

NATIONAL EMPLOYER TRAINING PROGRAMME



Leading learning and skills

DESIGN FRAMEWORK 2006-7

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Distribution: NETP Partners and Stakeholders

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline the scope of the National Employer Training Programme (NETP), to be introduced from April 2006 and thereafter implemented progressively until it is fully available across England from the 2007-08 financial year.

This outline provides an overview of the key elements of NETP and how it will be implemented.

2 BACKGROUND

A central aim of the 2005 Skills White Paper¹ is to raise national skill levels to achieve the twin goals of enabling individuals to realise their potential and businesses to become more wealth creating and economically successful.

Work has already begun to address these two goals. For low skilled adults, of whom there are an estimated 6.6 million in the workforce, an entitlement to training for a first full Level 2 (L2E) qualification has already been trialled in the South East and North East regions as part of a wider offer of support to individuals. From August 2005, this entitlement to training will be extended across the whole of England. When the NETP service is in place eligible employees will have the choice of accessing their entitlement to NVQ Level 2 training either through their employer or independently.

¹ 2005 White Paper 'Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work'

Focussing on the needs of employers, Employer Training Pilots (ETP) have been running since September 2002. These pilots have been used to test an offer to employers comprising a range of financial incentives and support designed to encourage them to release staff to take Skills for Life (including literacy and numeracy) and NVQ Level 2 training, delivered flexibly at a time and place to suit their needs.

The new NETP service, to be offered to employers and employees, announced in the 2005 Pre-budget Report and confirmed in the 2005 White Paper will build on the lessons learned and success of this early work.

3 THE SCOPE OF NETP

NETP is a service to employers rather than a programme. Although the service will build on the lessons learned from the ETP pilots, it will not be simply an extension of these pilots, but rather its introduction will mark the beginning of a new and more dynamic way of working with employers, which is designed to put their business and skill development needs first and identify clear and comprehensive solutions. It will require learning providers to review their provision and current methods of delivery, to ensure they can respond quickly and flexibly to employer need.

The NETP Service - Core Offer

The NETP service available to employers is **an independent and impartial brokerage service** to diagnose business need and source appropriate training provision.

The brokerage service will provide:

- **a comprehensive analysis of and solution to** training needs, which will identify clearly which elements attract government funding and those for which the employer will have to pay.
- **easy access to relevant and flexible, high quality training**, delivered mostly in the workplace and using increasingly an assess, train, assess model, which will enable the employee's prior learning and experience to be taken into account.
- **information and support to access a wide range of training packages** including higher level qualifications (including Level 3) and also non-qualifications based training. Brokers will also be able to sign post to other sources of information such as websites and telephone helplines.
- **information and advice to employees** on qualifications and training; eligibility for LSC funded training options, financial support; and local and regional skill shortages and priorities.
- **support for organisations wishing to work within the principles of Investors in People (IiP)** including a business improvement and training plan generated following an assessment against the IiP standard.

- **support to develop ongoing strategies** to address future training needs, which are aligned to business objectives

NETP Service – Flexible Elements

Other flexible elements may be offered at regional and local level to meet specific priorities such as:

- grants for leadership and management training
- support to achieve Investors in People recognition status
- training for Union Learning Representatives
- support for Foundation Degrees
- recruitment solutions through Jobcentre Plus
- support for continuation of individual skills development when moving from welfare to work into employment

An assumption underlying the NETP service is that employers will be expected to pay a fair contribution to the costs of training above first full Level 2 qualifications and that they will commit to giving employees at all levels in the business the time to train.

It is anticipated that Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) will identify how the combined efforts of funding partners might supplement the overall service offered through NETP.

In the longer term it is intended that the outcome of introducing the NETP service will be to:

- improve business performance
- raise the skill levels of the workforce
- develop the capacity of learning providers to meet employer need
- effect a change in the way training is delivered
- raise the standards and quality of training provision
- provide a national skills brokerage network

4 SKILLS BROKERAGE

The skills brokerage element of NETP will be funded and managed by the LSC and linked to a reformed Information, Diagnostic and Brokerage (IDB) business support service, managed by the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). From April 2006 each region will have in place a specialist skills brokerage service as described in the NETP Brokerage specification², which will:

- use brokers working towards a national standard and participating in a national training and development programme

² NETP Brokerage specification v1.0

- be impartial and easy to access
- be integrated with the generalist brokerage service to be offered under the Business Link brand
- build on resources currently available in each region
- be underpinned by quality assurance arrangements e.g. a service level agreement setting out the delivery criteria for brokers and by employer satisfaction surveys

A national broker competency framework for delivering all business support and brokerage, based on existing standards, is being developed to ensure a consistent and transparent service to employers. This broker competency framework is being developed by a steering group of key partners, led by the LSC and chaired by Chris Humphries CBE, Director General of City and Guilds.

There may be regional variations in the way the overall brokerage service is organised and RSPs will be responsible for ensuring:

- the range of business support services and skills brokerage is properly integrated.
- the support services for employers are of high quality and easy to understand and to access
- partners work together to create a 'no wrong door' access to the service
- business and skills brokers work towards accreditation
- contact with employers is co-ordinated to reduce the burden of bureaucracy

Brokers may also provide specialist support on sector specific issues. This support could include information on qualification frameworks, delivery models, funding, availability of provision and up to date intelligence on their specific sectors.

Sector brokers will also be able to advise employers on the qualifications and mode of delivery etc which meet the industry standards and priorities set out in Sector Skills Agreements.

In all cases brokers will provide an independent and impartial service, regardless of the organisation employing them and will act on behalf of employers to:

- provide them with the best possible advice on the skills training that will support their business need
- design and cost integrated training packages, which define clearly which elements are government funded and which the employer will have to pay for
- source training from the most appropriate provider

Although it is recognised that many employers already go directly to a learning provider if they are clear about the training they need, the NETP service will be

available to all employers, although brokers will primarily target new and small and harder to reach businesses.

The National Employer Service (NES) will provide the brokerage service for large (1,000 or more employees), national, multi-sited employers within NETP. In addition to offering the 'core' elements of the NETP service NES will be working to simplify contracting and administration processes and will also explore the scope for leveraging in more employer contributions towards the costs of training.

5 QUALIFICATIONS

The range of Government funded provision available through NETP, will include Skills for Life training, first full NVQ Level 2 qualifications, Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships.

Skills brokers will have the flexibility to provide advice on a wide range of training not necessarily leading to recognised qualifications and from a variety of learning providers, not just those offering government funded provision. The ETP pilots show there is a demand from employers for help to source higher level and non-qualification based training.

Level 3 Pilots

The 2005 White Paper emphasises the need to encourage higher-level skills, and RSPs will be asked to identify level 3 priorities and assess how best to deploy existing funds to address skill gaps at this level.

Level 3 qualifications are already funded across England for learners aged 16 – 25 years through Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships and also from other funding sources.

In addition, to support the move towards higher skills investment, trials will be set up in West Midlands and North West regions during 2006/07 and 2007/08 to test the level of subsidy needed to encourage many more employers to engage in additional Level 3 training. The trials will also establish the level of contribution employers would be prepared to make for Level 3 qualifications and test how the training might be delivered in the future, with a particular focus on developing the 'assess, train, assess' model and workplace delivery.

6 MARKETING

In September 2005 the LSC will be introducing an overall marketing and communications campaign to target audiences, which will consist of generic messages about the value of skills development.

Marketing support for NETP will be developed within this overall campaign and the timetable and delivery plan will be influenced by the national implementation plan.

During 2005 the LSC's national marketing team will be working with colleagues and partners across all regions to ensure that their marketing plans are developed within an agreed national strategy which takes account of and operates with existing brands such as Business Link, Apprenticeships and Learndirect.

7 AGENDA FOR CHANGE – PROVIDER FLEXIBILITY

The LSC's Agenda for Change prospectus³, sets out 'proposals for a dynamic programme of change' aimed at transforming the post-16 sector and the way the LSC works with its partners and stakeholders and it is the culmination of extended discussions with the FE sector across all regions.

Within the prospectus one of the six themes to be addressed is 'Skills for Employers' and the intent to 'work together to create colleges valued by employers as the partner of choice for developing the skills they need.'

Therefore, working with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) the LSC proposes to:

- create a nationwide network of colleges – and other providers – focused on the needs of employers
- develop with employers a Quality Mark for those colleges – and other providers – so that employers know they meet exacting standards and that the services they provide will be of high quality and responsive to the real needs of their business
- increasingly make employers aware of the benefits of working with these quality marked colleges – and other providers – so funding flows accordingly in line with employer choice
- develop the National Employer Training Programme as a powerful, demand-led mechanism for changing the way in which training for adults is delivered.

To begin this process, over the next three years, a plan is being implemented to ensure the national infrastructure to support the NETP service is developed. In 2005/06 this plan will include:

- developing the new Quality Mark in close partnership with employers and employer organisations
- improving the leadership and management skills of people working in the sector to ensure they are designing and delivering a workforce development service for employers
- developing a standard for teaching and learning in the workplace including the roll out of new teaching and learning materials

³ 'Learning and Skills – the agenda for change' (LSC August 2005)

- identifying and sharing best practice, which can be promoted to employers and the business and sectoral press and other media.

In addition, over the next three years all regions will be implementing comprehensive action plans, with clearly defined outputs, to ensure the regional and local infrastructure needed to support NETP is in place.

The timetable of this work for 2005/06 is:

- Phase 1 - mapping and analysis exercise to produce an outline plan by end of July 2005
- Phase 2 – a final and more comprehensive plan, signed off by each respective RSP at the end of September 2005.
- Phase 3 – progress reports in December 2005 and March 2006 and identification of further actions required for 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Those LSCs with ETP pilots will also be developing plans to ensure a smooth transition into the NETP service. This will involve a self-assessment of current activity and administration processes, to see how these might be improved or adapted to inform the development of the NETP. This information will supplement the lessons learned and good practice already identified from the evaluation of ETP.

End

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