

For information

LSC Northamptonshire

STRATEGIC AREA REVIEW

OUTCOMES

September 2005

A publication for partners, providers
and stakeholders of the Learning
and Skills Council Northamptonshire

STRATEGIC AREA REVIEW – OUR ACTIONS

The LSC Northamptonshire has set out an agenda for change with its partners and providers, based on the outcomes of the Strategic Area Review. Working with partners and providers, this programme for action is designed to deliver major improvements to the learning and training offered in Northamptonshire for young people aged 16+ and adults.

Northamptonshire has completed its Strategic Area Review (StAR) following an extensive consultation process on the outcomes. The StAR was conducted by all LSCs during 2003-5 and was designed to provide a detailed examination of the pattern of post-16 education and training provision in Northamptonshire and to determine how well it meets the demands of learners and employers. This included a review of all providers of education and training funded by the LSC including colleges, school sixth forms, work based learning provision, adult and community learning and learndirect provision.

This document provides a brief analysis of the main developments that have received endorsement from stakeholders, partners and providers and are taking place directly as the result of the StAR process. The document is correct as at 14th September 2005. With the help and support of all its partners, the LSC is delighted that the document is already out of date as the agenda for change locally gains momentum. In the future, many of these developments will also take a regional dimension as policy

addresses key regional learning and skills strategies.

The main challenges for Northamptonshire

During the StAR, participants identified and considered the following challenges that need to be tackled to improve learning and training provision across the County:

- Slow rates of improvement in achievement at age 16 (Level 2) and age 18 (Level 3), both of which continue to be slightly below the national average
- Although there are growing numbers of 16-18 year olds in education, employment and training (EET), there is a significant group who are not engaged in parts of the County
- Although improving, there are relatively low numbers of young people progressing to higher education compared to the national average
- The relatively low number of adults with higher skills levels compared to the national average
- Low aspirations for education and training beyond age 16 in some Districts and communities
- Relatively low skill base with almost full employment, resulting in young people and adults able to gain a job without having high level skills
- A large SME sector, which although vibrant does not invest in training
- Access to services in more rural parts of the east and south of the County

Overarching all these challenges is the significant job and population increase expected in the County in the period to 2031, arising from developments associated with the Milton Keynes South Midlands sub-regional strategy. This will put significant pressure on the learning infrastructure.

LSC Northamptonshire has now aligned the outcomes of the StAR with its Annual Business Cycle and integrated the actions required into its Annual Plan. StAR is also fully aligned to PSA requirements and key government strategies, specifically the 14-19 Strategy and the Skills Strategy, defined in the respective 2005 White Papers. It is committed to making StAR part of an ongoing process to ensure that the developments remain relevant to the learners, employers, providers and the communities that they serve.

The outcomes also incorporate the recommendations of the additional work commissioned in 2005 on learning difficulties and disabilities in the County.

Being 'about average' is not enough for Northamptonshire. The LSC and its key partners have now agreed that, as a minimum, by all education and skills measures the County will be up in the top 20 counties by 2015.

Beyond Strategic Area Review: the next steps

The developments identified in this document are specified in more detail in the 2005-6 Annual Plan and the StAR Delivery Plan.

These can be obtained at www.lsc.gov.uk/northants or from Jonathan Perry on 01604 533022.

Progress towards the delivery of the StAR outcomes will be reviewed at the beginning of 2006.

Key areas for action in Northamptonshire

We have identified key areas for action:

- Broadening the offer to young people and giving them a County-wide entitlement
- Agreeing a clear strategy and offer for all adults in the County
- Improving the information, advice and guidance available to all people
- Improving coordination between economic planners and providers and their funding agencies

This document summarises all the actions that we are now undertaking to address these key areas.

The LSC cannot deliver the StAR delivery plan unless it works in strategic partnerships with all its key stakeholders and providers. The LSC has been assisted greatly in developing the delivery plan with its partners, for which it wishes to give many thanks to all concerned.

StAR outcomes

The following ten actions have emerged directly arising from StAR.

YOUNG PEOPLE

Action 1

Emergence of a County 14-19 Strategy Group, managed jointly by the LSC, LEA and Connexions and involving FE partners. District-based groups develop strategies to meet County and District targets.

This addresses the issues of:

- *Offering a County-wide entitlement to learning and learning support to all young people, which also includes careers education*
- *Defining clearly vocational learning routes within each District and across the County*
- *Recognising the cross-County role played by FE colleges*
- *Promoting the interaction between providers and employers*

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- County-wide learner and learning support, reflecting local circumstances;
- Improved participation rates at 16 and 17

Measures:

- New vocational pathways available in each District in 06/07 and 07/08.
- An increase in learner participation 05/06 by 3% across all sectors

Further targets to be agreed for 06-07 and 07-08.

Our 16-19 learner participation has already increased substantially, rising by 4% between 2003 and 2004 alone. We need to capitalise on this excellent rate of improvement to ensure that we achieve at least 90% participation by 2010

Action 2

Appointment of a County 14-19 Strategy Manager, jointly funded by the partners.

This addresses the issue of lack of coordination of activity for young people across the County

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- County Manager appointed
- Learner and learning support entitlement in place across the County by December 2005.
- Coordinated programme delivered 06/07

Measures:

- County Manager delivers outcomes identified in Action 1 on time

Action 3

Increased opportunities for work based learning through two new Skills Centres in the east and possibly west of the County, through provider contracts and through expectations placed on new developers investing in an area (such as building contractors).

This addresses the issues of:

- *Insufficient work based learning in certain parts of the County (especially the E, S and W)*
- *Insufficient opportunities for work based learning in growth sectors such as construction.*

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- Work based learning providers fully involved in 14-19 strategy and its delivery in Districts
- Provider contracts reviewed to reflect enhanced work based learning offer and apprenticeships
- Work based learning in priority sectors which is readily accessible across the County

Measures:

- Skills Centres in place for 06/07
- Providers deliver enhanced targets for construction, engineering, health and social care, logistics in 05/06, 06/07, 07/08, especially for apprenticeships

Action 4

Alignment of LSC and LEA capital investment plans to maximise the opportunities to deliver new forms of learning.

This addresses the issues of:

- *Insufficient opportunities for work based learning identified in Action 3*
- *Poor building stock in some localities, such as Corby*

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes

- An integrated approach to investment in appropriate accommodation aligned to that of our partners

Measures

- New build agreed with funding strategy for key localities across the County including East Northamptonshire, Corby, Northampton and Daventry by end 05/06

Action 5

Coordinated efforts between the County 14-19 Strategy Group and Aimhigher through the County 14-19 Manager and each District Group

This addresses the issues of:

- *Progression into higher education from some school sixth forms, FE and work based learning*
- *Progression of young men into higher education*
- *Working towards the PSA target*

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- A higher proportion (+2%/annum) young people coming from deprived areas and non-traditional backgrounds entering HE

Measures:

- 90 additional young people participating in HE in 05/06

Further targets to be agreed with Aimhigher for 06/07 and 07/08

Aimhigher is already doing considerable work targeting schools that serve the more deprived areas and targeting those taking vocational qualifications. However, there is still considerable progress to be made to enable Northamptonshire to hit its PSA participation target of 38% by 2010.

Action 6

Establish a strategic planning and curriculum development group responsible for strategy and guidance for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, with delivery primarily through the 14-19 District groups.

This addresses the issues of:

- *Planning future needs across partners and agencies*
- *Improving S140 assessments*
- *Planning effective pathways*
- *Tackling high NEET levels*
- *Aligning activity with proposed regional developments for LLDD*

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- The needs of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities properly incorporated into planning and delivery processes
- Seamless transition between school-based provision and that offered in colleges and training providers

Measures:

- Further Entry and level 1 delivery available post 16 from 06/07
- Reduction of number of previously stated young people in the NEET group by 2%/annum to 07/08
- All District 14-19 delivery plans incorporate programmes and progression for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities

Major progress is already underway in improving Section 140 assessments, with the introduction by Connexions of a new database capturing information about learner needs. This will enable providers to plan provision and much more effectively for young people well before they leave statutory education

ADULTS AND SKILLS

Action 7

Establish an Adult Skills and Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Strategic Board to ensure a fully planned and integrated offer to adults across the County

This addresses the issues of:

- *Providing an integrated approach to the delivery of First Steps learning*
- *Providing clearly defined curriculum pathways across providers in the County*
- *Bringing IAG into all planning and delivery of provision*
- *Enabling smaller providers and the networks of voluntary and community sector providers to be involved in the planning and delivery process*
- *Raising the profile of Skills for Life (including ESOL) and IAG from an operational to a strategic process in the County*

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- Agreed Adult Charter delivered across County by 06/07
- Coordinated planning between adult learning providers to ensure contribution to national targets
- Voluntary and community sector offering Skills for Life provision
- Harmonised activities with those offered by Jobcentre Plus.

Measures:

- Adult Skills Strategy Group established
- Adult Charter agreed by December 2005
- Increase in first level 2 achievement delivered by providers in 05/06 with substantial increase to targets to be agreed for 06/07 and 07/08
- Skills for Life delivery plan for County for 06/07

Northamptonshire's achievement towards meeting Skills for Life targets has started to accelerate, with delivery being promoted through Family and Neighbourhood Learning and through employer engagement. An essential skills campaign, targeted at employers and Trade Union Reps is designed to engage 25 new companies and 400 new learners in 05/06.

Action 8

Establish two to three year funding for a Skills Development Director working across MKSM LSCs to develop strategies and resource plans (including capital) for growth areas and sectors. Align to national, regional and local priority sectors strategies and in particular those associated with the roll out locally of the National Employer training programme

This addresses the issues of:

- *Potential capacity problems associated with priority sectors:*
 - *Construction*
 - *The public sector especially healthcare*
 - *High performance engineering*
- *Maximises resources available across three LSC regions*

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- Alignment of strategy, planning and implementation between LSC Northamptonshire, LSC MKOB and LSC Bedfordshire and Luton to maximise resource

Measures:

- Northamptonshire Skills Strategy and implementation plan in place by December 2005, addressing key economic sectors, capital and funding priorities
- Director appointed for three years by December 2005 to take forward planning and implementation of strategy

Although the draft SRES provides the blueprint for economic and skills development in Northamptonshire, taking heed of the substantial projections for jobs and housing across the MKSM sub-region is essential to ensure that opportunities for skills development that encourages higher skill industries are not lost and in particular capital investment is maximised

Action 9

Establish a Logistics CoVE

This addresses the issue of a logistics being a local Northamptonshire priority.

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- A logistics CoVE established in Northamptonshire

Measures:

- Submission of bid to meet LSC CoVE approval round in November 2005
- Approval by March 2006
- CoVE commences 06/07

Action 10

Establish a forum to bring together all providers and agencies working with adults with learning difficulties and disabilities

This addresses the issues of:

- *Transitions at age 19*
- *Where LSC funding ends and social services and other funding starts*
- *Providing effective and meaningful employment and other opportunities for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities*

As a result of StAR we will deliver:

Outcomes:

- Coherent planning of provision and support for adults with learning difficulties across the County and across agencies

Measures:

- Progression routes mapped and agreed by October 2005
- Transitions group established by October 2005
- Partnership planning for developing opportunities completed by March 2006

