



Leading learning and skills

# Learning and Skills Council Local Area Statement of Need

## Essex

## 2008/09

## December 2007

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities  
across Essex

# Introduction

The LSC Essex area, including Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock is a complex area with a mix of urban and rural conurbations, including wards that are amongst the most deprived and most affluent in England. The 1.6 million who live in this area comprise 30% of the population of the East of England. On the fringes of the London market it is no surprise that 17% of our working population commute into the city.

Distribution of employment is in line with the regional picture, with wholesale, retail and motor related industries, manufacturing, real estate, financial services and business activities accounting for a significant proportion of employment.

Participation rates for 16-18 year olds on LSC funded provision at 75% (2004) were the lowest in England, and the fall off in participation by 17 year olds and also Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates in Essex are amongst the highest in the region. There is also a challenge in Level 2 achievement by age 19 with the lowest rates in the region in Essex (69%). Four of our districts failed to achieve a Level 2 qualification by age 19 in 2005. Around a third of young people in the Eastern Region who do not achieve a Level 2 qualification by age 19 are in Essex, in line with the population share of the region. For adults, Essex has the highest proportion of the working age population in the region qualified to below Level 2, with around two fifths of adults either having no qualifications or qualified only to Level 1.

This document is a local response to the Regional Commissioning Plan (RCP), setting out the local actions that will be taken in response to the RCP and the linked priorities of the East of England Skills and Competitiveness Partnership (EESCP). Essex, with its strategic positioning close to London and with sea and airports has enormous regeneration opportunities to support the national economy.

The challenges for learning and skills provision within Essex require innovative solutions delivered over the long-term. In particular, provision must meet the market demand of local employers as well as providing a better range and quality of choice for learners. There are ambitions for growth in Essex in Thames Gateway, Haven Gateway and the Stansted/M11 corridor areas with planned and ongoing developments. The opportunities from London 2012 in Stratford and within the county in Brentwood provide an energetic platform for a legacy in skills achievement. Within Essex, there are Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in the following regional priority sectors: construction, health and social care, hospitality and logistics to offer some of the skills development that these projects demand. An ambitious and extensive programme of capital investment into local providers, coupled with increased quality of delivery, is ensuring the development of a learning and skills sector in Essex to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

To ensure Better Skills, Better Jobs and Better Lives in Essex we will be focussed and proactive in taking forward the opportunities for growth with our strategic and delivery partners for the benefit of our whole community.

Janice Logie  
Area Director

# Challenges, key actions and measures of success for Essex

This LSC Essex Statement of Need responds to the national framework set out for the Learning and Skills Council through the Statement of Priorities 2008/9 – 2010/11 Better skills, Better jobs, Better lives, which has the following three headline priorities:

- creating demand for learning and skills
- transforming the FE system to meet demand
- delivering better skills, better jobs and better lives

We expect to see continued participation of young people in education across all three mainstream programmes within Essex. We will continue to drive increased participation by both 16 and 17 year olds. We will ensure access to different learning programmes and progressions routes. In Further Education (FE), we will ensure that quality and success rates are increased across all providers. Several new school sixth forms are planned to open in September 2008 and 2009 to accommodate growth trends in Essex. There will be a significant increase in the Work Based Learning Offer. Success is not only based on participation. The access to high quality education for all learners is dependant on improving retention significantly leading to a reduction in NEET and an increase in achievement.

The key to success for continued increase in participation is an effective 14-19 Strategy. The purpose of the Essex 14-19 Strategy is to contribute to the vision and develop a robust 14-19 plan for implementation. The LSC works with the three Local Authorities, Essex, Southend and Thurrock whose responsibility it is to support the education and training strategy for young people aged between 14 and 19. The LSC promotes the development of partnerships and collaboration between learning providers and enhances the range of learning opportunities available, including the introduction of the Diplomas across all the vocational lines of learning.

Clear strategic leadership at a senior level, with dedicated operational support, is vital in bringing together the range of different providers and interests to ensure coherence and a grasp of the bigger picture.

Adult FE participation rates are declining, mainly as a result of a shift in curriculum mix away from short courses into longer courses, as providers improve enrolment rates in full level 2 and full level 3 qualifications. This is a welcome shift, but we recognise the need to improve the rate of increase more rapidly and to drive up participation and success. Adult participation and achievement is a key priority for us in Essex.

LSC Essex is currently working to significantly expand its' Work Based Learning (WBL) offer in response to the Government's aspiration to double the number of Apprentices in England. In addition to the expansion of Train to Gain, WBL is a key driver in achieving LSC targets. We are working with WBL consortia and other providers to develop a robust offer with an expanded breadth of learning opportunities, particularly at Level 3, where Essex has been relatively weak. In addition, LSC is looking to commission provision, through open and competitive tendering, that meets local economic aspirations and employers needs.

To ensure such growth, LSC is further developing such models as Pre-Apprenticeship Pilots and looking to further forge the links between WBL and FE through Programme-Led Apprenticeships and a wider synergy of progression pathways between the two sectors. Through such developments we will create the infrastructure to support the Government target, that from 2012 there will be an entitlement for every young person (16-18) to have an Apprenticeship place (should they attain the sector's entry criteria). This will require sustained growth through existing providers and the introduction of new provision that complements the existing offer.

LSC Essex will continue to drive up quality and, in particular, success rates in the WBL sector. We will work with providers to ensure that we will only purchase "good" or better learning opportunities for our learners and employers that exceed our Minimum Levels of Performance and give value for money.

We have good multi-agency working for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LLDD) provision in Essex, with our relationship with Essex County Council the only example in the country where the local authority and LSC budgets are joined to provide a planned 52 week education & care programme. However, LLDD provision across the whole of Essex is patchy with an excellent offer in some places but a dearth of provision in others. There is a continuing need to have a significant focus on this provision for current and future known LLDD needs.

Essex providers are active in driving forward the quality agenda, for example the FE sector is preparing for self regulation via involvement in the pilot stages of Framework for Excellence, Peer Review and Foundation Learning Tier.

## Partnership Working

LSC Essex is committed to ensuring economic growth in the county through the role and inclusion of the skills agenda and is working, sometimes in the lead, sometimes in support across the wide range of partners and stakeholders in this dynamic area.

Our Area-wide working relationships are influential across the regeneration agenda, the business community and local communities as well as our core business of the provision and demand of learning.

## Local Authorities and Growth Areas

We have an excellent working relationship with our three Local Authorities Essex, Southend and Thurrock on the 14-19 Agenda, the Adult and Employer Market, together with shared ambitions on business growth and Local Area Agreement. We will build on this strong relationship to reduce NEET, increase participation and success, ensure appropriate choice and opportunity across all our provision to include 6<sup>th</sup> Forms, Further Education and Work Based Learning. We will work strategically on 14-19 planning so that young people are aware and can access what is best for them.

The three Gateways Thames, Haven and Stansted M11 Corridor, provide enormous opportunities for these communities. In particular, a new Skills Strategy has been developed for the Haven Gateway and we will work with our partners to increase successes in this area. The Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership has supported us to drive new provision in their areas and to be a catalyst for expectational growth in opportunities for young people. In the M11 Area new initiatives in Higher Education and new capital builds will change the landscape and access to learning in Harlow, Epping Forest, Uttlesford and Braintree.

LSC Essex has been involved extensively in developing the Investing in Communities Business Plans for all three sub regional partnerships and is represented on each of the associated Steering Groups. This partnership aligns Local Area Agreements, Investing in Communities and the wider skills and educational offers across the public and private sectors.

## Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC)

FEDEC, which includes all Essex colleges is, with the three Local Authorities, our key strategic and delivery partner for the FE sector. Our joint successes have had a major impact in encouraging the participation of young people. Our challenges this year are to continue to drive participation, progression and the achievement of both young people and adults. The introduction of demand led funding for all of our provider network will inform the way we work together, the way we plan and fund. There is a strong commitment to grow our market through high quality and flexible provision which has a crucial role to play in supporting the wider government ambitions.

## Work Based Learning

Our intended significant increase in this sector means we need to work closer in partnership with our provider base and employers to develop the right provision in the right sectors in the right place. The solution for WBL is multi agency.

## JobCentre Plus

LSC Essex and JobCentre Plus are working very closely together in developing the welfare to workforce Joint Working Development Plan and integrated skills and employment agenda.

We share the passion to increase skills achievement locally so that people at the margins of the labour market and in disadvantaged communities receive the support they need to access learning that will equip them for sustained employment.

# Voluntary and Community Sector

With our focus moving on 2012 and planning strategically for the reduction of NEET we see new opportunities for working with this sector on common objectives.

## Business

In Essex we are fortunate to have a wide range of business networks and agencies that actively recognise the Skills Agenda. We share objectives and ambitions with the Essex Business Consortia, the Institute of Directors, Chamber of Commerce, Brokerage Organisations and the Economic Development Network. This rich source of advocates and champions will continue to support our ambitions and targets for the immediate and legacy benefit of a high value added business community.

## Stakeholders

We are actively involved in other partnerships that can make a contribution to our ambitions for Essex. These include the Local Strategic Partnerships, local economic development forums, etc.

In summary, Essex is an area recognised for its entrepreneurial skills and innovation. During this next year, with our partners, we will demonstrate that LSC Essex is adapting this approach to achieve more success more quickly.