new as well as existing providers.

**What are the achievements and/or success criteria?**

Over the four-year period to 2010–11 the LSC expects to invest over £2 billion in capital projects and to promote between £4 billion and £5 billion of development by colleges, schools and other providers. If the annual level of capital funding currently projected to 2010–11 continues into future years, the modernisation and renewal of the FE estate would be substantially complete by 2014–15.
Financial Evaluation Policy: Capital Proposals

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The LSC has a remit to provide capital grant support to a range of providers, including FE colleges, school sixth forms, adult safeguarded learning providers, HE institutions, and national skills academies. The level of capital funds available is due to increase substantially over the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review period, while revenue programme funding remains more stable. Over recent years, projects have increased significantly in scale and cost, with the LSC providing proportionately higher levels of grant support. The LSC has developed a national capital strategy, which is supported by nine regional capital strategies.

Policy and guidance relating to the financial evaluation of capital projects is set out within the Capital Handbook on the LSC’s website. Regional provider financial management (PFM) directors lead on this activity, with the national PFM team developing policy, promoting compliance and best practice, and advising the national capital committee on financial matters. There are two aspects to the financial evaluation of capital projects, as set out below:

- an economic investment appraisal to assess whether a proposed project is likely to provide a return on the investment of public funds; and
- a financial affordability appraisal to assess whether a provider can afford its proposed project and to determine the appropriate level of LSC capital grant support.

A fundamental review of the LSC’s policy on, and approach to, economic investment appraisal is in progress. The new approach will be tested during autumn 2007.

What is it about?
This policy supports the achievement of value for money in relation to the investment of public funds in sector capital projects. Where the LSC provides a significant element, or most, of the funding for a project, the LSC itself has a responsibility to ensure that public funds are invested in accordance with requirements and guidance laid down by HM Treasury (The Green Book).

Under the terms of the financial memorandum between the LSC and colleges (Part 1 of their funding agreement), colleges are required to seek the LSC’s written consent before entering into land and buildings transactions (sale, purchase or lease) and entering into borrowing arrangements.

This policy also supports the LSC in fulfilling its duty under the terms of its own financial memorandum to monitor the financial health of providers, as a capital project proposal usually has a material impact on a provider’s financial position.

Project proposals have to satisfy a range of criteria in relation to education, property and financial issues. It is essential that all three aspects are considered together, with LSC teams using a cross-discipline approach.

What does it aim to achieve?
This policy aims to ensure that:
- the LSC invests its capital programme funds in projects that represent value for money and comply with HM Treasury requirements;
- risk is identified and managed to safeguard public funds; and
- providers (mainly FE colleges) receive an appropriate level of capital grant support, based on their financial circumstances and on a consistent approach across the nine LSC regions.

The main benefit of implementing this policy effectively will be an FE sector with 21st-century buildings and the capacity both to sustain and manage these assets and to meet the needs of learners and employers.

How will it do that?
This policy will be achieved through regional PFM teams working effectively with providers, with regional property advisors, and with area or partnership colleagues from an early stage of each project proposal. The focus of this long-standing policy area is changing. The key shift is from college-driven projects to LSC-driven projects. The new approach to economic investment appraisal will reflect and support this.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The LSC has well-established policy and procedures in place for assessing capital project proposals and related requests for LSC capital grant support and borrowing consent. Going forward, the LSC will increasingly be the major investor in college sector capital projects. Success will derive from the implementation of the outcome of the fundamental review of the LSC’s approach to economic investment appraisal, together with supporting changes in business processes.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Open and Competitive Tendering via an e-Tendering Solution

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
Open and competitive tendering will always be a two-stage process: the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) and invitations to tender (ItTs). Pre-qualification will happen twice each year, currently in January and August. The LSC will invite organisations to update their information at these times and will offer previously unsuccessful and new organisations the opportunity to provide the information required. Organisations that are successfully evaluated at PQQ will receive any relevant ItTs relating to the provision in which they have expressed an interest. This process will also be utilised for goods and services requirements, including any programme budget services.

What is it about?
The process is a means of competitively procuring provision that will continue to support the LSC’s commitment to eliminate poor provision and to create structures that help the best colleges and providers spread their influence. It introduces new providers into the system to increase diversity, improve quality and stimulate innovation. From a goods and services perspective, it will also offer high-quality organisations the opportunity to bid for LSC national contracts.

What does it aim to achieve?
In both provision and goods and services procurement, the intention is to ensure that we obtain value for money, raise the quality of contracting organisations and comply with the Statement of Priorities.

How will it do that?
All LSC procurements must follow the EU and UK procurement regulations that apply. Using an e-tendering solution widens the area in which we can contract and reduces the level of bureaucracy involved for all parties.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The 2007/08 procurement round saved an estimated 3 million sheets of paper (at least 3 tonnes of paper) plus postage and archive costs. The lessons learned from the 2007/08 round should be introduced to improve the requirements of the PQQ and make them more user-friendly. ItTs must be critically and consistently evaluated to ensure that the best-quality organisations are awarded contracts. This will also apply to goods and services requirements. Success will be demonstrated by contracting with organisations that meet the requirements of the learners with good-quality provision in a timely fashion, and with suppliers who provide goods and services that meet the value for money criterion.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Supporting Further Education Colleges to Achieve Procurement Efficiency Gains

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The aim of the programme is to meet or exceed the procurement efficiency gains target, which is £40 million for the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review period 2008–11, and, in doing so, also:

- successfully raise the status of procurement in the FE sector, so that the benefits that effective, efficient and economic procurement can deliver across a college’s commercial functions are fully recognised and utilised; and

- establish a robust and skilled procurement capability in the FE sector.

Efficiencies savings generated by colleges as a result of the programme are to be retained by the college in order to increase the funds available for ‘frontline activities’.

FE college procurement has been reviewed by the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee, and recommendations have been made for the LSC and colleges to support improvement of the sector’s procurement performance.

What is it about?
The programme supports the Government’s ‘Gershon’ efficiency agenda and the LSC priorities in as much as procurement savings can be redirected to frontline activity.

What does it aim to achieve?
This policy seeks effective procurement across all FE colleges, leading to sustainable savings of £40 million in the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review period.

How will it do that?
It will achieve this by delivering change in colleges based on initiatives around five core themes: collaboration; process improvement; capacity building; stakeholder engagement; and measurement.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
This programme aims to ensure that:

- effective procurement is recognised by college senior management teams as an essential activity;

- increased use is made of procurement collaboration;

- increased use is made of e-procurement solutions, including the Government Procurement Card;

- employees in FE colleges are equipped to make good procurement decisions; and

- efficiency gains are recorded in the efficiency measurement model (supplied to all colleges).
What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

The LSC assesses the financial health, financial control, and financial management and governance of providers – this last in alignment with the inspection cycle. Regional PFM teams (that is, the support team and the assurance team) lead on this activity, with the national PFM team developing policy and promoting compliance and best practice.

Where financial weaknesses or difficulties are identified, there are risks in the LSC continuing to fund a provider, and financial intervention policy is designed to ensure that this risk is managed and/or addressed. The LSC’s regional PFM teams will work with a provider (in conjunction with regional and area colleagues) and require it to take appropriate action to strengthen its financial position. Where a provider experiences financial difficulties, these usually reflect wider business and operational issues. Intervention should always be proportionate to the provider’s circumstances.

The financial intervention toolkit presents internal guidance for LSC colleagues to use when dealing with colleges and other providers. The toolkit includes an overarching guidance note on financial intervention (written for use by partnership and area teams, as well as finance teams) and is supported by detailed guidance on recovery planning, financial policy aspects of mergers, college borrowing consents, emergency payments to providers and college advances.

Notices to Improve will be issued where a college’s financial health and/or control is unsatisfactory (see Supply Side – Quality, Identifying and Managing Underperformance, page 73). Policy and procedures are nearing finalisation for roll-out at regional briefings (LSC and sector, with regional PFM directors playing a key role) during the autumn. (Also refer to the Identifying and Managing Underperformance policy, page 73).

Finance is one of the three FfE dimensions, alongside responsiveness and effectiveness. It covers three of the seven key performance areas: financial health, financial control, and use of resources (which includes proposals for wider business performance indicators based on learner data). Some 100 pilot providers will pilot all the FfE performance indicators during the period to February 2008. The policy lead for the finance dimension sits within the national PFM team. All providers will be assessed under FfE the following year, and the FfE financial assessments will then form the basis for financial intervention (including Notices to Improve).

What is it about?

Financial intervention policies and procedures support the maintenance of a well-managed provider base that has the capacity to respond to LSC priorities and achieve the Government’s targets.

The LSC is required under its financial memorandum with DIUS to ‘monitor the financial health of providers and, as a part of this duty, to keep their level of balances under review’. In addition to this formal requirement, the LSC assesses colleges’ and other providers’ financial health to understand the degree of risk they may represent to the LSC if they do not have the financial resources to continue operating and the likely impact on providers of LSC policy developments.
When a provider ceases to operate or there is a significant deterioration in its financial position, the LSC faces the risks of learners suffering if provision is disrupted or terminated, and of being unable to recover public funds. Both risks could compromise the LSC’s statutory responsibility to ensure proper and reasonable provision of facilities for post-16 learning.

The LSC implements financial intervention procedures when a provider is either ‘in financial failure’ (experiencing actual financial difficulties) or ‘financially failing’ (showing signs of deteriorating financial health, although it might still be in a reasonable financial position overall).

The financial intervention toolkit presents a suite of intervention tools and includes guidance on dealing with colleges and other providers in financial difficulties. Financial intervention should take place at as early a stage as possible. Later intervention tends to be more painful for the provider and more costly for the LSC. Also, more drastic intervention (such as merger) tends to be very costly for the LSC; an independent organisational review to identify the issues and possible ways forward can help to avoid the more costly options. Any exceptional financial support for recovery, closure or merger has to be found from regional resources. It is important to consider the full range of intervention measures in each case.

What does it aim to achieve?
This policy aims to ensure that:
- the LSC fulfils its statutory responsibility in relation to providers’ financial health;
- risk is identified and managed to safeguard public funds; and
- the most appropriate and proportionate form of intervention is identified and implemented in dealing with each provider.

The main benefit of implementing this policy effectively will be a strengthened provider base. The LSC will be able to have confidence that it is entering into funding agreements and contracts with providers that have the capacity to deliver in support of the achievement of LSC and government priorities.

How will it do that?
This policy will be achieved through regional PFM teams working effectively with providers to identify financial difficulties (and warning signs) at an early stage, and to require providers to develop and implement strategic recovery plans or strategic improvement plans. Also, regional PFM teams will play a key role in the development and implementation of regional LSC strategies and plans for wider intervention and college reorganisations.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The LSC has well-established policy and procedures in place for monitoring providers’ financial health and control, and for financial intervention. Going forward, success will derive from identifying and tackling providers’ financial difficulties at an earlier stage, and thus at less cost to the LSC. Area and partnership teams, together with regional contracting teams, have an important role to play alongside regional PFM teams.

The focus of this long-standing policy area is changing. There is now greater emphasis on identifying and tackling issues early on. The issue of Notices to Improve will further formalise intervention procedures and encourage effective strategic recovery planning and timely delivery of improvement indicators.
Assurance Over LSC Funding

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?

The policy has changed for 2008/09 in terms of the scope of funding subject to assurance and some of the means of obtaining assurance.

The LSC continues to need assurance about providers’ use of LSC funds, and there are significant changes planned for 2008/09. Demand-led funding reintroduces payment by results for adult- and employer-responsive audit. Funding audit will be needed in 2008/09 for those colleges receiving this funding. The funding audit of schools with sixth forms will end as they move into strategic commissioning. All LSC assurance work is being reworked to support the financial control key performance area of the FfE. Assurance will increasingly be based on audit learner survey and data analysis to focus on risk and get direct evidence of delivery.

How will it do that?

Assurance teams help formulate LSC funding policies and procedures to minimise risk, while allowing objectives to be achieved. The teams support providers in meeting LSC requirements to minimise error. Assurance work is planned in consultation with regional priorities, involving close liaison with contract management. Teams carry out an annual risk-based plan of initial visits to providers, followed by full visits if needed. Visits usually take place alongside an Ofsted inspection. Visits lead to reports to providers that make recommendations to them for improving their control and, if necessary, for recovering misallocated funds. Allegations of financial irregularity are taken seriously and should be referred to the internal audit investigations unit.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?

Regional and national directors have been able to give positive assurance to the Chief Executive every year of LSC operation. The LSC’s assurance approach has allowed it to maintain a strong reputation for probity in funding providers. Stakeholder confidence has allowed the LSC progressively to reduce audit burdens and keep them low. Financial recoveries from assurance work more than cover the cost of the work.

What is it about?

The LSC, as a non-departmental public body (NDPB), is answerable to Parliament for the proper and regular use of £11 billion spent on learning. Assurance is an important way of discharging this responsibility.

What does it aim to achieve?

The policy is to allow the LSC’s Chief Executive, as accounting officer, to demonstrate his responsibilities under the LSC’s financial memorandum with the DIUS. Assurance work also informs LSC policy development, assists providers in improving their own internal control and helps secure value for money.
Supply Side –

Information Management
Managing Information Across Partners

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
Managing information across partners (MIAP) is now operating both learner and provider registration services. The LSC will be pursuing the implementation corporately and by providers. There is a critical need for wide-scale use by September 2008. There are a number of MIAP policies in the LSC, and its partner organisations are dependent on the use of MIAP services.

What is it about?
Managing information across partners is about providing unique reference numbers for learners and providers, focusing on consistency and continuity of information across the entire education sector.

What does it aim to achieve?
The policy has a number of benefits that can be summarised in four key groups.

1. Enabling technology – other programmes, such as Diplomas and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) 14–19 prospectuses, do not need to create their own identification systems.
2. Efficiency gains – the unique learner number (ULN) and UK provider reference number (UK PRN) will reduce the amount of time required for enrolment and examination. The ULN will allow better reporting by NDPBs, leading to reduced costs.
3. Effectiveness gains – more accurate management information will allow more effective strategic and tactical planning.
4. Service improvement – consistency of information across providers will lead to improved quality of service to the learner.

How will it do that?
The LSC will be investing in change activity both internally and with providers to support the implementation of the ULN and UK PRN. This change activity will be focused on ensuring wide-scale adoption by providers and the modification of LSC systems to deliver benefit.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The LSC has successfully transitioned the MIAP learner registration services from pilot to a live service. The service is available to a restricted group of providers until the system and the processes have bedded down, with a full launch to the education sector in February 2008. There are a number of key initiatives being undertaken by NDPBs within the education sector that will require providers to register learners for ULNs; for example, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is including the ULN within Diplomas and the QCF. In addition, the LSC is making a submission to the Information Authority to review the idea of making the ULN a mandatory field for FE individualised learner record (ILR) returns.
Further Education System Data

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
This policy has set up the Information Authority, which has begun setting data standards for the FE sector. There will now be a data service to collect and disseminate data sector-wide within the framework established by the Information Authority. Providers in North London have been consulted on a pilot of the data service, and some aspects of the service will be made available to these providers in 2007/08. Phase 1 of the full data service is planned to come online in 2008/09. It will:
• be an independent service under the direction of the Information Authority;
• be responsible for the collection of 2008/09 ILRs; and
• provide a dedicated customer service desk to assist stakeholders with data queries.

What is it about?
It is about:
• responding to the data improvement vision in the FE White Paper across all priorities, through better collection and use of data sector-wide;
• collecting and disseminating data across the FE sector and doing so within the data standards framework set by the new Information Authority;
• providing a sector-wide customer-focused service in data collection and delivery for providers and national agencies; and
• giving learning providers timely access to the information that will aid better delivery to employers and learners, as envisaged in the 2007/08 priorities.

What does it aim to achieve?
The FE system data programme improves data collection and use in the FE system. This programme was launched to implement the FE White Paper recommendations and to achieve:
• improved reporting across the sector;
• better use of data across the sector;
• improved availability and comprehensibility of data across the sector;
• improved management of data collection schedules and collection content;
• a customer-focused service for assisting the sector with data queries;
• improved consistency and transparency of FE work-based learning success rate reporting (Ofsted, LSC, QIA);
• better understanding by providers of the end-to-end process of data transformation of the ILR into management information and reporting used by national agencies; and
• reduced burden of data provision on learning providers.

How will it do that?
The FE system data programme is the means agreed between the Department for Education and Skills (now DIUS) and the LSC for taking forward the data recommendations in the FE White Paper.

This will be done by setting up an independent organisation that will be the single collector of data across the FE sector. This organisation will operate under the direction of the Information Authority, and one of its key attributes will be responsiveness to customer needs and timely access to reliable and comprehensible data.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
The success criteria are:
• transfer of data collection responsibilities from the LSC to the new organisation without disruption of business anywhere in the sector;
• improved customer satisfaction with the level of support available for use and interpretation of disseminated data;
• reduction in the real and perceived burden of data collection on providers; and
• removal of incompatibilities between performance indices used by national agencies.
(CONTINUING STEADY STATE)

Individualised Learner Record Data Collection

What are the critical things I need to know about this policy?
The ILR specification is authorised by the FE Information Authority. There have been 110 requests for change received. The main drivers for change are demand-led funding and the QCF. As usual, some of the policies will be insufficiently defined in time to include changes in the ILR for 2008/09.

What is it about?
The ILR is used to collect data about each learner in the FE sector and each of the learning aims in a learner’s programme.

What does it aim to achieve?
The LSC uses the ILR to:

- monitor an individual provider’s delivery against plan or contract and inform payment and reconciliation;
- make informed local decisions about plans and provision;
- monitor progress towards targets;
- inform national planning, including policy development and modelling;
- monitor quality improvement and evaluate the effectiveness of providers across the learning and skills sector;
- enable it to make its case to the Government for levels of funding appropriate to the sector; and
- demonstrate the outcomes of its distribution of funds.

How will it do that?
The authority to collect the ILR is statutory, as it is derived from the Learning and Skills Act.

What are the achievements and/or success criteria?
We have steady-state learner data collection, which provides a regular, reliable and rich source of data and information. This needs to be kept in line with the future needs of the FE sector, including the LSC.
# List of Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ALA</td>
<td>Adult Learner Account</td>
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<td>ALG</td>
<td>Adult Learning Grant</td>
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<td>ALO</td>
<td>adult learning option</td>
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<td>ASL</td>
<td>Adult Safeguarded Learning</td>
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<td>ATLS</td>
<td>associate teacher, learning and skills</td>
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<td>BIT</td>
<td>Business Improvement Training</td>
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<td>C2L</td>
<td>Care to Learn</td>
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<td>DaDA</td>
<td>Dance and Drama Award</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCSF</td>
<td>Department for Children, Schools and Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>DfES</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills (now DCSF and DIUS)</td>
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<td>DH</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
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<td>DIUS</td>
<td>Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills</td>
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<td>dLS</td>
<td>discretionary Learner Support for Hardship and Childcare</td>
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<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<td>E2E</td>
<td>Entry to Employment</td>
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<td>EBL</td>
<td>education business links</td>
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<td>EDIM</td>
<td>equality and diversity impact measure</td>
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<td>EMA</td>
<td>Education Maintenance Allowance</td>
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<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
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<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for speakers of other languages</td>
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<td>FE</td>
<td>further education</td>
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<td>FfE</td>
<td>Framework for Excellence</td>
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<td>FLLN</td>
<td>family literacy, language and numeracy</td>
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<td>FLT</td>
<td>Foundation Learning Tier</td>
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<td>FSP</td>
<td>First Steps provision</td>
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<td>HAPB</td>
<td>helpline, assessment and payment body</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>higher education</td>
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<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
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<td>HLVLS</td>
<td>higher-level vocational learning and skills</td>
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<td>IAG</td>
<td>information, advice and guidance</td>
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<td>ILR</td>
<td>individualised learner record</td>
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<td>ITT</td>
<td>initial teacher training</td>
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<td>KS4</td>
<td>Key Stage 4</td>
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<td>LAA</td>
<td>local area agreement</td>
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<td>LDD</td>
<td>learning difficulties and/or disabilities</td>
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<td>LLN</td>
<td>lifelong learning network</td>
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<td>LLUK</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning UK</td>
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<td>LSA</td>
<td>Learning and Skills Act 2000</td>
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<td>MIAP</td>
<td>managing information across partners</td>
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<td>NDPB</td>
<td>non-departmental public body</td>
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<td>NEET</td>
<td>not in education, employment or training</td>
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<td>NES</td>
<td>National Employer Service</td>
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<td>NLDC</td>
<td>neighbourhood learning in deprived communities</td>
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<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>NSA</td>
<td>national skills academy</td>
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<td>NVQ</td>
<td>national vocational qualification</td>
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<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills</td>
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<td>OLASS</td>
<td>Offender Learning and Skills Service</td>
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<td>ONA</td>
<td>organisational needs analysis</td>
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<td>PCDL</td>
<td>personal and community development learning provider financial management</td>
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<td>PLA</td>
<td>Programme-led Apprenticeship</td>
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<td>PQQ</td>
<td>pre-qualification questionnaire</td>
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<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Service Agreement</td>
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<td>QCA</td>
<td>Qualifications and Curriculum Authority</td>
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<td>QCF</td>
<td>Qualifications and Credit Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>QIA</td>
<td>Quality Improvement Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>QTLS</td>
<td>qualified teacher, learning and skills</td>
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<td>RSS</td>
<td>Residential Support Scheme</td>
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<td>SES</td>
<td>single equality scheme</td>
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<td>SIP</td>
<td>schools improvement partnership</td>
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<td>SQS</td>
<td>sector qualification strategy</td>
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<td>SSA</td>
<td>sector skills agreement</td>
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<td>SSC</td>
<td>sector skills council</td>
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<td>SSDA</td>
<td>Sector Skills Development Agency</td>
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<td>TtG</td>
<td>Train to Gain</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK PRN</td>
<td>UK provider reference number</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK VQRP</td>
<td>UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme</td>
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<td>ULN</td>
<td>unique learner number</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCS</td>
<td>voluntary and community sector</td>
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<td>WBL</td>
<td>work-based learning</td>
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<td>WFL</td>
<td>wider family learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>YJB</td>
<td>youth justice board</td>
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