

SHARED INTELLIGENCE

linking  
**economic intelligence**  
to and **adult skills**  
**14-19 commissioning**

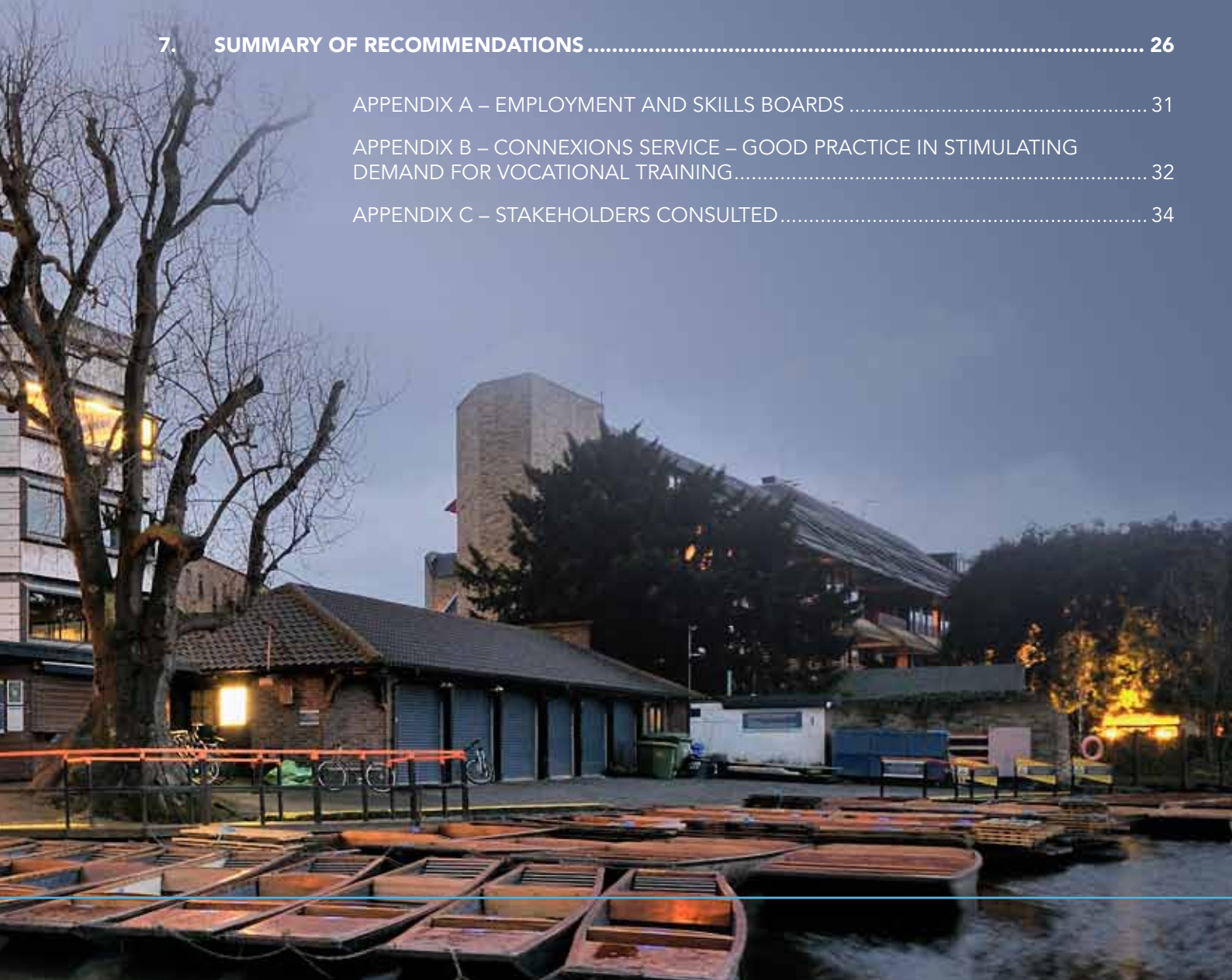


**FINAL REPORT JULY 2009**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

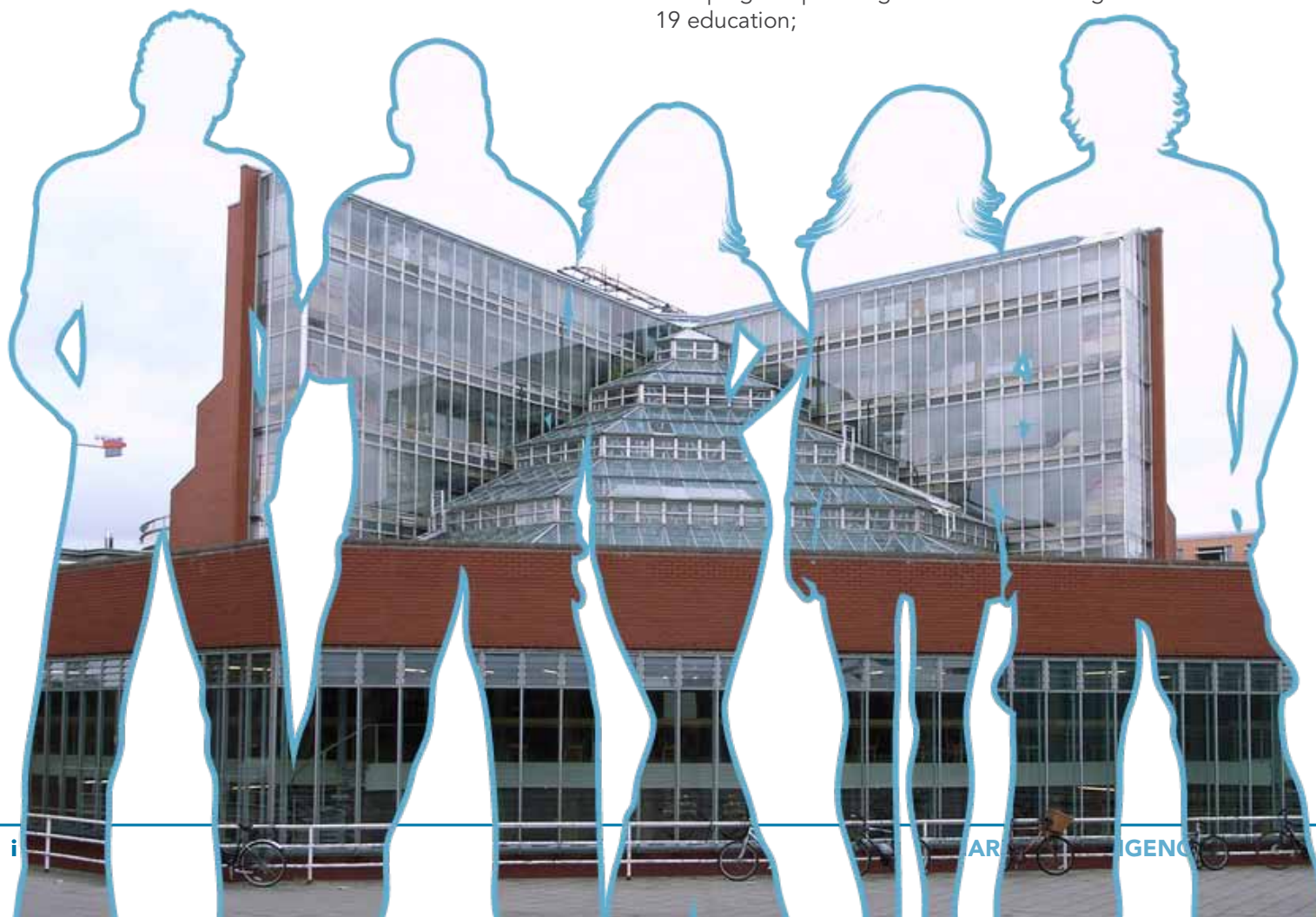
The transfer in responsibility for planning and commissioning 16-19 education and training coincides with the development of new regional governance structures and increased expectations of councils' role in supporting local economic development. This coincidence provides an opportunity to align the new structures so they are mutually supportive, and to bring all the responsible public agencies together in partnership to provide education, training and support through from 14-19 to adulthood in a managed market, responsive to the needs of the current and future local economy. This is particularly opportune given the current economic climate.

This report explains how that opportunity can be seized and the machinery of government changes can be used to enhance the life and work chances of young people and adults who are out of work or require further education and training.

The report was commissioned by the East of England 14-19 Regional Forum to develop recommendations for feeding in economic intelligence to the planning process for 14-19 commissioning and influencing the future shape of adult skills.

The report sets out the national and regional context, including:

- A summary of the machinery of government changes and how they are being implemented in the East of England, including the development of regional structures for the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), and the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS);
- The roles of the Regional Forum and the Sub-Regional Groupings in planning and commissioning 14-19 education;



- The new governance arrangements being introduced at a regional level, including the Single Regional Strategy and the Local Authority Leaders' Board;
- The enhancement of councils' role in local and sub-regional economic development, including the new duty to produce a local economic assessment and the potential role of Multi Area Agreements and Employment and Skills Boards.

The report makes the observation that the current state of integration of the economic development, skills and education agendas at a local level is patchy. In some places there are already good links between the 16-19 commissioning teams and economic development officers. In some councils these links are less well developed, and in others this project initiated discussions.

The report makes a series of recommendations for new arrangements at regional, sub-regional and local authority level.

The recommendations for regional level changes are significant and if accepted would require action by the Government Office for the East of England, the East of England Development Agency, the Local Authority Leaders' Board, the YPLA, SFA and NAS. The report recommends that:

- There should be one regional adult skills strategy and one regional young people's skills strategy which should form core components of the Single Regional Strategy;
- The 14-19 Regional Forum should sit within the new regional governance arrangements reporting to both the YPLA and the Local Authority Leaders' Board.

At sub-regional level the report notes that the three 14-19 sub-regions in the East of England are very different geographically and as a result are working in different ways. The recommendations are that:

- The arrangements introduced in the region should respect these differences;
- Economic intelligence should be provided to the SRGs through representation from the new EEDA area teams, alongside information from the YPLA;

- The roles of the SFA and NAS at SRG level should be clarified through discussions around the recommendations in this report.

The report explores the importance of employer engagement and links between 14-19 education and adult skills and employability. It recommends that the most appropriate level for these links to be made is at the local authority level, particularly in the case of the county councils in the region. But it recommends that where cross border partnerships exist (currently in Thames Gateway South Essex and Luton/Central Bedfordshire) they could play an even more effective role in integration across those functional economic areas.

The report identifies a number of priority actions at a local authority level:

- Councils should use their civic and community leadership role to work with their partners to co-ordinate economic development, adult skills and 14-19 commissioning structures. They should look to ensure effective strategic co-ordination and a partnership structure that facilitates delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA;
- Employer engagement mechanisms should be integrated, or co-ordinated at a corporate level by councils so as to provide a consistent approach to employer engagement, and meaningful partnership structures with employers;
- There should be an expectation that the Connexions service should perform the function of stimulating demand for appropriate vocational courses from young people;
- Councils need to work with the SFA to ensure that they are engaged in local partnership structures and in the development and integration of the Adult Advancement and Careers Service which should stimulate demand for appropriate vocational courses from adult learners; and,
- Economic assessments should be used to provide an economic context for 14-19 commissioning plans.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Shared Intelligence was commissioned by the East of England 14-19 Regional Forum to develop recommendations for feeding in economic intelligence to the planning process for 14-19 commissioning, and influencing the future shape of adult skills.

1.1. Developing an effective interface between councils' economic development role and their new responsibilities for commissioning 16-19 education and training is important, particularly in the current economic climate. One objective of this report is to ensure that this opportunity is not missed and that the implementation of the Machinery of Government changes is used to support the development of vibrant local and regional economies and enhance the life and work chances of young people and adults who are out of work or require further education and training.

## Background

1.2. In June 2007 it was announced, as part of the Machinery of Government changes, that 16-19 funding would be delivered through local authorities from 2010/2011. In *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver*, published in March 2008, proposals were set out to transfer responsibility for funding the education and training of young people from the LSC to local authorities (supported by the new YPLA), and to transfer the responsibility for adult education and training to a new adult Skills Funding Agency. In the East of England a number of new structures have been set up in order to support the transition process and deliver 14-19 commissioning following transition. These include sub-regional planning groups which will address needs of local residents and young learners flowing into and out of individual local authority areas.

1.3. Meanwhile in relation to economic development, the local authority role is developing significantly. Under the forthcoming statutory duty, County Councils and Unitary Authorities will be required to produce local economic assessments. The same time the recent Houghton Report on

worklessness suggested local authorities move towards producing worklessness assessments, work and skills plans, and potentially integrated work and skills budgets where there are effective partnerships in place. They will also have more responsibilities for delivering Apprenticeships and providing work placements.

1.4. In terms of adult skills, the Skills Funding Agency will take over responsibility from the LSC, but the extent to which it will replicate all the current functions of the LSC is unclear. There is also uncertainty around how to resolve a possible tension between the strategic economic development needs identified through the economic development agenda, and individual learner demand, which may well not correspond to the needs of current or future employers. Consequently, stimulating demand for appropriate vocational courses will need to be built into the planning process.

1.5. Finally, there are a number of strategy and policy areas in which local authorities need to engage employers. These include place-shaping and strategy discussions with local strategic partnerships, as well as consideration of business support programmes and engagement in identifying local skills needs. Previous experience suggests that, employers will not understand or respond well to a variety of different engagement mechanisms unless it is clear to them how their input is co-ordinated across the various agendas and what impact it will have.

1.6. In this context, our task was to identify the current and developing structures addressing these issues in the East of England region, and make recommendations for improved co-ordination between them. As far as we are aware, the region is the first to have considered these issues, and many of the recommendations may have relevance to other areas of the country.

## Methodology

- 1.7. Our approach to the work was to engage all the regional stakeholders as well as each of the local authorities to identify current links between services and partnership structures, as well as to explore possible improvements. We engaged officers within each of the local authorities from 14-19 commissioning and economic development services to work through the issues in a collaborative way. This was a useful process as in some cases it brought services together to explore joint working for the future, but also a challenge in terms of organising meetings.

### *Scoping stage*

- 1.8. A series of meetings and interviews were held at the start of the project with a number of key stakeholders to get agreement on the success factors and priorities for the work. The key objectives identified for the study were firstly that the key priority for local authorities is to determine how to link the three agendas – 14-19, adult skills and economic development at local authority level, as well as sub-regionally and regionally. While local authorities do not have the leverage over adult skills provision that they will have over 14-19 commissioning, what they are seeking is overall a more effective managed market, and a constructive dialogue with the adult skills providers on future economic priorities.

### *Local Authority discussions*

- 1.9. Wherever possible, each of the 11 county and unitary councils were engaged through face-to-face meetings, where this was not possible telephone interviews were conducted. Whenever diaries allowed, we brought 14-19 lead officers and economic development officers together for a joint discussion. The purpose of each of these meetings was to map out current 14-19 and economic development structures within the 11 local authorities in the East of England, provide an assessment about current and future links between the two agendas and discusses possible future developments and structures such as Multi-Area Agreements, Employment and Skills Boards and Economic Assessments.



### *Interviews with stakeholders*

- 1.10. A series of telephone interviews and face-to-face meetings were also held with regional stakeholders. These included the LSC itself, EEDA, Go East, NAS, LSC/SFA, and YPLA as well as a selection of colleges and providers. The full list of interviewees is attached at Appendix C to this report.

### *SRG meetings and Regional Forum*

- 1.11. Discussions were then held with all three of the Sub-Regional Groupings to test out the framework developed for linking the 14-19 commissioning structures to the economic development structures in each sub region at each of the three geographical levels. In addition, a discussion was held at a meeting of the Regional Forum and at a special meeting including economic development officers to consider the draft findings and recommendations of the report.

### *Report Structure*

- 1.12. We have set out in some detail the policy context for this work in Section 2 of the report. As the main audience for the report is the Regional Forum and the stakeholders involved in 14-19 commissioning in the region, we have emphasised information on the economic development side to inform their understanding of the changes in that arena.
- 1.13. As the regional structures for skills and economic development and indeed the regional

governance structures themselves are in the process of development, we have identified in Section 3 the position at the time of writing. This provides the context for the subsequent discussions and recommendations.

- 1.14. In the course of the work we developed a framework for linking the 14-19 commissioning structures to the economic development structures in the region by looking separately at each of the three geographical levels at which the 14-19 commissioning structures operate. We have discussed the need for links at each of these levels with stakeholders across the region, and with the three sub-regional groups, and our recommendations reflect the outcome of these discussions. The next sections of the report are structured around the discussions at these three levels, with Section 4 addressing regional co-ordination, Section 5 looking at the sub-regional level, and Section 6 exploring links at local authority level. We have summarised our recommendations in Section 7.
- 1.15. Appendix A provides further information about the development of Employment and Skills Boards across the country to inform the SRGs in considering appropriate structures at sub-regional level.
- 1.16. We have also provided, at Appendix B, a number of examples from within the region and outside it, of approaches to stimulating demand for vocational education provided through Connexions services.
- 1.17. Appendix C lists those stakeholders consulted as part of this work.

# 2 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT CHANGES AND POLICY CONTEXT

This section sets out the policy context for this work. As the main audience for the report is the Regional Forum and the stakeholders involved in 16-19 commissioning in the region, we only briefly discuss 14-19 reforms. However, we have provided a more detailed assessment of changes to economic development and, in particular, those which are highly relevant to 16-19 commissioning, along with some discussion of the changes to the adult skills area, including increased responsibilities for tackling worklessness arising from the Sub-National Review and the Houghton report. The policy context in this chapter forms the framework for the discussions with local authorities, the results of which are presented in section 4 of this report.

## Machinery of Government changes

- 2.1. In June 2007 it was announced, as part of the Machinery of Government changes, that responsibility for planning and commissioning 16-19 provision would transfer from the LSC to local authorities from April 2010. In Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver, published in March 2008, proposals were set out to transfer responsibility for funding the education and training of young people from the LSC to local authorities (supported by the new YPLA), and to transfer the responsibility for adult education and training to the new Skills Funding Agency.
- 2.2. Local Authorities will become responsible for ensuring provision of the range of 14-19 Diplomas, Apprenticeships and Foundation Learning Tier for those working below Level 3. The statutory participation age for young people will be raised to 18. The new regional planning group (currently called the 14-19 Regional Forum) will consider and agree the overall commissioning plan for 14-19 provision through aggregated plans for their sub-regions.
- 2.3. The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) will hold the overall national budget from DCSF and will approve all Local Authority commissioning plans for 14-19 provision. Each region will have an agreed sub-regional structure for 14-19 provision, which will consider the coherence of plans, including the joint commissioning of certain provision such as for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) will be focused on 19+ learning and will have responsibility for: managing the National Employer's service; be responsible for performance management in colleges; working with the new Adult Advancement and Careers Services; and working with the new National Apprenticeship Services (NAS). The NAS is responsible for the end-to-end delivery of apprenticeships, from the delivery of targets, assessment of providers, national marketing and an apprenticeship vacancy matching service.
- 2.4. In relation to adult skills, the government wants the system to be capable of responding quickly to the immediate and future needs of employers and individuals. Colleges and providers will have greater flexibility to deliver the education and skills required in their local communities. The update on FE and Skills System Reforms produced by DIUS in December 2008 states that "Employers will be able to access the skills training they need quickly and easily through co-ordinated brokerage services and responsive colleges and providers." To do this, the government wants colleges and providers, individually and collectively, to reflect employer and individual demand locally and sub-regionally, and deliver what is appropriate in their area. It is not currently clear whether there will be any mechanism for this to happen except through their engagement in local authority partnership structures.

### *Adult Advancement and Careers Service*

- 2.5. As envisaged by DIUS in its prospectus<sup>1</sup>, the new adult advancement and careers service will work with Jobcentre Plus to ensure that those seeking work receive a seamless offer of support into employment, and with Train to Gain skills brokers to help employers and employees work together on skills development. It will link up with Connexions services and with all sources of advice on higher education so young people and adults can find out about all their options in one place.
- 2.6. While it is not yet clear how this will translate on the ground in the region, the government intends that the adult advancement and careers service will be a single service available to all adults, shaped by local partnerships and innovative ways of working. In each local area, partnerships of advice services and providers will deliver advice to individuals “bringing together everything they need to know to advance in work and life”. The partnerships will operate as a flexible network, sharing information and expertise to deliver a personalised offer to advice and ongoing support. The service will need service protocols with young people’s information, advice and guidance services (through the Connexions services now commissioned by local authorities) to ensure that young people get the support they need during the transition to adulthood. And it will also have strong links with all sources of advice on higher Education, so individuals can find out about all their options in one place.

### *Employability and Skills Policy*

#### *Leitch Review of Skills*

- 2.7. The Leitch Review of Skills<sup>2</sup>, published in 2006, highlighted that the UK is ‘running to stand still’ in terms of skills provision. Although there have been significant improvements in participation and attainment, particularly up to Level 2, UK and global labour markets are evolving at a faster rate. By 2020, less than 10% of UK jobs

will require a qualification below Level 2. The Leitch Review set the ambitious target of raising the number of adults qualified to at least level 2 to 95% by 2020 and exceeding 40% of adults qualified to level 4.

- 2.8. To reach this ambition, the Review recognised that there must be a step change in attainment of intermediate skills both at school and in the labour force. Among the recommendations to deliver this step change were: a focus on economically valuable skills providing real returns for individuals, employers and society and delivering mobility in the labour market; a demand-led skills system to meet both the needs of individuals and employers; and a new Commission for Employment and Skills with a network of lower level Employment and Skills Boards to strengthen employer engagement.
- 2.9. The Leitch Review and ‘In work, better off: next steps to employment’<sup>3</sup> set out the Government’s proposals to develop an integrated employment and skills service that will help move more people into sustainable employment and to progress in their working lives. ‘Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work’<sup>4</sup> provided further detail on how DIUS and the LSC would work with DWP and JCP to deliver the integrated service including proposals to trial aspects of the service, such as the adult advancement and careers services, skills accounts and skills vouchers in 2008/09.

#### *The Houghton Review*

- 2.10. The Houghton Review on ‘Tackling worklessness: A Review of the contribution and role of English local authorities and partnerships’, March 2009, contains the review team’s recommendations on how successful multi-agency and cross-sector local partnerships can best tackle worklessness in their communities.
- 2.11. The report identified the need for greater clarity of the role of local authorities and LSPs and recommended that central and local government should work within a single

<sup>1</sup> DIUS, (2008) Shaping the Future, a new adult advancement and careers service for England

<sup>2</sup> HM Treasury (2006) Leitch Review of Skills, Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills

<sup>3</sup> DWP (2007) In work, better off: next steps to employment

<sup>4</sup> DIUS/DWP (2007) Opportunity Employment and Progression: making skills work

framework for integrating skills, employment and wider support for workless people. The new framework includes: worklessness assessments as part of the new economic assessment duty; work and skill plans in all the areas eligible for working neighbourhood funds and integrated work and skills budgets across partnerships; a challenge fund to stimulate temporary jobs of benefit to the community and local economy in areas which are particularly hit by the recession; and local authorities should do more to expand employment, work experience and training opportunities for long-term benefit claimants.

- 2.12. These recommendations emphasise the government's policy of aligning and integrating the economic development and skills agendas.

### Economic Development

#### *Sub-National Review of Economic Development*

- 2.13. The publication in 2007 of the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR)<sup>5</sup> reviewed the geographic level at which economic development takes place and made recommendations for significant changes at the regional, sub-regional and local level.
- 2.14. At the regional level proposals were set for the introduction of a single integrated regional strategy to ensure a much closer alignment between economic and spatial planning. This will provide the means of prioritising regional activity to address key issues such as economic development in the context of a shift to a low carbon economy, regeneration and housing. 'Prosperous Places', the government response to the consultation on the proposals outlined in the sub-national review<sup>6</sup>, states that the new integrated regional strategy will be the joint responsibility of the RDA and a Local Authority Leaders' Board. As a result, the key regional planning functions of the regional assembly will pass to the RDA and Local Authority Leaders' Board, which will have joint responsibility for

the regional strategy, including its drafting, implementation plan and monitoring its delivery.

#### *The new local authority role*

- 2.15. The Government is now looking to local authorities, individually and in sub-regional partnerships, to play a much stronger role in promoting the economic development of their communities. The Government is devolving responsibilities for economic development and skills to local authorities to ensure that the economic challenges of globalisation and technical change can be responded to quickly and flexibly. The position of local authorities in economic development is pivotal to enabling cities, towns and localities to work effectively with business to develop, attract, and retain a skilled workforce which is able to be successful in the globalised economy.
- 2.16. The SNR is one of a number of recent national policy framework documents that fundamentally changes and enhances the role of local authorities. Local authorities are still grappling with the implications of these changes, some of which have not yet come into force, but will make new demands of them. The government has already taken measures to empower all local authorities to promote economic development, and will now introduce a statutory economic duty on county and unitary authorities to undertake local economic assessments. Prosperous Places set out new responsibilities for local authorities as follows:
- providing clear, transparent leadership to raise prosperity;
  - developing a vision for the future of the local economy, informed by input from business and analysis of local, regional and national contexts;
  - supporting the development of wider regional and sub-regional strategies and ensuring that local strategies are consistent with these;
  - using the considerable resources and powers at their disposal to develop the economic

<sup>5</sup> HM Treasury, (2007) Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration HM Treasury: London

<sup>6</sup> Prosperous Places: taking forward the review of sub-national economic development and regeneration, CLG Dec 2008



potential of all local areas;

- securing investment from the private sector; and
- ensuring that business support is co-ordinated with relevant partners within regional and national frameworks.

2.17. The new local government performance framework and in particular the introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, will reinforce the role of local authorities in leading local partnerships, emphasise a focus on “place” rather than individual services, and underline councils’ responsibilities to support local economic prosperity.

2.18. Other key proposals made through the SNR are Multi Area Agreements (MAAs), Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) and Economic Assessments. Each of these is discussed below.

### *Multi Area Agreements*

2.19. A Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) is a written framework in which adjoining local authorities work in partnership beyond their administrative boundaries to better reflect the real economic geography of their area. An MAA is formed through a voluntary agreement between local authorities who enter into a contract with central government in return for a direct dialogue with government and government agencies, and the potential for devolved powers, responsibilities over funding programmes, and flexibilities.

2.20. An MAA is formed through a voluntary agreement between neighbouring local authorities and other stakeholders to work together differently in return for freedoms and flexibilities from central Government. They bring together local public and private sector partners to coordinate action across a wide range of policy interventions such as: transport, land use planning, unemployment, capital investment, and infrastructure provision. The basis for sub-regional collaboration is to allow issues to be addressed at the most appropriate and effective spatial level, so that an artificial administrative boundary does not prevent the successful implementation of policy designed to stimulate economic growth.

- 2.21. There are two types of MAAs, voluntary MAAs and MAAs with duties. MAAs with duties are statutory as they require partners to work together to deliver targets. The Pre-Budget Report, November 2008, indicated the intention to devolve additional responsibilities to Local Authorities within MAAs and city regions to drive prosperity and economic growth. These proposals will be underpinned by new statutory arrangements for sub-regional co-operation between Councils to support governance and accountability at city region level.
- 2.22. There is considerable variation across MAAs in terms of the size and definition of the sub-region; the policy themes that are prioritised; and, the nature and formality of the governance structures in place.
- 2.26. In the context of this study MAAs and ESBs are of significance as they could provide a mechanism to support the integration 14-19, economic development and adult skills.

### *Economic assessments*

- 2.27. Prosperous Places proposed a statutory economic assessment duty for local authorities. This duty, scheduled to come into force next year, requires county and unitary local authorities to:
- carry out an assessment of their economic circumstances and the challenges of their local economy in consultation with partners; and
  - ensure that this assessment underpins the relevant regional strategy, local Sustainable Community Strategy and subsequently Local Area Agreement (LAA) and potentially Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) targets.
- 2.23. Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs), as explained in the Leitch Review of Skills, should be led by employers. Their role would be to engage local employers, articulate labour market needs, scrutinise local services and recommend improvements in integrating labour market and training support.
- 2.24. The guidance recommends that a 'one size fits all' approach is to be avoided. Adopting a flexible approach will give significant scope for simplifying the current complex arrangements. The Leitch Review highlights some potential criteria for licensing:
- Eminent employers should take on a leadership role. Trade unions and independent representation should also be present
  - On a large enough scale to be recognised as a functional economic area, while sufficiently local to allow effective scrutiny of services
- 2.25. However, to date there has been no detailed guidance on Employment and Skills Boards. Where ESBs have been set up there is considerable variation in their structure, scope and functions; examples have been provided in Appendix B of this report.
- 2.28. The emerging guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has outlined the broad principles which should apply to local economic assessments. In particular a local economic assessment should:
- Identify the economic linkages, including the links between the urban and rural economies, within the area of the assessment and between it and the wider economy;
  - Identify the comparative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the local economy;
  - Review the key ways in which local authorities and their partners influence local economic development and their impact;
  - Review the regeneration challenges of the area identifying priority areas. It should also improve a local authority's understanding of how economic development can support regeneration priorities; and,
  - Analyse the causes of worklessness. In applying the principles above, local authorities should examine the key weaknesses of the local labour market and the nature of labour

market exclusion. These assessments should feed into any resultant work and skills plan, which would take account of the capacity of key agencies to deliver across employment, skills and enterprise programmes.

2.29. The Government expects the first assessments to be undertaken to inform local strategies and LAA targets for 2011/12. Many authorities are now starting the process of producing these new assessments.

2.30. The new statutory duty regarding economic assessments is of particular significance to the 14-19 commissioning function as these assessments will provide the economic context, vision and future direction of local economies in addition to providing valuable economic and labour market intelligence on skills priorities and the needs of local areas.

## Observations and conclusions

2.31. From this summary of the policy context it is possible to identify a number of key issues and priorities for local authorities which are important in terms of the interface between economic development, adult skills and 14-19 commissioning:

- The development of new arrangements at a regional level in relation to 16-19 education and adult skills is happening at the same time as the introduction of a more streamlined approach to broader regional structures and strategies. This provides an opportunity to ensure alignment and integration between education, skills and economic strategies;

- Councils are developing mechanisms to meet the new expectations on them in relation to supporting their local economy at the same time as they take on new responsibilities for 16-19 education. This presents an opportunity to co-ordinate the work across these agendas, which should also be seized;
- Employment and employability and skills are now clearly linked in government policy and Councils and their strategic partnerships provide the mechanism for linking these at local level;
- The role of Councils as civic and community leaders means that they have a responsibility to co-ordinate partners to deliver local priorities (as set out in Sustainable Community Strategies and local area agreements), and ensure partnership structures in place to facilitate this.
- Local partnership structures will need to connect agencies working across adult and young people's skills, worklessness and employability and economic development, in order to ensure an effectively managed market for skills in response to local economic needs.
- There are a number of new mechanisms that can help partnerships to do that, including MAAs and ESBs, where these are appropriate. Where they are not pursued, alternative mechanisms for employer engagement and co-ordination of agendas will be needed.
- Economic assessments will be available from next year and have the potential to provide useful information for 14-19 commissioning teams in relation to local economic priorities.

# 3 EAST OF ENGLAND – EMERGING STRUCTURES

This section outlines the structures in development in the East of England for regional governance, economic development and 14-19 commissioning. We have not gone into detail on the 14-19 commissioning structures because they are well-known to the primary audience for this report. We have provided more information on the emerging structures for the new regional agencies (that is the YPLA, SFA and NAS), and for some of the economic development structures as these may be less familiar.

- 3.1. The information provided in relation to the YPLA, the NAS and SFA in the East of England is understood to apply to the other English Regions. While the structures and functions of the organisations are now becoming clear, they are still in the process of development, and there is still an opportunity to influence relationships between the agencies and other regional, sub-regional and local structures.
- 3.2. The summaries of all the emerging structures in the region provide the foundation for the discussions in the next sections looking at how the structures and responsibilities could be better integrated.

## Regional governance structures

- 3.3. The East of England Regional Assembly currently has responsibility for the development of the regional spatial strategy (RSS), and the East of England Regional Development Agency (EEDA) is responsible for preparing the Regional Economic Strategy. Both these documents are prepared on behalf of the region as a whole, and as such their implementation is the shared responsibility of the region. From next year, the Regional Assemblies will be dissolved, and a new Local Authority Leaders' Board will work with EEDA to agree between them the new single integrated regional strategy which will replace the current RSS and RES.
- 3.4. Plans are currently being developed for the region's integrated, or Single Regional Strategy (SRS). It will provide the regional economic context for the development of sub-regional and local activity and for any regional skills strategies.
- 3.5. Recognising the importance of integrated economic and spatial planning, the region is

already working to produce a joint regional Implementation Plan, the draft of which is currently out for consultation. The Plan is intended to set the longer-term context and priorities for investment in areas such as housing, transport, wider infrastructure and sustainable economic development. It will also show how the region is collaborating on the integrated delivery of economic objectives, and help partners align investment.

- 3.6. The question arising from this discussion is what should be the relationship between any strategies arising from the new 14-19 and adult skills structures, with the regional skills strategy produced as part of the new regional governance structures.

## Planning and commissioning young people's learning

### *Young People's Learning Agency regional structures*

- 3.7. The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) regional office will have a number of functions in addition to supporting the commissioning process developed through local authority partnerships and sub-regional groups. These include research and analysis, and planning for the provision of education for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young offenders.
- 3.8. The YPLA's analytical team plans to provide data and analysis for councils to use to inform their 16-19 commissioning, including labour market intelligence. The YPLA recognise the need to develop a relationship with councils'

economic development teams in order to reconcile data from different sources, and ensure that all economic data provided for the 14-19 commissioning teams is as good as possible. A first cut of the local authority level data will be published in July 2009 and this could provide a useful opportunity for an initial interaction with economic development departments.

- 3.9. The Regional Implementation Team will provide support to the Regional Forum and support the development of regional policy on 14-19 education and training. The YPLA will not itself develop a regional strategy, but plans to support the Regional Forum in doing so. It is envisaged that the RDA will have a key role in feeding economic data into that process. Councils will be able to influence this process "upwards" via the sub-regional groups and "sideways" via the Local Authority Leaders' Board.

### *Sub-regional 14-19 commissioning structures*

- 3.10. Following the announcement of the machinery of government proposals a number of structures have been and are in the process of being established in readiness for the transfer of 16-19 responsibilities from the LSC to local authority control. In the East of England a Regional Planning Group, known as the Regional Forum has been established to maintain strategic oversight for the effective transition and implementation of the machinery of government changes for young people in the region. The Regional Forum currently includes the Directors of Children's Services of all eleven Local Authorities in the region, the LSC Regional Director, the LSC 14-19 Director, Government Office Director of Children's Services and the RDA Skills Director.
- 3.11. Proposals for sub-regional group have been informed by travel to learn data for FE college provision provided by the LSC. This has led to a pattern of three sub-regional groupings across the region as follows:
- Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Peterborough and Suffolk;
  - Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Luton; and,

- Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

- 3.12. These groups are different in terms of area covered to sub-regional groups in other regions. Their responsibilities and the differences between them are discussed in detail in section 5 of this report.

### *Adult skills structures*

#### *Skills Funding Agency regional structure*

- 3.13. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) will be structured around three teams. A regional skills team will produce a regional skills plan. The intention is that it should be a stand-alone plan sitting alongside the Regional Economic Strategy or IRS with both a sectoral and a geographical dimension. The agency will work and consult with other regional organisations in putting the plan together.
- 3.14. An employer skills group will manage the train to gain programme. It will also provide an interface with local employer organisations, Employment and Skills Boards, Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Redundancy Networks. It will also relate directly with very significant employers or sectors.
- 3.15. A client services group will liaise closely with Job Centre Plus and local authorities around services to unemployed people, including benefits, and programmes to tackle worklessness.

#### *Adult Advancement and Careers Service*

- 3.16. The service is still in early stages of development. There are ten prototypes in operation across the country to test a range of approaches to establishing local partnerships. These include a 'hub and spoke' advancement network in Greater Manchester with common referral mechanisms, protocols and standards, and partners include Jobcentre Plus, nextstep, employers, employees and employer-facing intermediaries. In the Black Country a targeted network of advancement advisers ensures that individuals can access a range of support from the CAB, Local PCTs, Connexions, nextstep, colleges, third sector training organisations, and RSLs. In Slough, a local authority-led partnership delivers through

multiple access points including the CVS, Wellness at Work Slough Group, nextstep, Jobcentre Plus and colleges.

- 3.17. It is clear from these examples and the outline information provided about the service<sup>7</sup>, that how this service works through local partnerships will be crucial to ensuring that the service can support an effective mechanism for stimulating demand for appropriate routes to vocational training and employment.

### National Apprenticeship Service

- 3.18. There is still a lack of clarity around the exact role of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and its interface with local authorities, although proposals are quickly taking shape. The organisation will have responsibility for the developing Apprenticeships in response to identified demand, and for increasing the numbers of public sector apprenticeships. It will operate the newly established National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service for employers and would-be Apprentices, which will enable employers to advertise their positions and prospective applicants, anywhere in the country, to search for them and apply as appropriate.
- 3.19. In the East of England the NAS will operate both at the regional and local level. There are two sides to the NAS at regional level: learner services which will be responsible for stimulating demand for apprenticeships and will work alongside the 14-19 partnerships; and the employer services who will work with employers to boost the demand for apprenticeships. Employer services officers will work with larger employers in local authorities while smaller employers will be dealt with through business link.
- 3.20. Although the mechanisms and structures are in the early stages of development it is envisaged that the NAS will have to work very closely with local authorities, and in particular, economic development structures to make sure that apprenticeship planning reflects local priorities and needs.

<sup>7</sup> DIUS, October 2008, Shaping the Future: A new Adult Advancement and Careers Service for England.





## Economic development structures

- 3.21. This section identifies some of the elements of emerging economic development structures in the region in relation to the policy context for economic development discussed in the previous section.

### *Sub-regional economic partnerships (SREPs)*

- 3.22. In recent years, EEDA supported a number of sub-regional economic partnerships (SREPs) serviced by small secretariats across the region. These were based partly on local authority boundaries, and partly in relation to some assessment of functional economic areas. More recently EEDA has reviewed its support for these partnerships, and they are not now intended to provide a comprehensive coverage across the region. So, for example, the Bedfordshire and Luton Economic Development Partnership no longer exists, and liaison with Councils in that sub-region are conducted with the Councils themselves with some co-ordination of these discussions provided by Central Bedfordshire.
- 3.23. Although again this is subject to the continuing review of SREPs, each of the counties has had such a partnership. This applies for example, in Essex, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. The SREPs are often, but not always, linked into the local strategic partnership structures of the authority. The function of the SREPs has been to provide a forum for partnership discussions and co-ordination of EEDA activity in the sub-regions, and agree sub-regional economic strategies and priorities.
- 3.24. These are not the only sub-regional arrangements recognised by EEDA, so for example, the Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis, or Luton/Central Bedfordshire area is also recognised as a sub-region, for the purposes of economic development in relation to the growth area, and for work on co-ordinating infrastructure investment in the area in the form of the EEDA Integrated Development Programme, along with other identified "engines of growth" in the region such as Peterborough and Greater Norwich, as well as the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region.

- 3.25. EEDA is in also the process of putting in place new arrangements for liaison with Councils and their partners at local and sub-regional level, in addition to the remaining SREPs. Under consideration is a new Area Partnerships team structure, which would engage in local authority level work, and co-ordinate initiatives across skills and enterprise briefs with local partners.
- 3.26. This discussion is important and relevant to the discussion of sub-regional 14-19 commissioning structures because it illustrates the differences in geographical approaches between the SRGs on the 14-19 commissioning side, and EEDA's economic development structures on the other.
- 3.30. There has, however, been considerable interest in the concept of ESBs expressed through the Regional Forum. This has been in relation to the potential for them to fulfil the functions of employer engagement as well as linking the economic development, adult skills and 14-19 skills agendas.
- 3.31. In the case of Norfolk exactly this structure is proposed, and we consider that such an approach makes perfect sense in a council of this size. However, this example does not meet the general criteria relating to ESBs in terms of them being cross-boundary.

#### *Multi-Area Agreements*

- 3.27. To date, the East of England is the only region in the country not to have an MAA in place, and there remains a mixed appetite for MAAs in the region. This may be due to a number of factors, including the geography of the region. There are no core cities or established city-regions in the region, and in other regions these have been at the forefront of developing MAAs. In both Thames Gateway South Essex and Luton/Central Bedfordshire, the partnerships have opted for the development of Integrated Development Programmes, to co-ordinate capital investment.

#### *Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs)*

- 3.28. Again, there are no ESBs in the formal sense of the term in the East of England. Their development has been subject to very similar discussions to that around MAAs. As discussed above, in other areas they have tended to be established following the agreement of an MAA, and subsequent to it.
- 3.29. MAAs have been developing in momentum across the country as they have enabled areas to significantly increase their voice in relation to central government as well as conferring additional resources and flexibilities on sub-regions. However, in relation to ESBs there has been some concern that the functions, remit, structure and responsibilities are not clearly described in any current government guidance.
- 3.32. Elsewhere across the region there has been discussion around the potential for an ESB in Luton and Central Bedfordshire, and in the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership sub-region, and it may be that the SRGs can influence the likelihood as well as the remit of ESBs being developed in these areas.

### Conclusions

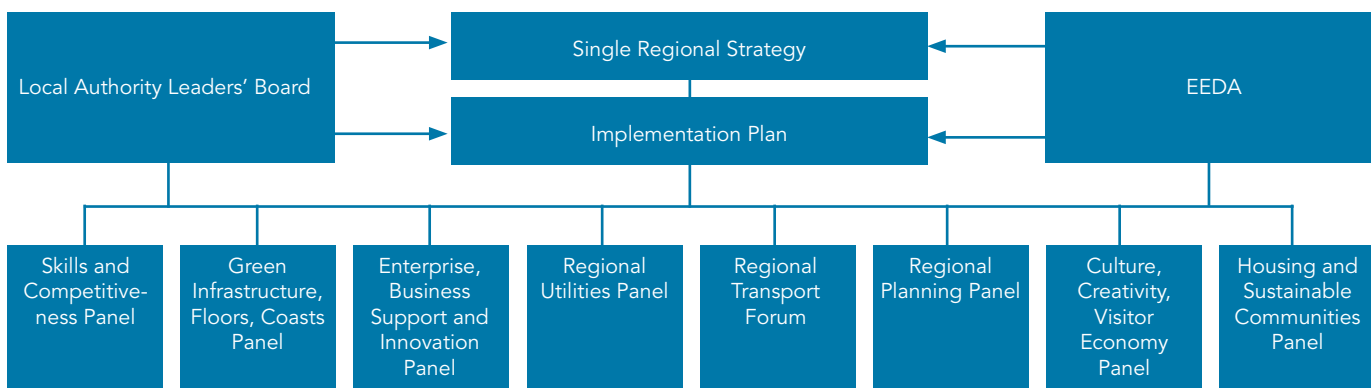
- 3.33. From this summary of the emerging regional structures we would suggest the following:
- While the regional role and structures of the YPLA and SFA are in development, there is an opportunity to align them with the emerging regional structures, governance arrangements and strategies proposed under the new Single Regional strategy;
  - There would be considerable benefit in a continuing dialogue between those responsible for economic development, education and training across the region to ensure that an integrated approach is achieved and maintained; and
  - Any arrangements introduced in the East of England need to be capable of responding to the variable geography of sub-regional structures being explored in the light of the government's sub-national review.

# 4 REGIONAL LEVEL INTEGRATION

The structures and strategies related to the East of England Single Regional Strategy are still being developed and considered by EEDA and its partners. However, we understand that the basic model is likely to be that described below.

- 4.1. The Local Authority Leaders' Board and EEDA will be jointly responsible for preparing the new Single Regional Strategy on behalf of the partners in the region. The Implementation Plan will summarise the proposals for delivering the strategy across the region and regional partners. Underneath these documents will be a series of thematic partnerships, responsible for preparing strategies relating to these themes. Some of these are currently in existence under the EEDA and EERA structures, such as the East of England Skills and Competitiveness Panel (EESCP), and the Regional Transport Forum. Others are described in the Implementation Plan currently published as a consultation document. The Panels are shown in the diagram below:
- 4.2. Government guidance identifies the main purpose of regional strategies as setting out the overarching strategic framework for the region. They should articulate a clear long-term vision for the region over a 15-20 year period, and focus on the relationship between the regional economy and the key drivers of growth (competition, enterprise, innovation, skills, investment and employment), the environment, communities and regeneration. The plans will set the framework to guide the activities, plans and investment decisions of key public sector agencies, and influence the policies, plans and investment decisions of central Government departments.
- 4.3. The regional strategy will be jointly developed by the Regional Development Agency, EEDA, and the Local Authority Leaders' Board, but in conjunction with a range of other partner agencies. It is our view that it would be entirely appropriate for this strategy to provide the framework for regional adult or young people's education and skills strategies.
- 4.4. In the context of this emerging structure for the regional strategy, and in the context of the regional structures and functions of the SFA, YPLA and NAS, there is a need to identify the relationship between the regional structures and strategies produced by these agencies, and the Single Regional Strategy. As the regional governance structures and arrangements between EEDA and the Local Authority Leaders' Board are currently in development, there is an opportunity to suggest arrangements which would integrate these strategies and partnerships to ensure the maximum level of consistency between strategies and provision, and reduce the possibility of duplication.
- 4.5. Currently, the position appears to be that the Regional Forum and the YPLA are preparing

## Regional skills strategies and partnerships



to produce a regional 14-19 strategy and the regional SFA is preparing to produce a regional adult skills strategy. These would be separate to the Single Regional Strategy and the agencies would need to work together and with EEDA to attempt to align these strategies with the Single Regional Strategy and the Regional Skills Strategy. This could be done through a formal consultation process, but both the 14-19 strategy and adult skills strategy would need to draw on economic intelligence provided by EEDA.

- 4.6. The alternative approach, which would be more effective in co-ordinating strategies and also raise the profile within the region of the 14-19 agenda, would be to align the structures within the new regional governance arrangements.
- 4.7. This could be achieved through the Regional Forum taking on the role of a regional young person's skills partnership, with its accountability both to the YPLA, and the regional governance structures. Its membership already includes the YPLA, NAS, SFA and EEDA as well as local authorities across the region. The regional 14-19 strategy would then form an integral part of the Single Regional Strategy. We understand there will also be a regional stakeholder group to advise the Regional Forum, including providers and employers. The role of this group would not be affected by these proposals.
- 4.8. There is already an adult skills partnership – the East of England Skills and Competitiveness Partnership (EESCP). In order to provide a mechanism for this partnership to produce an integrated strategic approach to adult skills its membership and functions would need to be reviewed to provide for appropriate SFA, NAS, YPLA and other representation. The SFA would not then need to produce a separate adult skills strategy. The strategy would be produced by the SFA working with EEDA and other partners. Integration with economic strategy and 14-19 skills would be built into the process, and an essential part of agreeing the SRS itself.

## Recommendation

- 4.9. There is currently an opportunity to influence the relationships between the new regional structures. We recommend regional partners, and in particular the leads for the regional YPLA, SFA, and NAS, along with EEDA, the Government Office and local authority representatives, should take this opportunity to ensure the most effective links are made across these structures.
- 4.10. Indeed, our view is that the structures should be aligned so that there is one adult skills strategy, and one young people's strategy for the region. These would be core components of the Single Regional Strategy, and the partnership structures responsible for agreeing them should sit within the regional governance structures, with the Regional Forum reporting to the YPLA and the Local Authority Leaders' Board.
- 4.11. This is an important and potentially highly significant discussion. Our view is that if this recommendation is taken forward it would be beneficial to all parties.

# 5 SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL LINKS

The approach to implementing the transfer of responsibilities for 16-19 commissioning to local councils set out by the DCSF includes an important role for sub-regional groupings. It is clearly important that economic intelligence is available to support these groupings in their work. But the discussions we have had with the three SRG's in the East of England suggests that, driven by their geography, they are operating in very different ways and that different approaches to integration may well be appropriate in each sub-region.

5.1. This section summarises the role of the SRGs and how economic intelligence could support that process. It then explores the position in each sub-region and makes some recommendations in relation to links with other sub-regional bodies and other agencies. In some cases our conclusion is that links are best made at the local or regional level, particular given the varied picture at a sub-regional level.

5.2. We understand that the principal function of the SRGs will be to aggregate the individual local authority 14-19 plans into a sub-regional plan and identify how commissioning will take place across the sub-region in relation to the priorities identified. This will need to be done in the context of planning other 16-19 and 14-19 provision such as NEET and pre-NEET interventions, school sixth form provision, apprenticeships and Foundation learning Tier/Progression Pathways provision. The SRGs will feed these sub-regional 14-19 commissioning plans through to the Regional Forum, for integration into a regional 14-19 commissioning plan. The SRGs will also play an important role in managing cross border issues and commissioning.

5.3. However, it is clear from our discussions with the SRGs at their meetings in May that, driven by their geographies, the three groups have rather different ambitions. The next sections explore the position in each SRG area.

## *Essex, Southend and Thurrock*

5.4. The SRG covering Essex, Southend and Thurrock concentrates, in its joint work, on a tightly defined part of the Thames Gateway. It covers two small unitary authorities and a small part of Essex,

where the priorities are planning for growth and raising skills levels and the partners recognise that it is essential to work together because of the economic links across the area.

5.5. The Essex, Southend and Thurrock group consider that integration with adult skills provision across the sub-region, and providing an employer engagement mechanism at that level are essential elements of ensuring a strategic and co-ordinated approach to meeting skills needs across the sub-region. They consider that some sub-regional level broader economic development level structure is essential to this purpose, and would also help to ensure that there is some mechanism at sub-regional level for discussion around stimulating demand for vocational skills provision for adults in the absence of any formal structures in the commissioning process. The SRG also seeks to influence regional/sub-regional funding pots through linking in to economic development issues and partnerships. In this context the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership structures are essential to link into. If this partnership moves towards the development of an MAA and ESB, the SRG should be engaged in the process in order to influence strategy and co-ordinate provision with adult skills.

## *Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Norfolk and Suffolk*

5.6. By contrast, the Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Norfolk and Suffolk group comprises three large county areas and one small unitary authority. The counties are large enough to be considered by EEDA and others as sub-regions in themselves. The 14-19 commissioning structures at county level already have to bring together priorities from a number of area-based consortia. While

there is still cross-county boundary travel for work, and colleges based across the local authority boundaries, they do not provide a functional economic area in the way that the Thames Gateway sub-region does. As such, and while bringing together a wide range of issues, providers and employers, the appropriate level for employer engagement and links to adult skills is more likely to be at individual authority level for the counties. Peterborough is in a different position, but key to its effective operation is the co-ordination with its own economic development structures which are well advanced through Opportunity Peterborough.

- 5.7. The Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Norfolk and Suffolk group was sceptical about the need for additional structures for employer engagement at the sub-regional level, or any extension of the function of the SRG meetings. However, they are happy to engage with EEDA to access economic information and would also welcome economic profiles of the sub-region.

#### *Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Luton*

- 5.8. The third group, Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Luton, is made up of three unitary councils, two of them newly formed, and one county council, each with different economic priorities. In Hertfordshire there are important connections with London in relation to travel both to work and to learn, and little connection with issues in Bedford Borough. Luton and Central Bedfordshire, meanwhile, have developed very close work in relation to growth and regeneration of the Luton/Houghton Regis/Dunstable sub-region with the development of a range of partnership and collaboration arrangements around growth in the area.
- 5.9. This SRG was interested in exploring the potential for economic assessments to provide useful information for the 14-19 planning process, and checking at which point in the planning cycle the information will be required at local authority and sub-regional levels.
- 5.10. Our view is that, as a result of these differences, the right solution for any one of the sub-regions

in relation to links with adult skills and economic development may not be appropriate for the other two.

### Sub-regional economic intelligence

- 5.11. We consider that across each of the sub-regions an understanding of the sub-regional economy should be fed into each of the sub-regional groups to inform the aggregation of the local authority 14-19 commissioning plans into a sub-regional plan. This could be done in a number of ways, such as through including economic development officers in the SRG meetings at appropriate points, providing written briefings on the sub-regional economy to the SRG, or looking at aggregations of local economic assessments where available.
- 5.12. However, our view is that this link could be provided most effectively by engaging EEDA representation (in the form of the new Area Teams) in the sub-regional groups at appropriate points. They can feed in sub-regional economic issues and priorities to the discussions about priorities for 14-19 commissioning across the sub-regions. They would also be in a position to bring together information from Business Link in relation to employer priorities as expressed through Train to Gain, as well as information aggregated by EEDA from the local authority and/or sub-regional Borough economic assessments. It should also be noted that the new EEDA funding for sub-regional partnership supports the production of economic intelligence for that sub-region, and this can provide a useful source of sub-regional economic information for the SRGs.

### Employment and Skills Boards - feeding in the employer voice

- 5.13. Our brief was informed by an understanding that the DCSF had identified a need for structures at sub-regional level to facilitate employer engagement. In discussion with the Regional Forum it was also clear that there is a view that one possible mechanism for employer

engagement and links to both economic development and adult skills issues at the sub-regional level might be Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs). We therefore considered this option in some detail.

- 5.14. The background and purpose of ESBs is described in section 2 above, with further details provided on particular examples in Appendix B. Where an ESB has been established to fulfil a particular function in relation to economic development and skills within the region, its participation in influencing the 14-19 agenda and in influencing adult skills would considerably strengthen a local partnership's ability to co-ordinate provision and ensure it reflects strategic economic priorities. However, experience elsewhere has demonstrated that employer boards or ESBs established without a clear role and authority over resources or strategies cannot maintain the interest of employers over any period of time.
- 5.15. In the East of England there are no formal ESBs in existence. There are two areas where cross-authority boundary economic development structures are in place, and the development of an MAA (and therefore potentially an ESB), is a possibility. These are the Thames Gateway South Essex area (which has a boundary co-terminous with the 14-19 commissioning group), and the Luton and Central Bedfordshire growth area. In these areas it is strongly recommended that if they proceed with the development of an MAA, this is informed by, and in turn informs, 14-19 commissioning. The TGSEP Business Plan recommends exploring the establishment of an ESB for the sub-region, and the partnership has invited the SRG to discuss the case for a formal link to the 14-19 commissioning structures.
- 5.16. However, the value of including an employer input at the sub-regional level as a general principle is unclear. In partnerships of small unitary authorities covering a functional economic areas, such as the Thames Gateway South Essex area, it may be helpful to combine structures in the form of an Employment and Skills Board should one be developed. But as

argued in the previous section, in larger county areas, employer input needs to be facilitated at the county level rather than across a large sub-region.

- 5.17. If sub-regional structures for employer engagement are established in Luton/Central Bedfordshire or in the Thames Gateway sub-region, the agendas could usefully be co-ordinated through these structures.

### Links to adult skills and employability

- 5.18. Taking into account the discussion about the differences between the sub-regions, our view is that different solutions may be appropriate across the region. As discussed in the previous section, our view is that these links need to be made most significantly at local authority level. There are structures in the form of local strategic partnerships, LAAs and in some cases other structures designed to facilitate linking the agendas, and it is appropriate that these be exploited for that purpose.
- 5.19. Within County Councils these partnership structures are more complex, and are more likely to require additional mechanisms for linking the agendas, such as the Norfolk ESB proposal, which would be designed specifically to bring together the 14-19 and adult skills agendas with the employer board responsible for co-ordinating economic development and business support.
- 5.20. While arrangements are in place for effective links to be made with the adult skills and employability agendas at a local authority level we do not feel there is a need for this issue to fall within the remit of the SRG. However, in the Thames Gateway area, for reasons discussed above, there is a far stronger case for strategic co-ordination at the sub-regional level, particularly if that can build on existing economic development structures in the form of the TGSEP.

## Input from key partners and providers

- 5.21. We also considered, and discussed with the sub-regional groups, the potential for building further links into these forums. In relation to links to the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), and adult skills, the approach is partly dependent on whether the NAS and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) develop structures at the sub-regional level. If they do, it would be sensible to invite them to input into the sub-regional 14-19 strategy aggregation process at appropriate points.
- 5.22. However, the view of two of the sub-regional groups was that the sub-regional level structure for 14-19 commissioning is less significant than that at the local or regional levels, and the groups have a very specific and limited remit. We would support this view, with the exception of a sub-regional level 14-19 input into existing employer engagement and adult skills structures in the form of the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership.
- 5.23. If the principal function of the SRGs is to provide a sub-regional commissioning plan aggregating priorities of the local authorities, it would not appear to be necessary or appropriate to include providers in that discussion. Their views would in any case have been taken on board at local authority level.
- 5.27. There are two areas of the region (Thames Gateway South Essex and Luton/Central Bedfordshire) where there may be opportunities in the future to develop Employment and Skills Boards. Currently the model is unlikely to be pursued elsewhere, although the Norfolk county-wide ESBs could be developed in other parts of the region.
- 5.28. As a general rule, and particularly in relation to county councils, links to the adult skills agenda need to be made at local authority level (in some cases in negotiation with neighbouring areas). In the case of Luton/Central Bedfordshire and the Thames Gateway South Essex areas, at that sub-regional level; we would recommend mechanisms are put in place within the sub-regional structures to facilitate this.
- 5.29. With similar caveats, we would suggest that employer engagement should also be developed at local authority level.
- 5.30. In the light of the above, the roles of the SFA and NAS at SRG level should be clarified through discussion around the recommendations in this report.
- 5.31. Any tension between the strategic economic development needs provided by linking with the sub-regional economic development agenda, and the individual learner and employer demands arising through the Train to Gain and Adult Advancement and Careers Service could be reduced through ensuring that the adult advancement and careers service in the region is equipped with the economic intelligence necessary for it to provide a role in stimulating demand for vocational training.

## Conclusions and recommendations

- 5.24. The difference in geographies of the three sub-regional groups suggests a need for different approaches to integration with economic development, adult skills, and employer engagement at the sub-regional level.
- 5.25. These conclusions about the integration that takes place at sub-regional level have implications for the relationships developed at local authority level.
- 5.26. Economic intelligence should be provided to SRGs by the new EEDA Area Teams, alongside information to be provided by the YPLA.

# 6 LOCAL AUTHORITY LEVEL LINKS

The fact that the transfer to local councils of responsibility for commissioning 16-19 education and training is coinciding with the strengthening of councils' economic development role provides a significant opportunity to develop a more integrated approach at a local level. This is particularly important in the current economic circumstances with issues around worklessness, skills and economic resilience being at the centre of the concerns of local councils and the communities they represent.

- 6.1. In this section we provide a brief assessment of the arrangements in place in the region for the integration of these agendas at the local level. This includes both links between the various officer teams and, importantly, the extent to which partnership structures provide for an integrated and strategic approach to be taken to the whole education, skills and economic agenda.
- 6.2. Our assessment is based principally on meetings and interviews with officers in the 11 county and unitary councils in the East of England. We used our discussions with 14-19 leads, economic development officers and those responsible for adult skills, to discuss possible improvements to the structures and relationships between them. It is also important to note that the fact that these discussions have taken place has itself contributed to the process of developing closer integration between these areas of responsibility.
- 6.3. In some authorities there may be different structures managing 14-19 commissioning, economic development, adult and community learning, and employability/worklessness initiatives. All these functions are delivered in partnership with other agencies, overlapping across the agendas. Partnership structures have to be sensibly integrated to be able to deliver efficiently under the local strategic partnership. The civic leadership role of Councils includes responsibility for ensuring appropriate representation on these partnerships and engaging them to deliver LAA targets. In areas with over-arching structures such as MAAs and ESBs, these could be used as a co-ordinating mechanism. In the East of England where these are largely absent, other ways of achieving co-ordination will need to be considered.

## Current structures and relationships

### *Joint work and sharing intelligence*

- 6.4. In some authorities where there is a strong history of joint work across education and economic development, there are already good links between the 16-19 commissioning teams and economic development officers. In some Councils these links are less well developed, and in others our intervention initiated discussions.
- 6.5. Where there are already effective relationships between economic development and adult learning, and links to structures to tackle worklessness, it is easier to extend these officer relationships to include 14-19 discussions. Examples of joint work from Southend include sector skills meetings, work on Future Jobs Fund, and work with local employers including public agencies, on developing apprenticeships. In Central Bedfordshire, where there are also strong links across departments, there is joint work taking place to commission support for NEETs and pre-NEETs, moving people off benefits, and there is an economic well-being group feeding into the Children's Trust. In Luton a high-level corporate team is working on a skills strategy for the town, and there are links between the thematic boards within the LSP.
- 6.6. There was a general acceptance expressed across all the Councils in the region that economic assessments would provide a useful mechanism for providing information on local economic priorities, key growth sectors and how the local economy may change in the future. It will also be important to ensure that the 14-19 Partnership has all relevant information on current employer demand through data from Business Link on Train to Gain, and EEDA can provide reports on this.

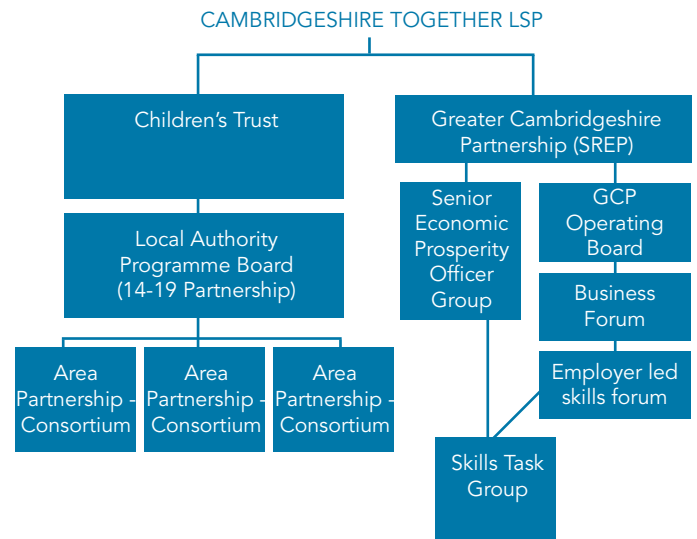
6.7. From work we have conducted elsewhere, we would suggest that there is also a need in many authorities, to raise the level of understanding corporately not only of the need to support the links between different areas of council responsibility, but also to understand the corporate role that the Council can play as a key local employer as well as civic leader. This includes taking a lead, for example, on developing apprenticeships and promoting them with other partners, as well as supporting work placements for young people, and developing links with schools and colleges.

6.8. Our conclusion is that economic strategies and the forthcoming economic assessments should inform 14-19 commissioning plans at the local authority level. Economic assessments will provide a narrative for the vision and strategy for the future development of the local economy and this should be provided to inform the development of 14-19 commissioning plans. This can currently be provided with reference to existing economic development strategies. However, the quality and consistency of these is variable. From next year when the statutory duty is likely to be in place, there is likely to be more consistency in terms of content and format of economic assessments across the region.

*Partnership structures*

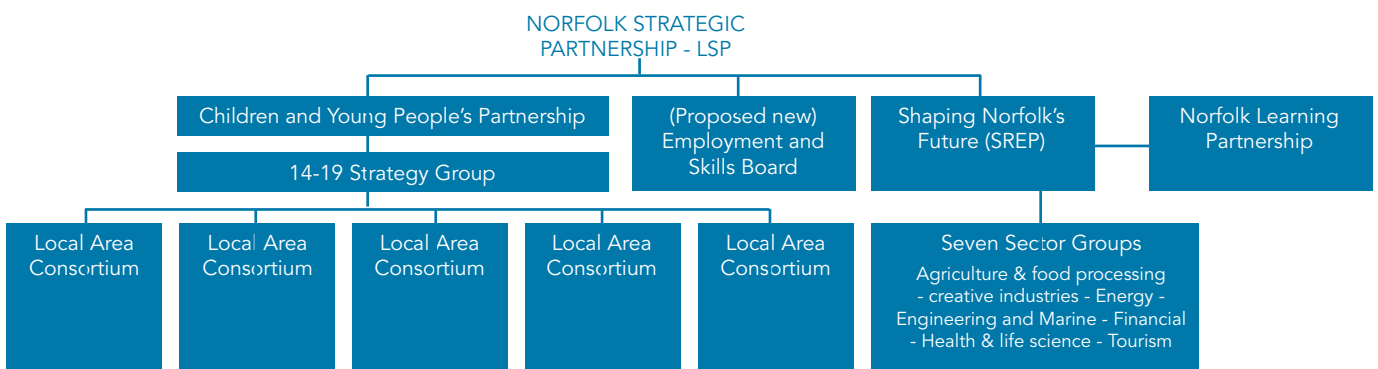
6.9. From our analysis of the existing partnership structures across the region's local authorities, there is a limited degree of connection across 14-19 planning, economic development and adult skills, and employer engagement structures.

6.10. There are exceptions to this. In Cambridgeshire, the Chief Executive of the Greater Cambridge (Economic) Partnership also attends the 14-19 Programme Board. The County is currently developing new economic development partnership structures including a Skills Task Group which will be linked to the 14-19 commissioning structures, and there is an Employer-led skills forum in development, which would provide an employer engagement mechanism for both economic development and 14-19 purposes. This is shown in the chart below.



6.11. In Essex there are close operational links being developed across the service areas. Joint work is taking place with the skills sub-group of the Essex Development and Regeneration Agency on the Apprenticeship Strategy.

6.12. In Norfolk there is a proposal to establish an Employment and Skills Board as illustrated in the





structure diagram below. This would link the adult skills, 14-19 strategy and economic development agendas across the County in partnership with employers.

- 6.13. Within the Thames Gateway, there are proposals at the sub-regional level to create partnership structures to link the skills agendas for young people and adults through the establishment of a local authority skills group.
- 6.14. In Suffolk a new Learning and Skills Board has been established to bring together young people's education with economic development, and this group has a very strong employer input. It is jointly developing work on apprenticeships, and is seen as an embryonic Employment and Skills Board. There is recognition of the need for the group to include work on adult skills.
- 6.15. Our conclusion is that local partnership structures should provide a mechanism for:
  - An interface for economic development, worklessness, skills, education and training, including 16-19 commissioning and strategy in relation to adult skills and apprenticeships;
  - The overall strategic partnership to maintain a strategic overview and links with the sustainable community strategy and LAA; and,
  - Engagement with local employers relating both to work around economic development (and mitigating the impact of the recession), and skills provision.
- 6.16. We would recommend that local authorities across the region give serious consideration to whether partnership structures could be more effectively linked.

### *Employer engagement*

- 6.17. From our experience working elsewhere in the country, employer engagement on the economic development side of local authority activity is frequently in need of improvement. The East of England region is no exception. In relation to 14-19 planning there are mechanisms in existence and developing, to engage employers particular in the development of Diplomas.

- Education Business Partnerships develop and promote business links with schools. However, there is frequently no connection between these partnerships and links with key employers or developers around future employment opportunities in the area. There are opportunities both for co-ordination of employer engagement at a more strategic level across authorities, and also for co-ordinating employer engagement mechanisms to provide a clear corporate and partnership structure for business engagement.
- 6.18. Some Councils in the East of England have developed more co-ordinated and strategic approaches to employer engagement across services. These include Southend, where employer engagement for 14-19 curriculum development and planning utilises the database of employers established through the economic development team. Norfolk has a structured approach to employer engagement in economic development, and the boards and partnerships will also be utilised in relation to inputting an employer voice into 14-19 planning. Cambridgeshire is in the process of setting up an employer-led skills forum, inked into its adult skills and economic development structures.
- 6.19. In Essex the main employer engagement mechanism is the Essex Business Consortium, and this group has now been involved in developing an employability project for young people. In Luton work has been commissioned looking at an employer forum in collaboration with Luton and Bedford. In Peterborough there is an employer engagement strategy in development in which both 14-19 commissioning staff and economic development officers (through Opportunity Peterborough), have been involved.
- 6.20. Our recommendation is that the Connexions Service, already commissioned and often provided through the local authority, should be clearly informed about both current and likely future economic scenarios in order that they can inform students about likely future employment opportunities and changes in the job market, in order to stimulate demand for appropriate vocational courses.
- 6.21. In Norfolk, the Connexions Service works closely with employers through a job vacancy matching service and advisors are informed of the current and future skills needs of the economy through a variety of means such as links with Sector Skills Councils and sources of Labour Market Intelligence. In Essex, officers are working with employers to promote employment opportunities in priority sectors to young people.
- 6.22. We have also looked at examples of best practice outside the region. The Connexions advisors in Bristol receive an annual Labour Market Intelligence update, a regular monthly vacancy bulletin is produced to inform young people about opportunities available in their area, and the Education Business Partnership actively encourages employers to visit local schools to provide information and careers advice. We have elaborated these as case studies in the Appendix.
- 6.23. Local authorities will need to work with the SFA regional structures to develop mechanisms for establishing the new Adult Advancement and Careers Service. It will need to be linked into the economic development and Connexions services in order to provide a role in stimulating demand for appropriate vocational training.
- 6.24.

### *Stimulating demand*

- 6.20. There were a number of suggestions arising from our discussions with local authorities about how demand for appropriate vocational courses will be stimulated in the future. Some Councils appear to have given little consideration to this issue to date. Others suggested either that schools and colleges will more effectively market courses to their current and future students, or that it should be a function of the Connexions Service.

### *Conclusions and recommendations*

- 6.25. Our view is that as the 14-19 commissioning plans produced by individual local authorities form the building blocks of the sub-regional and then regional commissioning strategies, it is essential to ensure effective links between structures and strategies at the local level. Although, as has been pointed out by Directors of Children's Services on the Regional Forum, these mechanisms and structures are all within

the control of the local authority (and their partners), it is clear that at the current time there is a considerable degree of variation across local authorities in terms of the effectiveness with which they make the links across economic development and Children and Young People's Services.

- 6.26. Across the region the links at local authority level are in development in order to take on board the new 14-19 responsibilities. At the same time local Councils are responding to an expectation of increased role in supporting local employment and the development of the local economy. There is an opportunity for these agendas to be connected effectively through both officer links and partnership structures, and there are improvements that could be made to support this.
- 6.27. We would recommend that local authorities across the region give serious consideration to whether partnership structures could be more effectively linked.
- 6.28. Our recommendations are that at the local authority level the following links should be made:
- Councils should use their civic and community leadership role to work with their partners to co-ordinate economic development, adult skills and 14-19 commissioning structures. They should look to ensure effective strategic co-ordination and a partnership structure that facilitates delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA;

- Employer engagement mechanisms should be integrated, or co-ordinated at a corporate level by councils so as to provide a consistent approach to employer engagement, and meaningful partnership structures with employers;
- There should be an expectation that the Connexions service should perform the function of stimulating demand for appropriate vocational courses from young people;
- Councils need to work with the SFA to ensure that they are engaged in local partnership structures and on the development and integration of the Adult Advancement and Careers Service which should stimulate demand for appropriate vocational courses from adult learners; and,
- Economic assessments should be used to provide an economic context for 14-19 commissioning plans. Economic development officers should work with 14-19 teams to identify and respond to any specific local economic data requirements.

# 7 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

## Regional level

- 7.1. The development of new arrangements at a regional level in relation to 16-19 education and adult skills is happening at the same time as the introduction of a more streamlined approach to broader regional structures and strategies. This provides an opportunity to ensure alignment and integrations between education, skills and economic strategies.
- 7.2. We recommend regional partners, and in particular the leads for the regional YPLA, SFA, and NAS, along with EEDA, the Government Office and local authority representatives, should take this opportunity to ensure the most effective links are made across these structures.
- 7.3. Indeed, our view is that the structures should be aligned so that there is one adult skills strategy, and one young people's strategy for the region. These would be core components of the Single Regional Strategy, and the partnership structures responsible for agreeing them should sit within the regional governance structures, with the Regional Forum reporting up to the YPLA and the Local Authority Leaders' Board.
- 7.4. This is an important and potentially highly significant recommendation, which if taken forward could be beneficial to all parties.

## Sub-regional level

- 7.5. The difference in geographies of the three sub-regional groups suggests a need for different approaches to integration with economic development, adult skills, and employer engagement at the sub-regional level.
- 7.6. Economic intelligence should be provided to SRGs through representation from the new EEDA Area Teams, alongside information to be provided by the YPLA.
- 7.7. There are two areas of the region (Thames Gateway South Essex and Luton/Central Bedfordshire) where there may be opportunities in the future to develop Employment and Skills Boards. Currently the model is unlikely to be pursued elsewhere, although the Norfolk county-

wide ESBs could be developed in other parts of the region.

- 7.8. The roles of the SFA and NAS at SRG level should be clarified through discussion around the recommendations in this report.

## Local level

- 7.9. Councils are developing mechanisms to meet the new expectations on them in relation to supporting their local economy at the same time as they take on new responsibilities for 16-19 education. This also presents an opportunity to co-ordinate the work across these agendas, which should also be seized. The role of Councils as civic leaders means that they have a responsibility to co-ordinate partners to deliver local priorities (as set out in Sustainable Community Strategies and local area agreements), and ensure partnership structures in place to facilitate this. Local partnership structures will need to connect agencies working across adult and young people's skills, worklessness and employability and economic development, in order to ensure an effectively managed market for skills in response to local economic needs.
- 7.10. Our view is that as the 14-19 commissioning plans produced by individual local authorities form the building blocks of the sub-regional and then regional commissioning strategies, it is essential to ensure effective links between structures and strategies at the local level. Although, as has been pointed out by Directors of Children's Services on the Regional Forum, these mechanisms and structures are all within the control of the local authority (and their partners), it is clear that at the current time there is a considerable degree of variation across local authorities in terms of the effectiveness with which they make the links across economic development and Children and Young People's Services.
- 7.11. Across the region the links at local authority level are in development in order to take on board the new 14-19 responsibilities. At the same time local Councils are responding to an expectation of increased role in supporting local employment

and the development of the local economy. There is an opportunity for these agendas to be connected effectively through both officer links and partnership structures, and there are improvements that could be made to support this.

7.12. Our recommendations are that

- Councils should use their civic and community leadership role to work with their partners to co-ordinate economic development, adult skills and 14-19 commissioning structures. They should look to ensure effective strategic co-ordination and a partnership structure that facilitates delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA;
- Employer engagement mechanisms should be integrated, or co-ordinated at a corporate level by councils so as to provide a consistent approach to employer engagement, and meaningful partnership structures with employers;
- There should be an expectation that the Connexions service should perform the function of stimulating demand for appropriate vocational courses from young people;
- Councils need to work with the SFA to ensure that they are engaged in local partnership structures and on the development and integration of the Adult Advancement and Careers Service which should stimulate demand for appropriate vocational courses from adult learners; and,
- Economic assessments should be used to provide an economic context for 14-19 commissioning plans. Economic development officers should work with 14-19 teams to identify and respond to any specific local economic data requirements.

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# APPENDIX A

## EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS BOARDS

### Background to Employment and Skills Boards

Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs), as explained in the Leitch Review of Skills, should be led by employers. Their role would be to engage local employers, articulate labour market needs, scrutinise local services and recommend improvements in integrating labour market and training support. The Review recommends a flexible approach to the licensing of ESBs, using existing arrangements and local initiative. For example:

- It is recommended the Boards rationalise and build on successful city, employer coalition and regional models currently in existence
- In London, the Mayor's new board will set the strategic direction for adults for a single London LSC, replacing local LSCs, and taking on the role of the RSP

The guidance recommends that a 'one size fits all' approach is to be avoided. Adopting a flexible approach will give significant scope for simplifying the current complex arrangements. The Review highlights some potential criteria for licensing:

- Eminent employers should take on leadership role. Trade unions and independent representation should also be present
- On a large enough scale to be recognised as a functional economic area, while sufficiently local to allow effective scrutiny of services
- An agreement that the Board must operate within a national framework for employment and skills

There are considerable variations to the structures, functions and powers of ESBs set up so far. These are highlighted in the following examples.

### The London Skills and Employment Board

The London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB) was set up in 2006 by the Mayor of London to provide strong employer leadership to driving up performance on skills and employment in London. It became a statutory body in February 2008. The LSEB has a Board of 22, including the Mayor, the vice Chair, (Chairman of Prudential plc), 15 employers, four providers, (FE, HE, private), Skillest, LSC, JCP and the London Development Agency.

The Board's primary responsibility is for the strategic direction of The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) adult skills budget in London (approximately £635m per annum). In addition, it will seek to influence the spending and priorities of other key agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, London Development Agency and the Higher Education Funding Council in England.

The Board's terms of reference state that it will:

- formulate and publish an annual plan for adult (post 19) skills training and employment in London
- regularly review the strategy
- produce an annual report setting out progress on implementation
- contribute to overseeing administration of the European Social Fund (ESF)
- make recommendations to the Mayor, Secretary of State, the Learning and Skills Council, London Development Agency and other relevant bodies and organisations on issues related to its responsibilities

The LSEB meets five times a year. There are three sub committees of the LSEB on Strategy, Finance and Performance and Implementation and Delivery. As the LSEB is chaired by the Mayor, there is no need for a further layer of governance above the LSEB.

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## Statutory Metropolitan Areas: Manchester and Leeds

The two Pennine city-regions, which each have populations in excess of 2.5 million, beat competition from urban areas such as Birmingham and Bristol to become statutory metropolitan areas by the end of this autumn, chancellor Alistair Darling announced in his Budget last week. The city-regions win new strategy-making powers over key regeneration-related areas such as economic development, housing and adult skills

Manchester and Leeds both had existing MAAs which included an employment and skills element. Manchester developed city-regional skills and employment targets with Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council, while Leeds MAA provided a single voice with which to approach the LSC to influence provision. However, as part of the new statutory powers they will both have a binding employment and skills board to allocate LSC adult skills spend.

# APPENDIX B

## CONNEXIONS SERVICE – GOOD PRACTICE IN STIMULATING DEMAND FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING

### Connexions West of England: Bristol Connexions

Connexions West of England is a local authority controlled company working in partnership with the LSC, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council. It is made up of three branches: the Connexions services for young people; The Education Business Partnership (EBP); and Adult Careers Service (nextsteps).

Personal advisors are kept up-to-date with the current and future skills needs of the economy through an annual labour market intelligence update paper. Jobcentre Plus sits on the Connexions partnership board and feeds in wider information about the job market. They also link in with Sector Skills Councils locally to provide more detailed sector based labour market information.

The Education Business Partnership, actively seek the involvement of employers who come along to schools to provide information on future careers and job opportunities for young people. The EBP is in regular contact with employers, and employers also contact them, to obtain information on local job vacancies for the production of a regular monthly vacancy bulletin to young people who are out of work.

Because the service for adults is provided by the same company this ensures a smooth transition is made to post 19 advice and guidance. There are strong links between connexions and 14-19 partnership structures, for example the Chief Executive of West of England Connexions chairs of the Bristol 14-19 partnership. The Bristol Connexions manager also works very closely with the area partnerships and 14-19 partnership to help develop local plans. They are also beginning to have links to the economic development function of Bristol City Council helping to putting together a futures jobs fund bid for the city.

### Connexions Norfolk

The Connexions service in Norfolk, run by Norfolk County Council, ensures that Personal Advisors for young people are aware of current and future labour market skills needs. A number of sources of labour market information (LMI) are available on their website and in paper form and staff are given regular briefings. The Connexions service also makes use of Sector Skills

Councils and Norfolk's County Council Sector Groups and advisers are informed of local priorities through Shaping Norfolk's future – a business led partnership. The Connexions service has recently put together a proposal for the creation of an LMI hub with the view that information on the job market needs to be more accessible, easily interpreted and available.

The Connexions service keeps in regular contact with employers through direct canvassing, to input into their vacancy and job matching service for young people. There are strong links between the Connexions services and the 14-19 planning partnership and 14-19 area partnerships in Norfolk. They have also forged strong working links with the economic development functions of the council and make use of updates from economic development officers on current and future business developments.

### Connexions Norfolk LMI resources:

- LM Eye - twice yearly bulletin for advisers and teachers
- Sector LMI leaflets - on diploma sectors aimed at key Stage 4 students
- LMI section on Connexions Gateway - Personal advisers' intranet
- LMI section on 14-19 prospectus [www.helpyouchoose.org](http://www.helpyouchoose.org)

### Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire

Connexions Coventry and Warwickshire 14-19 prospectus is linked to an LMI website developed in partnership with the LSC, Coventry City Council and Warwickshire City Council. The LMI website called 'world of work' provides easily accessible information for young people on current and future employment opportunities. Information is provided on: future growth sectors, for example, green industries; employment opportunities arising through inward investment and developments; sectors likely to experience significant replacement demand as older workers retire; and opportunities available now. Occupational job profiles are also provided, which allow young people to see what kind of skills and qualifications employers in different industries require and how they can develop these. This provides a valuable resource to inform for young people, advisors, teachers and employers about changes in the labour market locally.

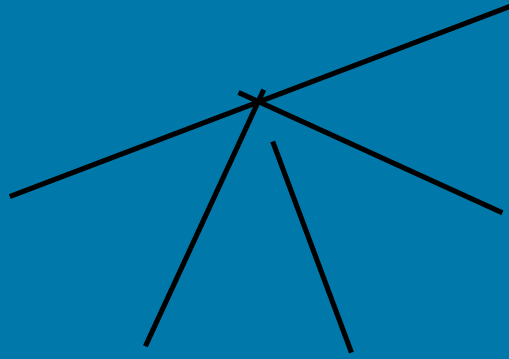
# APPENDIX C

## STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Name	Surname	Title	Organisation
Noel	McCarthy	14-19 Partnership Director	Bedford Borough Council
Mark	Oakley	Head of Economic Development	Bedford Borough Council
Gordon	Jeyes	Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services	Cambridgeshire County Council
Adrian	Loades	Director of Planning and Development Office of Children and Young People's Services	Cambridgeshire County Council
Guy	Mills	Economic Development Manager	Cambridgeshire County Council
Sarah	Hughes	Head of Regeneration and Skills	Central Bedfordshire Council
Clare	Kershaw	14-19 Strategy Manager	Essex County Council
Eileen	Gordon	14-19 Strategy Manager	Hertfordshire County Council
John	Harris	Director - Children, Schools and Families	Hertfordshire County Council
Jan	Hayes-Griffin	Head of Economic Development	Hertfordshire County Council
Alison	Batten	14-19 Director	Luton Borough Council
Kevin	Compton	Chief Executive	Luton Borough Council
Anne	Futcher	Head of Access	Luton Borough Council
Debbie	Jones	Director of Children's Services	Luton Borough Council
Laura	Church	Head of Economic Development	Luton Borough Council
Gordon	Boyd	14-19 Strategy Director	Norfolk County Council
Fiona	McDiarmid	Head of Economic Development	Norfolk County Council
Mel	Collins	Assistant Director, Learning and Skills	Peterborough City Council
Karen	Moody	Adult Learning and Skills Manager	Peterborough City Council
Keith	Nelson	Project Manager for 16-19 Transition	Peterborough City Council
Stephen	Compton	Chief Executive	Opportunity Peterborough
Paul	Greenhalgh	Corporate Director Children & Learning	Southend Borough Council
Alison	Hoy	14-19 Strategy Manager	Southend Borough Council
David	Nicholls	Economic Development Officer	Southend Borough Council
Martin	Slattery	14-19 Strategy Manager	Suffolk County Council
Jai	Raithatha	Head of Economic Development	Suffolk County Council
Linda	Bostock	Strategic Leader 14+ Pathways	Thurrock Council
Paul	Weiss	Economic Development	Thurrock Council
Jay	Mercer	Deputy Director, Children's Services	Thurrock Council
Alison	Webster	Enterprise and Skills Director	East of England Development Agency
Judith	Mobbs	Regional Director	Learning and Skills Council /YPLA
Jon	Nay	Regional Director	Learning and Skills Council/NAS
Laurie	Kay	Regional Director of Skills	Learning and Skills Council/SFA
Graham	Moores	Economic Development Director	Learning and Skills Council
Ruth	Brown	Young People's Team Leader	GO East
Mohua	Bhattacharya	Economic Development Team	GO East







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