



Leading learning and skills

Learning and Skills Council Local Area Statement of Need

Bedfordshire and Luton

2008/09

December 2007

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities
across Bedfordshire & Luton

Introduction

Bedfordshire and Luton is situated at the heart of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area; described as one of the biggest housing, jobs and regeneration projects in Europe.

It is clear that Bedfordshire and Luton has unparalleled opportunities to create sustainable communities through planning and partnership working to deliver ambitious housing targets and the required skills for the current workforce and prepare young people for the jobs of tomorrow.

The area has a combined population of 590,000 with 187,000 in the urbanised area of Luton, one of the largest towns in the region and 403,000 in Bedfordshire with its mix of smaller towns, rural areas and with Bedford being the largest settlement.

The area has traditionally had a strong manufacturing base, built around the motor, aeronautical and other engineering industries and brick making. With the loss of several large employers over the last 20 years, and the subsequent decline in the numbers employed in these industries, the economy has undergone significant transformation towards service based industries and is now characterised by large numbers of small and medium sized enterprises and relatively few large employers.

Unemployment is relatively low but there are pockets of high unemployment with Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean and Pakistani groups having unemployment more than double the average across the area with more than 15% of the working age population having no formal qualifications.

Whilst Luton is an established unitary authority area the area covered by Bedfordshire County Council is being divided into two unitary areas, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. The two new unitary authorities are required to be in place on 1st April 2009 and this process will require substantial LSC involvement in 2008-09 to ensure the smooth transition of LSC funding and the development of new strategic partnerships. A detailed profile of the local area was included in the local Annual Plan 2007-08 providing a significant evidence base of data and key statistics; this local profile supplemented with the latest local and regional strategic analyses have provided the basis for the development of the local 2008-09 statement of need.

The local statement of need is a development of the 2007-08 Annual Plan in the context of the 2008-09 Regional Commissioning Plan that identifies the regional investment priorities within the national Statement of Priorities, Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives (November 2007).

This alignment, within both a regional and national framework of priorities, has shaped and identified the key priorities and delivery actions which will drive local investment decisions in relation to increasing the participation of young people in learning, increasing the proportion of working age adults with employability skills and moving more people into sustainable employment.

At the local level effective partnership working will be the key to success. Local ambitions, local aspirations and local achievements will only be delivered through local engagement and support from providers and partners.

Suzie Webb

Area Director

Challenges, key actions and measures of success for Bedfordshire and Luton

The LSC has three national priorities, which we deliver at both a regional and local level. The key challenges for Bedfordshire and Luton in delivering these priorities in the context of local needs are set out below.

Priority 1 - Creating demand for learning and skills

Young People		
Key Challenges	Key Actions	Measures of Success
Working with local 14-19 partnerships to ensure that all schools, colleges & providers are reaching out to all young people, including the most disadvantaged and 'at risk', to offer more integrated and personalised support to each young person.	Support local 14-19 partnerships in developing the 14-19 curriculum, in particular Diploma development and responding to issues raised in Progress Checks.	Both Bedfordshire and Luton has an overarching 14-19 strategy in place, delivered through a robust formalised partnership, directing and supporting an increased range of 14-19 curriculum opportunities delivered via collaborative delivery.
Commission high quality and/or specialist provision to meet the needs of learners and ensure all young people are offered a place in learning through the delivery of the September Guarantee.	Increase the total number of 16-18 places available, aligned to demand, and the percentage of young people participating in learning.	The September Guarantee for 16 and 17 year old young people is in place in both Bedfordshire and Luton. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is reduced in Bedfordshire to 5.9% & Luton to 7.2% by December 2009. The number of funded Apprenticeships for young people grows from 1302 in 2006/07 to 1542 in 2008/09 and the number of framework completions increase from 53% to 58% by December 2009.
Extend local opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to provide access to high quality learning and deliver improved success rates and narrow the gap in levels of achievement.	Work with local providers to build the capacity of local specialist provision leading to the increase in the number and percentage of LLDD learners remaining in the local area.	The volume of 16-25 year old LLDD learners accessing learning in the local area is increased by 25% from 16 to 20.
Adults		
Key Challenges	Key Actions	Measures of Success
More adults to attain basic skills qualifications, progressing to higher	Volume of Skills for Life provision that contributes to PSA target increases	2040 adult learners achieving Skills for Life qualification that

skills, giving adults the skills they need for life, work and progression.	from 13% in 2006/07 to 18% in 2008/09.	contributes to PSA target achievement.
Work with Jobcentre Plus to ensure the local adult offer is relevant and geared to the needs of the individual.	Level 2 adult funded provision that contributes directly to the 'full Level 2' target achievement to represent 18% of the total adult FE & WBL learners.	2,737 adult FE & WBL learners achieving a full Level 2 qualification that contributes to target achievement.
Target public investment in the Foundation Learning Tier, Skills for Life and Level 2 provision (Level 3 for 19-24 year olds) at priority groups of learners to enhance their skills and employment prospects.	Level 3 adult funded provision that contributes directly to the 'full Level 3' target achievement to represent 11% of the total adult FE & WBL learners.	1,398 adult FE & WBL learners achieving a full Level 3 qualification that contributes to target achievement.

Employers

Key Challenges	Key Actions	Measures of Success
Helping businesses become more productive by encouraging employees to develop the right skills to do their job.	Identify and agree allocations for FE funded employer based NVQ provision delivered on employer premises.	50% of local public sector employers engaged in Train to Gain funded learning activities.
Close collaboration with Jobcentre Plus, Business Link East and Train to Gain Skills Brokers to ensure that the menu of support is presented to local employers as a seamless business solution service.	Target the skills necessary to support employers in the local area, with a particular focus on the priority sectors identified in the Regional Commissioning Plan and MKSM Skills and Learning Action Plan.	All locally based employers employing 250+ employees contacted via local employer engagement plan to promote Skills Pledge/Jobs Pledge/Train to Gain/Local Employment Partnership in a seamless manner.
To identify growth sectors with the MKSM Growth Area and work with LSC Thames Valley and LSC Northamptonshire to target public investment in a coordinated manner	Agree an employer engagement plan with Jobcentre Plus, Business Link East and Train to Gain Skills Brokers with a particular emphasis on public sector and larger employers.	Three local FE colleges are on the journey to achieving the New Standard, increasing fee income in line with targets and fully utilising their budget for employer based NVQ provision.

Priority 2 - Transforming the FE System to Meet Demand

Key Challenges	Key Actions	Measures of Success
Introducing the demand-led funding methodology into school sixth forms, FE colleges and work based learning providers to stimulate demand and reflect learner and employer choice.	We will work closely with local providers to support their development and response to current and future changes and challenges within Framework for Excellence.	Overall success rates in the local area in line with or exceed regional benchmarks.
Commission provision to	We will commission	New provision is

reflect overall volume, pattern and range of need and identify areas of market failure where provision fails to meet national minimum standards.	provision where the market is not responding or failing to provide provision of sufficient quality to meet national minimum standards.	commissioned to replace provision failing to meet national minimum standards
Support the local FE colleges in developing capital plans in line with the Regional Capital Strategy to ensure local colleges have world-class buildings and progressively introducing leading edge learning technologies.	We will work with colleges and providers to champion success and promote their role in contributing to local economic development.	Locally agreed capital applications are successfully processed through regional and national approval processes.

Priority 3 - Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives

Key Challenges	Key Actions	Measures of Success
To increase the number of economically active adults, specifically in Luton and localised areas where the percentage is lower than the regional average of 80.7%	We will work with Jobcentre Plus to ensure the effective integration of employment and skills services, including adult guidance service, meeting the needs of individuals disadvantaged in the labour market.	The local LSC/Jobcentre Plus Joint Delivery Plan is agreed, reviewed on a quarterly basis and key milestones and targets are achieved.
To reduce the number of adults without a qualification, targeting disadvantaged groups who will benefit from foundation learning leading to progression and employment.	We will align our local investment with both Bedfordshire and Luton's Local Area Agreements.	Local responses to economic development opportunities are agreed within revised Bedfordshire and Luton LAA 2s and include LAA target achievements relating to LSC responsibilities.
To work with partners to provide flexible and inclusive ESOL provision to help people to learn English so that they can play a full part in society and work.	We will work with local voluntary and community sector organisations to procure services or as a conduit to disadvantaged groups furthest from the labour market.	Local LSC/VCS Group continue to inform local LSC investment and provide a forum for developing approaches to penetrate groups most disadvantaged in the labour market.

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

Partnership Working

At the local level effective partnership working is the key to success in delivering solutions to local challenges as long as there is joint ownership, alignment of plans, and clear areas of responsibility that contribute to the LSC's agenda and targets. The following are examples of local partnerships that are contributing to the local statement of need:

* **The Luton Forum** – Luton's Local Strategic Partnership includes Luton Borough Council, local statutory agencies, education providers, community and voluntary organisations and businesses supported by a community empowerment network of some 650 community and voluntary groups. All members of the Luton Forum have made a commitment to joint working to transform Luton's aspirations into achievements. Two of six key themes within the Sustainable Communities Strategy contribute to the LSC's agenda, each with Local Area Agreements that include targets that align with the LSC's priorities:

- A learning and skilled Luton (including Campus Luton; the 14-19 Strategy Group);
- A working and prosperous Luton.

* **The Bedfordshire Countywide Partnership** – Bedfordshire's Local Strategic Partnership includes Bedfordshire County Council, District Councils, local statutory agencies, education providers, community and voluntary groups and businesses supported by a Countywide Assembly of some 150 groups. The Sustainable Community Plan, which has been endorsed by all members of the Countywide Partnership, include two themes that directly contribute to the LSC's agenda, each with Local Area Agreement targets that align with the LSC's priorities:

- Supporting children and young people (including 14-19 Strategy Group);
- Economic prosperity and growth.

* The **Milton Keynes and South Midlands Economy, Learning and Skills Group** – a group including EEDA, EMDA, SEEDA, Local Authorities, Learning Partnerships, Economic Development Partnerships and the LSCs for Thames Valley, Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire and Luton.

The Three LSC s have jointly produced a Learning and Skills Action Plan to ensure consistency across the MKSM Area with each LSC taking individual responsibility for specific sectors and the LSC Plan has now been adopted by all partners as a basis on which to develop a broader skills plan for the growth area.

* **The Bedfordshire and Luton Economic Development Partnership** – the sub-regional economic partnership has a balanced membership between the private and public sectors that produces the local Joint Economic Development Strategy, owned, funded and delivered by partners through the alignment of plans and priorities. The LSC leads on skills issues within the partnership that includes substantial EEDA funding through the Investing in Communities Programme of which four themes contribute directly to the LSC's agenda; reducing NEET, increasing adult skills, healthy steps to employment and enterprise support.

* The **LSC/Jobcentre Plus** Joint Delivery Plan – whilst the Plan is the formal agreement for purposes of agreeing priorities and responsibilities there is a strong working relationship between colleagues across both organisations. Service Level Agreements are in place between the Jobcentre Plus and local colleges reflecting closer working and the IAG provider has long established a presence in Jobcentres working closely with Jobcentre Plus staff. Representatives for both the LSC and Jobcentre Plus are members of key local groups providing a consistent approach to activities in deprived areas or with community groups.

* The **Personal & Community Development Learning Partnership** (PCDL) is a multi agency network involving representatives of the FE sector, ACL, local authorities, VCS and private providers. PCDL is learning for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation as well as activities developed with local residents to build skills and knowledge for social and community action. The partnership is working to align plans and activities to widen participation, respond to the broader government agenda (eg health and social cohesion) and maximise the impact of PCDL in the area by collectively identifying and responding to the needs of adults, in particular in the most disadvantaged groups in the community.