



Leading learning and skills

Learning and Skills Council Local Area Statement of Need

Hertfordshire

2008/09

January 2008

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities
across the East of England

Introduction

Hertfordshire's population of just over 1 million people accounts for just under 20% of the East of England's population, making LSC Hertfordshire the second largest local LSC within the region. Despite accounting for 20% of the region's population, the Hertfordshire economy accounts for 25% of the region's wealth (as measured by Gross Value Added) and this statistic mirrors a number of other key learning and skills performance indicators in which Hertfordshire exceeds the rest of the region. Within the region, Hertfordshire has the highest share of both adults and young people qualified to Level 2 (a key threshold for the Government) and for the latter one of the highest qualification rates in the country. It has the highest percentage of 17 year olds participating in either education or training in the region; reflecting the lowest NEET rate in the region and the second lowest in the country.

However, these headline statistics mask pockets of significant absolute and severe relative need within the local area. There are many areas of deprivation where people are neither in employment or education/training, particularly in Stevenage, Broxbourne, Welwyn-Hatfield, Borehamwood and Hemel Hempstead. Although Hertfordshire has made great strides in raising skill and qualification levels, we must address those geographical and demographic pockets of needs, so we can grow the strong skill base of the local labour market in order to meet the evolving needs of local and cross-border employers, particularly London.

The vision of an improved skills and knowledge base for Hertfordshire remains the same as stated in the 2007-2008 Annual Plan, in that **“by 2010, young people and adults in Hertfordshire will have the knowledge, and productive skills that are the best in the country”**; an ambition for the county and its residents and one that will ensure that the prosperity, social cohesion and well-being of the residents continues to grow.

In order to make further strides towards this goal we will give particular focus in 2008/09 to the following:

- Improving quality ~ matching local achievement rates with our high participation rates, so both young people and adults acquire the qualifications needed to progress in learning, life and employment.
- Raising participation ~ targeted action on key client groups with relatively low participation rates e.g. people with disabilities, ex-offenders and some BME groups, and targeting geographical areas of relative low participation.
- Raising skills ~ meeting the skill needs of our local employers by continuing to re-balance the learning offer of our local providers so that it meets the current and future needs of employers. We will focus particularly on the adult offer; expanding Full Level 2 and Full Level 3 provision so as to meet the higher skill needs of employers.

We cannot do this alone and we will need to continue to work with our partners and providers if we are to deliver this shared vision for Hertfordshire; building upon the excellent partnership arrangements we already have in place and making even greater progress in 2008/09.

Liam Sammon

Challenges, key actions and measures of success for Hertfordshire

Priority 1 – Improving Quality

When looking at post-16 participation Hertfordshire as a county has performed extremely well and has the highest overall participation rate of 92% for young people. However, these high participation rates are not matched by achievement. Performance across sectors and providers varies, and also by geography with a number of districts having achievement rates below the county and regional average.

In 2006/07 FE success rates were above the national average in many areas, but below the regional average in others. Despite recent gains we must close the gap with the rest of the region for some key quality measures. In Hertfordshire a substantial proportion of 'A' level and short course provision in FE is below the current Minimum Levels of Performance, and there still remain some substantial pockets of adult underperformance. We will continue to work with FE providers in driving up quality levels to above the regional average.

The Joint Area Review (JAR) highlighted considerable variation in achievement amongst school sixth forms within Hertfordshire, and the LSC/Local Authority (LA) joint response to this will be mainly through the Challenge and Support programme. We envisage much closer working with the School Effectiveness Advisors, to ensure that the LSC is fully involved in any remedial actions put in place for underperforming school sixth forms. This will continue to be a priority in 2008/09, with schools being set for the first time, post-16 performance targets for achievement at Levels 2 and 3.

Hertfordshire has made key improvements in Apprenticeship performance and success rates. However despite this, other parts of the region have also made impressive gains. We still lag behind the rest of the region in key performance measures, and performance across the Hertfordshire WBL provider base varies significantly. A stronger focus on raising the quality and profile of WBL in Hertfordshire is needed to drive up performance in line with the rest of region.

We have seen a modest increase in Entry to Employment (E2E) performance and considering the area has the second lowest NEET rate in the country, reaching this cohort remains a significant challenge. We have established an E2E action group to identify and share best practice and create opportunities for collaboration, reflecting in dynamic and individualised provision and support for learners.

We will continue to work closely with the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) in order to ensure that the Improvement Advisory Service is targeted at those providers who remain satisfactory and/or are identified as failing to improve. To guarantee the improvement of quality in post-16 provision, we will support the provider base as they implement Framework for Excellence by targeting QIA resources as appropriate.

Priority 2 – Raising Participation - Targeting Priority groups

In Hertfordshire our aim is simple; we want more young people to demand more learning, and to continue to learn throughout their lives. Despite our high participation rate, there are still almost 4,000 young people not engaged in education or training, with the bulk of this group in employment without formal training (NET). As to those who are neither in education, employment or training (NEET), Hertfordshire has reduced the rate to 5.5% in 2007, from 5.8% in 2006, and has the lowest drop-out at 17 rate in the region. This still remains an issue of concern as these learners join the NEET group, equivalent to 1,531 learners. These young people are not evenly distributed across the Hertfordshire area or client groups, and to engage these learners we will continue to work with Connexions, FE, WBL and E2E providers to ensure that they are guided by the Connexions service and enrolled upon a suitable

programme of learning. In order to reduce the number of NEET learners that 'churn' back through the system, we have introduced 'NEET reduction patch meetings' within the 7 Strategic Area Partnership Groups (SAPGs). These quarterly meetings explore the potential to match learners to current vacancies in provision, and as Hertfordshire has the second lowest positive progression rate in the region, ensure these learners progress into employment or further study. The need for flexible and individualised provision and availability of support for NET learners is also a priority in 2008/09. Furthermore, to ensure young people have better skills, better jobs, better lives, we will continue to drive forward the September Guarantee, ensure appropriate provision is available for teenage parents/parents to be, and promote the EMA take-up in Hertfordshire to support learners from low incomes.

In developing and improving provision and progression routes for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD), Hertfordshire is responding by developing more flexible learning packages and social enterprise models, both in collaboration with the FE sector. These developments form part of the Hertfordshire Implementation Plan for the LLDD client group.

Priority 3 – Raising Skills

Hertfordshire performs well against the regional picture for levels of Adult educational achievement. Despite this performance, to ensure that all adults have the same chances to succeed in life and work, we will work with providers of adult learning to ensure that Hertfordshire learners have access to a core adult offer.

In response to the Leitch report, in 2008/09 we need to create a culture of demand for skills. With adult funding pressures remaining, the focus will be on engaging those learners most excluded from the labour market. In 2008/09 we expect the FE providers to continue rebalancing their adult provision and to substantially increase their delivery of Full level 2 and Full Level 3. To support our ambitions for employers, we must encourage them to recognise the value of investing in the skills of their employees. Subsequently, an increasing share of Adult Skills will be delivered via Train to Gain (TtG) funded provision. Hertfordshire currently has a Consortium of 11 providers, having the largest contract in the region (circa £2.4million) with a target of delivering over 4,700 First and Full Level 2 qualifications. It is regarded as the best performing on volume in the region, achieving 87% of profile in 2006/07. In line with the TtG Plan for Growth, by 2010/11 funding and volume trajectories will double nationally from the 2007/08 and as such in 2008/09 we plan to expand TtG provision in Hertfordshire.

Literacy and numeracy needs are substantial across the county, particularly concentrated in the local areas of Broxbourne, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield. Hertfordshire has been successful in rebalancing Skills for Life provision, and in 2008/09, we will aim to increase achievement rates, and continue to re-balance Skills for Life provision so that a greater share is target bearing.

In order to deliver World class skills in 2008/09, the implications of the Demand Led Funding (DLF) methodology will be more choice for learners and employers, and for the Hertfordshire LSC the renewed role of creating the right local market environment for supply to meet demand. In light of this, we will work with our FE providers to encourage a more focused shift and rebalancing of provision towards Adult priority, and Employer responsive provision. We expect our partners and providers to become more responsive to learner and employer needs, and move to the aspiration of self regulation by 2012.

Our challenges and actions are based on our regional *Progress Report*, a robust strategic analysis of supply, demand and need; as well as ongoing dialogue with key partner organisations.

Partnership Working

14-19 Partnerships

The LSC in Hertfordshire has made a significant contribution to the 14-19 agenda in Hertfordshire and this will continue to be a priority for us. In 2007/08 we invested in excess of £1.6 million directly into supporting 14-19 partnership arrangements and local activity and this is in addition to the millions of pounds invested in mainstream 14-19 activity. We have aligned our structure to the local 14-19 partnership structure with a Partnership Manager assigned to each of the seven 14-19 Strategic Area Planning Groups and we jointly fund the LSC/CSF 14-19 Strategy Manager post.

We will continue to support and contribute to the 14-19 agenda in Hertfordshire in 2008/09 and we will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Hertfordshire County Council and other partners in addressing the findings from the 2007 JAR and delivering the Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP). A key element of this 2008/09 work will be the development of a 14-19 Education Plan, built upon a strengthened and renewed 14-19 partnership particularly the county Strategic Partnership Group (SPG), and a plan aligned with the Children and Young People's Plan ~ all the more pertinent now that the SPG reports directly into the Hertfordshire Children's Trust Executive Group.

The Hertfordshire 14-19 partnership was the most successful in the region for the 2008/09 Diploma Gateway and was awarded the highest number of diplomas in the East of England. This will require support and we will continue to channel our resources (both financial and human) via the partnership structure to help support this key programme.

Hertfordshire Local Area Agreement

The LSC will continue to be a core member of the LSP, Hertfordshire Forward, and will continue to align both our resources and priorities to those agreed by the LSP. In 2008/09 we will actively contribute to the NEET reduction target and the actions/provision underlying the Hertfordshire-wide campaign to raise aspirations and promote the benefits of learning, with the aim of targeting specific places within the county with low achievement levels and unemployment 'hot spots'. We will also contribute to the development of the 'evolution of the LAA' successor agreement.

PCDL Partnership

Hertfordshire LSC has been active in establishing the Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) Partnership Group and we have embarked on a major review of the partnership and planning arrangements for PCDL provision in Hertfordshire, and the recommendations from this review will be implemented for the 2008/09 academic year. PCDL provision continues to be a priority for 2008/09, and we will continue to work with Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Services (HAFLS) to ensure that planning and commissioning arrangements are in place to deliver 2008/09 targets and the priorities identified by the Hertfordshire PCDL Partnership.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

We will encourage the development of increased VCS provision across programmes, utilising their expertise in supporting the needs of client groups that they represent.

Hertfordshire Learning for Living and Work Strategic Partnership for LLDD

The Hertfordshire Learning for Living and Work Strategic Partnership for LLDD has developed a local implementation plan to take forward the recommendations from Learning for Living and Work. The plan includes the development of sustainable Social Enterprises to create meaningful progression routes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, post compulsory education.