National Management Group Report to Council

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Introduction
1 This is Management Groups Report to Council

Key Achievements
2 Train to Gain will be officially launched on 13 September, So far, the service has generated 3,149 employer leads which have led to 1,102 employer engagements. 689 (63%) of these are hard to reach employers.
3 The first whole year data for 2005/06 shows 91,600 Apprenticeship completions, thus exceeding the 2007/08 target two years early.
4 Key features of the A level results announced on 17 August were:
   - overall number of entries at A level in 2006 at an all-time high at 805,698
   - proportion of A level candidates attaining grades A-E increased from 96.2 per cent to 96.6 per cent
   - girls out-perform boys in every major A level subject apart from modern foreign languages

Key Issues
5 Ministers have been very concerned about the rise in the size of the NEET group, and the LSC has worked closely with DfES to understand the reasons for this rise, and actions to address the issue. The proportion of 16-18 year olds NEET has remained broadly stable at around 10per cent since 1993, although the most recent DfES national estimate is that the NEET figure has increased to 11 per cent in 2005, which is roughly equivalent to 220,000 young people.
The LSC and Connexions are working together to ensure that every Year 11 pupil leaving school in the Summer has, by the end of the same September, the offer of a place in learning.

The main challenge for the National Skills Academies remains employer sponsorship and the difficulty each Academy has had in securing the necessary investment to ensure a sustainable model driven by employers.

Performance Update

This update includes new performance information which has become available since the June 2006 performance report and July 2006 update for Council.

Adult Level 2

In the second quarter of 2006, the proportion of economically active adults in England qualified to at least NVQ level 2 or equivalent was 73.5%. This represents around 17.4 million adults from an economically active population of 23.6 million. There has been an increase of 1.4 percentage points since Spring 2005 (the nearest equivalent seasonal quarter), and a small increase (0.2 percentage points) since the first quarter of 2006. It corresponds to an increase of 1,403,000 since Autumn 2001 (the PSA target requires an increase of 3.6 million by 2010), and an increase of 1,035,000 since Autumn 2002 (the PSA target being a 1 million increase by the fourth quarter of 2006).

While these figures show continued good progress on this target, and imply that the 2006 milestone has been met early, we cannot be certain of that at this stage that the 2006 milestone, as the baseline for the target needs to be revised following the change to calendar quarters. This should be available by the end of September.

Train to Gain

Train to Gain was introduced in 20 LSC areas (the former Employer Training Pilots) across the 9 regions in April 2006. The remaining 27 LSC areas and the National Employer Service introduce Train to Gain in August 2006. The information below is the key headline points from the performance report for the first quarter of operation (April to June 2006).

- Train to Gain has generated 3,149 employer leads which have led to 1,102 employer engagements. 689 (63%) of these are hard to reach employers.
- The clear majority, well over 90%, of employers supported through Train to Gain are small (1-49 employees)

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1 The Labour Force Survey has changed from seasonal quarters (spring, summer, autumn, winter) to calendar quarters in 2006. This means that year-on-year comparisons are not directly comparable. DfES are reworking historical data onto calendar quarters to give a consistent time series, which is likely to be available by the end of September
- The leading sectors for employer engagement are Care, Manufacturing, Retail & Wholesale, and Leisure & Tourism.
- 803 employers have been referred by Skills Brokers to one or more solutions providers.
- In addition, 1,065 employers that were previously engaged in ETPs have new learners who commenced since April 2006 funded by Train to Gain.
- There are 9,468 learner starts from employers that were previously engaged in ETPs. However, this is far short of the predicted 20,000 starts figure.
- 79% of learners were White British; 5% Other White; 4% Black or Black British - African; 2.5% Asian or Asian British - Indian. This compares to 87% of the general population that are White British.
- 29% of learners were aged 36-45; 26% aged 26-35; 19% aged 45-55; 18% aged 19-25; and 8% aged 56+.
- The gender split is equal.

**Apprenticeships**

12 Apprentice completion statistics:

Baseline (2002/03): 43,149

Performance indicator (2007/08): 75,511 (increase of 75%)

Latest outturn (2005/06): 91,600 (provisional figure)

13 The first whole year data for 2005/06 shows 91,600 Apprenticeship completions, thus exceeding the 2007/08 target two years early. This figure is based on the initial end-year returns from work-based learning providers, and will be subject to revision during the autumn.

14 The large increase in completions is partly due to a ‘spike’ in the number of leavers in 2005/06 due to the pattern of starts and of programme lengths, but also to another significant increase in the full framework success rate – the provisional success rate for 2005/06 was 53%, up from 40% in 2004/05 and 24% in 2001/02. This is a huge improvement in quality, and means that for the first time, more Apprentices are completing their programmes than not. Success rates for both Advanced Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships at level 2 are around 53%.

15 We expect success rates to continue to increase, although inevitably not at the same rate as in the last couple of years. However, the number of leavers is likely to decline from the 2005/06 peak, so the total number of completions will not continue to rise at the same rate, and may in fact decrease slightly in 2006/07. We are still confident of continuing to exceed the target of 75,511 completions in the performance indicator.
Trends in E2E recruitment: EMA Impact

16 The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was extended to learners on Entry to Employment (E2E) and Programme Led Apprenticeship programmes in April 2006. For the period April to June 2006 there has been a noticeable decline in E2E starts. However starts in July have bounced back up to reflect a similar recruitment trend as 2004/5.

17 Cumulatively, the number of starts to the end of period 11 is broadly in line with figures for 2004/05. However, following a peak in recruitment in February/March, where providers sought to make best use of the transitional arrangements there has been a drop. Data at a national level is only available to end of P11 (June). However anecdotal evidence from a national provider suggests data for July does show a significant improvement in E2E starts.

18 The evidence suggests that while the EMA extension has had an impact on the number of starts on E2E programmes, the cumulative numbers in learning are broadly similar, and the overall drop in recruitment is not as significant as the period 9–11 data suggest. Providers have deliberately made best use of the sensitive transitional arrangements the LSC put in place (so learners starting E2E/PLA programmes before 10 April 2006 could continue to receive the ‘old’ training allowance until the end of their course or December 06, whichever was the earlier.)

Reasons for drop in E2E recruitment:

19 The LSC has worked with Connexions in 31 LSC areas (approximately 2/3 of the country) to identify what is happening. While these vary significantly by locality we have identified the following key trends:

- **EMA’s income assessment and take-up.** Unlike EMA, MTA was administered by providers directly, and had no element of income assessment. Therefore providers have had to acquaint themselves with the EMA Application Process, and consider that E2E learners and their parents are facing significant barriers to the EMA Application process. The LSC has offered these providers significant support in doing this through training sessions, resource packs, spreading best practice etc. Offering this support is a contractual requirement, but in addition the providers will receive a payment of £70 per EMA learner in Autumn 06.

- **Perceptions of E2E programme.** Prior to the extension of EMA the E2E programme was often “sold” to young people on the ready availability of the training allowance, often perceived by the young person as a wage. This option is no longer available, and providers have struggled to engage young people without it, particularly where young people are entitled to £10 payments, or nothing. Young people are unconvinced by arguments that their family will be eligible for child benefit and child tax credits, as they want cash in hand. This suggests Connexions/providers
are still trying to ‘sell’ the provision on the financial support available, when they need to sell the benefits of the provision itself.

20 But there are wider issues in E2E recruitment which are not financial:

- **Successive increases in FE participation** due to FE colleges ‘raising their game’ particularly in terms of the vocational provision they offer and initiatives like EMA - there has been an increase of 4.5 percentage points in participation in full-time education by 16 year olds over the last two years – with participation now at the highest ever rate.2
- **Changes in the local labour market** (e.g. due to an influx of EEA Migrant labour) resulting in fewer opportunities in the trades that appealed to young people such as construction.
- **The impact of a growing number of ESF funded programmes** may have contributed to a local decline in e2e recruitment but more analysis needs to be undertaken to assess the impact.

**Young People not in education, employment or training (NEET)**

21 Ministers have been very concerned about the rise in the size of the NEET group, and the LSC has worked closely with DfES to understand the reasons for this rise, and actions to address the issue. In particular, we have explored the relationship between post-16 staying-on rates, NEET rates and labour market pressures on young people.

22 The proportion of 16-18 year olds NEET has remained broadly stable at around 10per cent since 1993, although the most recent DfES national estimate is that the NEET figure has increased to 11 per cent in 2005, which is roughly equivalent to 220,000 young people. The DfES estimate of the NEET figure is consistent with that of DWP.

23 It is important to note that this is a snapshot figure, and that there is a considerable amount of “churn”, with young people moving in and out of the education and training system. In practice, only around one per cent of the 16-18 cohort (20,000 young people) are NEET throughout the three year period.

24 The increase in the number of young people who are NEET is in the context of an increase in overall participation in learning by 16-18 year olds, but a reduction in the proportion of 16-18 year olds in work.

25 At the Level 2 at 19 Board meeting, the LSC presented a proposed new LSC Action Plan, bringing together all the relevant work on NEET and Level 2, including the September Guarantee and meeting the local provision shortfalls identified in partnership with Connexions, in order to ensure a coherent package of measures to support improved attainment of Level 2 at 19. The Action Plan has been shared with DfES which expects it to develop into a joint plan with DfES colleagues with responsibility for Connexions and the

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transition of IAG responsibility to local authorities. As part of this we will develop a strategy across LSC, Connexions and JC+ to bring together approaches to employer engagement in a way that maximises access to WBL and the labour market for 16-18s.

**Delivering Learning and Skills – Progress Report 2006**

Due to be published later this month, this document will set out the totality of the sectors achievements articulating clearly the huge contribution that LSC funded provision makes to the country.
Priority 1: Ensure that all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities

Future of the Increased Flexibility (IF) Programme

27 In July, Ministers agreed the next steps towards mainstreaming the IF Programme from September 2007. From September 2007 IF will no longer exist as a national, ring fenced, Programme. Cohort 5 (2006-08) will be the final Cohort under national arrangements.

28 In future, funds will be allocated on a regional basis to support the delivery of joint LSC/LA 14-19 plans, including alignment with local authorities’ Dedicated School Grant (DSG) allocations for off-site practical learning opportunities at Key Stage 4 and the introduction of Specialised Diplomas.

29 Ministers have indicated that they do not expect to see any reduction in the volume of provision purchased through this residual fund. It should be noted, however, that there is no guarantee of funding for this purpose beyond 2007-08. Any provision commitment to a two year undertaking across Key Stage 4 or over years 10 and 11 may not be met, nationally, in the second year, 2008-09.

30 Regionally, 14-19 partnerships may continue to use the IF name, targets and objectives if they consider this best for their young people, or move instead to secure the best features of the IF Programme within their local plans.

14-19 Prospectus and September Guarantee

31 The LSC and local authorities (LAs) are working together to ensure that in every area of the country there is a prospectus setting out the range of learning pathways available to 14-19 year olds. It is intended that these individual prospectuses will be accessible by young people in any area of the country, and indeed, the LSC and LAs in London are working together to develop a prospectus covering the whole region.

32 The LSC and Connexions are working together to ensure that every Year 11 pupil leaving school in the Summer has, by the end of the same September, the offer of a place in learning. The Guarantee takes a variety of forms, but LSC/Connexions have advised that the Guarantee is fully in place in around half of all LA areas, and substantially in place in all others. The Guarantee will be in place in all areas of England next year.

33 A key feature of the Guarantee is that it is pro-active. Rather than simply guaranteeing a place to a young person who asks for one, Connexions begin to work with all young people in the cohort whilst they are still in school and keep in touch with them.

34 At the Level 2 at 19 Attainment Board on 18 August, the LSC agreed to survey two LA areas in each LSC region ahead of the next Board meeting in October, to see how effective the September Guarantee and clearing house arrangements had been – in other words, to understand how many Year 11
leavers in those areas were without a place in learning, whether at school, college or work-based.

**Exam Success in Maths**

35 Key features of the A level results announced on 17 August were:

- overall number of entries at A level in 2006 at an all-time high at 805,698
- proportion of A level candidates attaining grades A-E increased from 96.2 per cent to 96.6 per cent
- girls out-perform boys in every major A level subject apart from modern foreign languages

36 Entries for AS level Further Mathematics showed the largest increase in numbers, at over 20 per cent, and that A level Further Mathematics showed an increase in numbers of over 20 per cent this year. For England, the figures are 25 per cent and 24 per cent respectively, and for Wales and Northern Ireland 13 per cent and 5 per cent. We are confident that this is a direct result of the Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI) project, which runs in England only. This £10 million, five-year, project, which is seeking to establish a Further Mathematics network of schools, colleges and universities in each LSC area, is funded and managed by the Young People’s team in the national LSC.

**Child Protection: Safer Recruitment and vetting in the education service**

37 The DfES is consulting on draft guidance which details the recruitment and vetting checks that need to be made on all people who wish to work with children and young persons through a role in the education service, including overseas teachers and agency staff working in education establishments.

38 The guidance provides advice about the range of checks that should be carried out to ensure risk of harm to children is minimised. It aims to assist all schools, including non-maintained and independent schools, Further Education institutions, and Local Authorities (LAs) exercising education functions, to ensure the full range of checks are carried out so as to minimise the possibility of children and young people suffering harm from those who they consider to be in positions of trust.

39 Staff in the national office are coordinating an LSC response to the consultation, which runs to 12 October.

**EMA**

40 05/06 out-turn figures. These were pretty much on target, with a higher take-up amongst the target group than had been profiled. This no doubt re-enforced EMA’s impact on participation, which has increased by 4ppt over the roll-out period.
At Mark Haysom’s instigation, a seminar is to be held in October for significant policy shapers, researchers and journalists, to promote the story of EMA’s success and impact on participation, which is not yet recognised sufficiently. The DfES Chief Economist will also be involved.
Priority 2: Making learning truly demand-led so that it better meets the needs of employers, young people and adults

Through Inclusion to Excellence

42 The analysis of the responses to the consultation on Through Inclusion to Excellence (the report of the review of the LSC’s planning and funding of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the post 16 sector) was published on 10 August 2006. The LSC’s own response to the report was also included in the publication.

43 The main recommendation in the report was that the LSC should publish an overarching national strategy regarding provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The national strategy is currently under development and is due to be published in October 2006.

44 DfES has is working with the Department of Health (DH) on a joint DH/DfES strategy for young people and adults with disabilities. The same DfES team will be responsible for taking forward Through Inclusion to Excellence. This is a very positive move, as it will enable a more joined up approach across the various groups who engage at various times with young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as the school Special Educational Need (SEN) team, the SEN regional partnerships people, and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

UK vocational qualification reform programme

45 The LSC has continued to work with its key partners to drive forward the programme of UK wide qualification reform and, as a key component of the programme, to develop a credit and qualification framework.

46 The LSC is leading one of the 5 strands of the programme – the planning, funding and delivery of provision for learners. We are working closely with the planning and funding bodies in Wales and Northern Ireland as well as the other key organisations on the Sub Programme Board, to develop a programme of work to underpin the reform programme and ensure readiness to support a longer term implementation of a stable credit system. Our priorities are to:

- Model and evaluate the potential of a credit and qualifications framework to deliver government targets and priorities
- Drive forward VQ reform on a UK-wide basis
- Drive forward VQ reform through the planning and funding of provision
- Drive sector qualification reform through the planning and funding of provision
- Use the potential of VQ reform to drive data simplification.
In meeting these priorities we will be working together on a UK-wide basis as well as individually in the respective countries. In England, for example we will be looking at the impact of a credit system on the Level 2 target and how credit could be incorporated in the proposed funding reforms.

We have also been supporting QCA in their role of establishing tests and trials of Framework provision in 2006/07 and 2007/08. We expect to support up to eight trials with public funding in 2006/07 - trials where the provision helps us meet targets and priorities. We aim to build the numbers of learners involved significantly for 2007/08.

The LSC has a particularly active involvement in two other strands of the VQ Reform Programme – Sector Qualification Reform and Framework Development which is part of our strategy to ensure that planning and funding can help drive reform forward quickly.

**Offenders’ Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)**

On the 31st July the Learning and Skills Council assumed full responsibility across England for the planning, funding and delivery of the integrated offender learning and skills service. The new service integrates learning and skills provision for those serving sentences either in custody or in the community.

The procurement process has been subjected to an OGC gateway review 4 “readiness for service” which concluded that the national and regional OLASS teams have encountered and resolved a series of difficult issues within a demanding timescale. The review team concluded that “all key stakeholders are positive about the prospects for success over the coming months. The experience from phase 1 (in the NE, NW and SW regions) suggests that improvements in learning experience and learning achievement are already in prospect and the strong partnerships established at regional level between LSC, the National Offender Management Service, Her Majesty’s Prison Service, the National Probation Directorate and the Youth Justice Board are providing a good foundation for the progress necessary to deliver these improvements”

**Adult Learning Grant**

Next stage pilots begin September in Y&H and WM. It’s very important that we drive take-up (as also in other existing pilot areas) because this will determine the baseline and budget for national roll-out which has already been announced.

**Career Development Loan**

DfES have decided that the proposed pilots will be postponed, to take account of Leitch and the Comprehensive Spending Review.
Train to Gain launch

54  Train to Gain offers impartial advice, matches needs with training providers, and makes sure that training and support are delivered to help meet employers’ objectives.

55  Train to Gain has been available across the country since 1st August, following its commencement in the former Employer Training Pilot areas in April 2006.

56  The service will be officially launched on 13 September in Central London. Interview opportunities have been arranged throughout the day with a main launch photo opportunity featuring James Cracknell, the internationally acclaimed oarsman, Rt Hon Alan Johnson (Secretary of State for Education and Skills), Phil Hope MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Skills), Richard Lambert (Director General of CBI), Sean Taggart (Small Business Council), Mark Haysom, David Way, Stephen Marston (DfES) and Stephen Hillier (DfES). They will be supported by representatives from London LSC and employers who have already used the service.

57  A high level of media coverage is expected at a National level to help boost awareness of the service. Regional LSCs will hold their own launch events at a later date with the theme “Fit for Business”.

58  Performance is reported on elsewhere in the Council papers. Early indications from the ongoing Skills Broker Evaluation survey show that over 8 out of 10 employers rate the service highly.

University of Industry (Ufi)

59  The national contract between Ufi and the LSC has now entered its third year. Ufi is contracted to run the learndirect network; the Information, Advice and Guidance service, including the national telephone helpline and website; and administer the UKonline network. They have also recently secured Train to Gain contracts in a number of regions.

60  Performance against targets has increased significantly in the last two years with Ufi achieving 56,800 first Skills for Life test passes and 1,900 first full level 2 qualifications in 2005/06 against an overall budget of £205 million.

61  Key targets for 2006/07 are 50,000 first Skills for Life test passes and 3,000 first full level 2 qualifications within a total budget of £180.8 million.

62  Ufi will to continue to offer the Information and Advice service, but are discussing with DfES the possibility of relinquishing the administration of the UKonline service. Ufi has successfully implemented the necessary changes to their network, and with the dissolution of hubs, Ufi now contract directly with providers. Not only does this re-organisation release £10 million of funding to front-line learning but it is also expected to support further improvements in quality.
Priority 3: Transform the Learning and Skills sector through agenda for change

Learning Infrastructure

63 The LSC is responsible for running competitions for significant new 16-19 provision within an area. Competition might be held for one of a number of reasons or to meet a range of specific needs. These include:

- a need for ‘additional’ provision to meet increased learner numbers
- ‘different’ provision such as altering the vocational/academic balance
- ‘better’ provision in terms of quality; or
- a combination of the above.

64 A competition must be held if 200 new places are required; it may be held for fewer places. The statement of need for a competition should specify the levels of NEET in the area, as they are intrinsically linked to the calculation of the need for new places - it is specifically not about redistributing those already in learning but reaching those who are not.

65 Of the five 16-19 competitions that have so far been published, three (Sefton, Ipswich and Sittingbourne) focus on the need for new provision, and the statements of need refer to the need for increased participation from the identified NEET levels in each of those areas.

The New Standard for Employer Responsiveness

66 Regional consultations with LSC colleagues have taken place to help shape and formulate views on the development of the New Standard for Employer Responsiveness and Vocational Excellence. A detailed project plan has been agreed by the external Steering Group. The key milestones for the coming period include: finalising the Standard; developing a communication and branding strategy (and ensuring the fit with National Skills Academies); developing the assessment and employer validation process; and agreeing the plan for roll out (priority to be given to existing CoVE provision and Train to Gain provision).

67 Regional provider briefings are planned for October in readiness for November trialing of the New Standard with Manufacturing and Construction providers.

National Skills Academies

68 We are almost at the end of the Assessment and Appraisal process. Three business plans, Construction, Food and Drink Manufacturing and Manufacturing, were presented to the Approval Panel on 4th September. The Financial Services Business Plan was approved on 18 July 2006 with conditions and capital funding now having been agreed.
For those that are successful at the Approval Panel, the launch will take place in October 2006.

The long list for the second round ‘expressions of interest’ have been selected and eight will be going forward to panel interview in September. The Panel comprises employer representatives as well as the LSC, SSDA, DfES and DTI and is chaired by Jane Drabble. Successful applicants will be announced by Ministers in October.

The main challenge for the National Skills Academies remains employer sponsorship and the difficulty each Academy has had in securing the necessary investment to ensure a sustainable model driven by employers.
Priority 4: Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development so that we provide the skills needed to help individuals into jobs

City Strategy

72 In its Green Paper, A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work, the Government set out far reaching proposals for welfare reform aimed at moving towards its national aim of an 80% employment rate for the working age population. The city strategy is a central element of these proposals to tackle the highly localised pockets of worklessness, poverty, low skills and poor health across the UK.

73 The eight areas selected to pilot the city strategy approach are currently developing their expressions of interest into full delivery plans. These are likely to be ready for formal submission by the end of 2006 with delivery commencing in April 2007. The quality of the proposals were mixed but most demonstrated the ability to deliver something through a local consortium that is innovative and will join up activity to improve existing outcomes. The proposals have a strong focus on the disadvantaged groups including those in receipt of incapacity benefits, lone parents, ethnic minorities and older workers.

City Regions

74 The State of the Cities report set out a long term vision for cities including a “New Deal for Cities” based on an agreement between government and each city on challenges, targets and funding for areas, including skills and employment.

75 The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government reinforced the importance of the city region agenda at the Core Cities Summit 26/27 July. The Minister has held meetings with each core city to discuss the business cases for their city regions. Ahead of the Local Government White Paper due in the autumn, Ruth Kelly displayed support for the city proposals for greater ownership and accountability within policy areas including the integration of employment and skills. LSC Regional Directors continue to be involved in the development of the city region business cases.
Priority 5: Improve the skills of the workforce who are delivering public services

76 The first meeting of the Public Services Forum is scheduled for September. The LSC will lead the submissions at this first meeting, setting out the challenge in meeting the skills needs in the sector. We are working with the Cabinet Office to finalise the agenda and Ministerial Briefings.

77 The LSC Public Services Framework is now complete, and brings together key services delivered by the LSC into a consistent support package for the Sector. There are two proposed steps in the next phase of the Strategy:

- The LSC will test the Framework regionally through the business cycle, starting in September 2006. During this process we will also explore the principles of joint planning and funding set out within the Framework with the public services sector, in order to evaluate and refine the policy at the end of the business cycle in 2007. This will include the proposals to agree joint targets and objectives and aligning LSC and sector budgets at a regional level, particularly at level 2.
- Our second objective is to evaluate the progress of Train to Gain, and to revisit the Strand 2 objectives concerning the creation of a fit-for-purpose Skills Brokerage service for the sector. From the Train to Gain management information we will monitor usage by the sector, and use this to inform a firm proposal for Skills Brokerage for development by the end of 2006.
6. Strengthen the capacity of the LSC to lead change nationally, regionally and locally.

78 National Skills Directors undertook a series of visits to each region to look at readiness for the national roll out of Train to Gain on 1 August. These visits have proved particularly useful in identifying good practice as well as areas that require further development. Good practice is fed back through regular Train to Gain programme management arrangements, as well as through the Train to Gain Directors Group.

79 We have completed a first analysis of LSC plans to support the delivery of Sector Skills Agreements. The picture varies significantly from one local LSC to another. The Sector team will be working closely with regional sector colleagues to better understand what is happening in each region and to identify good practice and areas that require further support and development.

Clearance
The Director of Strategy and Communications has cleared this paper.

Legal Implications
There are no legal implications arising directly from this paper.