ONE MILLION MILESTONE EXCEEDED AS GOVERNMENT STEPS CLOSER TO REACHING LEITCH’s AMBITION

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Figures published today reveal that the Government is one step closer to meeting Lord Leitch’s bold ambitions for the UK to become a world leader on skills. Almost three-quarters of the workforce now have a Level 2 qualification (the equivalent of five good GCSEs) and the minimum skill level required to get a job and improve their productivity. In addition, over half the population has a Level 3 qualification, the equivalent of two A levels. Sandy Leitch challenged the Government in December 2006 to get at least 90% of the population equipped with Level 2 qualifications by 2020.

Compared to four years ago, 1,141,000 more adults are now qualified to Level 2, exceeding the one million milestone set for adult skills targets for the end of 2006. The final Labour Force Survey of 2006 shows that 73.9% of adults in the workforce now have a Level 2 or equivalent qualification; this corresponds to around 17.5 million adults from a total economically active population of 23.7 million. In addition, 52.4% are now qualified to NVQ Level 3, corresponding to around 12.4 million adults out of the total.

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

“This is a major achievement and shows that we are well on the way to meeting the ambitious targets set by Lord Leitch. This achievement is down to the hard work and dedication of all those in the learning and skills sector, and significant extra Government investment. These qualifications will make a real difference to people’s lives and careers,
as well as ensuring the future economic competitiveness of this country. It is absolutely right that we are prioritising Adult Education funding to get adults up to Level 2”.

Mark Haysom, Chief Executive of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) said:

“As the Leitch report identified, all of these skills are vital to the wider economy which stands to benefit by £80 billion if we can meet these skills targets. The Further Education sector is rising to the challenge by focussing more on vocational qualifications for the lowest skills, rather than on short courses and those not leading to qualifications.

“Those with a full Level 2 qualification are three times as likely to be offered training by their employer. They earn more, they are much less likely to be unemployed, much less likely to be in prison or involved in crime and they are much more likely to go on to get the higher qualifications that the economy increasingly needs.

“This is the third skills target that we have beaten this year. We recently announced that the number of young people at 19 gaining Level 2 qualifications has increased by over 40,000. Plus through the Government’s Skills for life strategy, over 1.5 million people have gained crucial basic skills qualifications since 2001”.

Sir Digby Jones, the UK’s Skills Envoy said:

“Without a skills revolution we face the prospect of unemployment on a scale we have not seen since the 1980s. Too many adults, in and out of work, lack the basics in literacy, language and numeracy. They simply don’t have the skills and qualifications to support sustained, productive employment. Level 2 offers all adults a firm foundation of employability skills with the potential to progress to higher levels. This is why today’s news is such good news. I am delighted to see the achievement of this major milestone”.

Dr John Brennan, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges:

“We would like to congratulate all those working hard within colleges, and those across further education who support that delivery, in meeting the Government’s targets on Level
2 and equivalent qualifications early. While there is always more work to meet the nation’s skills needs, this impressive achievement is testimony to the collective efforts of the sector in helping adults improve their employment and life prospects.”

Graham Hoyle, Chief Executive of the Association of Learning Providers (ALP) said:

“ALP has been supportive of the move over recent years to focus Government/LSC funding for adults on developing the skills needed by employers and employees alike. The focus on upping the level of adult basic skills and getting everyone up to at least a first level two represents a critical foundation from which to build the extensive higher level skills needed by our economy if we are to prosper in an ever more competitive global economy.

“The frontline weapon is of course Train to Gain, and we are delighted that this new national approach is spearheading the LSC’s strategy on adult skill development. ALP members, both independent providers and colleges, are ready to move into top gear to deliver this, not only to their existing, extensive employer base, but also to that broader range of employers that need to focus on developing the skills of their workforce. Train to Gain represents a truly shared agenda which will only succeed on the back of joint and coherent action between LSC and its provider base."

**Notes for Editors**

**The Level of Highest Qualification held by Adults: England 2006**

This Statistical First Release updates key statistics on the level of highest qualification held by people of working age in England, published on 23th February 2006. Attainment figures are broken down by sex, age, geography, ethnicity, disability and economic activity. It also contains statistics on specific subsets of the population used to measure progress towards post-16 attainment targets within the Department and Learning and Skills Council. The figures are calculated from the final quarter 2006 Labour Force Survey (carried out by the Office for National Statistics) using the detailed information collected about qualifications gained by individuals. To read the SFR in full, please go to: [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000715/index.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000715/index.shtml)
1. The Government’s Adult Level 2 PSA Target is to reduce by 40% the number of adults in the workforce that have not achieved a qualification at level 2 or higher by 2010, with an interim target of 1 million more adults in the workforce with Level 2 or higher between 2003 and 2006.

2. The Statistical First Release, based on the Labour Force Survey shows that in Q4 2006, the proportion of economically active adults in England qualified to at least NVQ level 2 or equivalent was 73.9%. This represents around 17.5 million adults from an economically active population of 23.7 million. There has been an increase of 0.8 percentage points since Q4 2005. It corresponds to an increase of 1 million 546 thousand since Q4 2001 (the PSA target requires an increase of 3.6 million by 2010), and an increase of 1 million 141 thousand since Q4 2002. The PSA interim 2006 target was for an increase of 1 million economically active adults with a Level 2 or higher between Q4 2002 and Q4 2006, so this result means that the interim target has been exceeded by a margin of some 141,000.

3. 52.4 % of economically active adults were qualified to at least NVQ level 3 or equivalent in Q4 2006, representing 12.4 million adults from an economically active population of 23.7 million. There has been an increase of 0.9 percentage points since Q4 2005.


This announced the outturn of the 2006 PSA target - measured using matched administrative data, and set the baseline for the 2008 target.

- 71.4 percent of people aged 19 in 2006 were qualified to at least level 2
- This means we are 5.1 percentage points ahead of where we were in 2004 and we have exceeded the 2006 target of 69.3 percent by 2.1 percentage points.
- The baseline for 2006 is now set at 71.4 percent and the target for 2008 is 73.4 percent.
- An increasing proportion of 19 year olds are qualified to level 3 – 46.8 percent of people aged 19 in 2006 compared with 45.6 percent of people aged 19 in 2005.

5. Over 1.5 million people have gained crucial basic skills qualifications through the Government’s Skills for Life strategy, hitting a key target set back in 2001. Skills for Life provides free literacy, language and numeracy tuition for adults in England who have skills below Level 2 (broadly equivalent to a GCSE at grades A* - C.) Since the launch of the strategy in 2001, 4.7 million adults have taken up 10.5 million Skills for Life learning opportunities with 1,619 000 learners achieving their first Skills for Life qualification in literacy, language or numeracy. This figure includes achievements by over 138,000 offenders. The Government has a public service agreement (PSA) target to improve the skills of 2.25 million adults by 2010, with an interim target of 1.5 million by 2007, measured by the number of learners achieving their first national Skills for Life qualification in literacy, language or numeracy.

6. Sir Sandy Leitch’s report was published in December 2006. To read the full report, go to: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/leitch_review/review_leitch_index.cfm

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is

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that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

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