

New London strategy to help 800,000 Londoners live independently Improved training, facilities and employment prospects for disabled learners

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Agencies across London today launched a strategy to work together to provide better routes to employment for disabled people in London.

One in six people of a working age in London (800,000) currently has a disability. Half of this disabled population are economically inactive and those that are in work are likely to be on lower wages than their counterparts, with gross earnings on average 12 per cent less.

Over 48,000 learners in London have a learning difficulty or disability; this represents 8 per cent of the total Further Education learner population. The strategy, *Learning for Living and Working in London*, will ensure that these learners get the best education/ training possible to help them gain sustainable employment.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will improve the quality of courses for learners so that more gain the skills required to get a job or progress. This will involve working with partner agencies Jobcentre Plus to expand employment opportunities and reshaping the curriculum to ensure that learners are meeting their full potential. The aim is to help learners become more independent and lead more fulfilled lives.

The LSC currently invests £150 million annually on provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition, millions are being spent on improving the college buildings and infrastructure.

David Hughes, LSC Regional Director for London said:

“This is an important piece of work that will require a great deal of commitment and effort from a number of agencies to make sure that programmes are aligned to make the most difference to peoples lives. We are delighted with the response and support we have received from our strategic partners so far and we are confident that by working in partnership with other agencies we will achieve our goal.”

The multi-agency approach will require the LSC, local authorities, the Health Service, training providers, the London Development Agency, Jobcentre Plus and other agencies, and employers to work together to provide the best solution to support people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Skills training, mentoring, advice and guidance will help them to make the best use of their talents and give them the opportunity to progress into work and independent living.

Peter Little OBE, Chair of the independent review committee, said:

“As part of *Through Inclusion to Excellence*, an independent national review of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the importance of a regional focus was highlighted in taking the process forward. I am pleased that London has produced a particularly strong strategy. It is an excellent example of the region leading the way.”

The five broad goals of the strategy over the next three years are:

- To expand employment opportunities and improve progression routes into employment of different kinds
- To provide people with better services through effective partnership working at local, regional and national levels
- To understand better what learners and employers want, the services currently available and what changes need to be made
- To reshape the curriculum so as to support people in achieving their potential for independent living and employment
- To make a good range of opportunities accessible throughout the region through shared expertise and building local capacity

The strategy was launched to industry representatives at a conference yesterday at Dexter House, Tower Bridge. The conference brought together key partners in the sector and was Chaired by Peter Little OBE.

To access the full report visit www.lsc.gov.uk/London

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Notes to Editors

The strategy *Learning for Living and Working in London* was produced in partnership with members of the London Region Strategic Advisory Group for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including: London Councils, London Development Agency, Skill (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities), the Valuing People Support Team and Connexions, and is supported by a number of agencies including Jobcentre Plus and the NHS.

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. It is responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. It has a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Its vision is that young

people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. It works nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

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