

London's Strategy for Skills for Life

July 2006 Update

Introduction and background

London regional partners recognise that the delivery of high quality, appropriate provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), literacy, numeracy and key skills is pivotal to the success of London's economy and communities.

Since May 2005, the Commission's Skills for Life (SfL) Flagship Group has been involved in developing a three year Strategic Action Plan for all SfL in London. The work began with the development of a Strategic Action Plan for ESOL, in response to the London Project Report (Strategy Unit, July 2004) which commented on the lack of work-focused ESOL provision. This approach has now been taken forward to encompass all SfL.

The purpose of this update is to outline what has been put in place to date and the work in progress. Where they are available, signposts to additional documents that provide more detail on particular aspects of the work are provided.

Bringing greater coherence and effectiveness to SfL in London is taking place against a dynamic backdrop of wider strategic change. This includes key policy developments for Further Education, 14-19 education and skills, employer focused skills development, offender learning and Youth Matters to name but a few. London's contribution to staging a successful Olympic Games that leaves behind a positive legacy for all Londoners has also now been added to this complex mix. Skills for Life underpin the success of all these developments, and it is vital that the Strategic Action Plan is integral to their implementation from the highest policy level through to the learner and employer.

This is a challenging context in which to establish ground-breaking joint working in London. Strategic partners such as the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, the London Development Agency and others are also all undergoing significant organisational change. But the London Skills Commission partners and members of the Flagship group clearly acknowledge that the challenge must be met if London is to possess the world class skills that it needs.

What are the processes for development and implementation?

The overall purpose of having a joint regional Strategic Action Plan for SfL is to establish more effective and coherent planning, purchasing and delivery of SfL in the capital. By September 2006, a suite of plans covering all SfL areas will be launched as London's Strategic Action Plan for SfL. The draft Strategic Action Plan for ESOL is available already and gives an indication of what the final suite of Plans will look like.

Evidence bases have been established to underpin the Plans, first for ESOL (November 2005) and then for literacy, numeracy and key skills (in final stages of drafting). The evidence bases have identified the key information and issues for SfL in London, and have led to six strategic goals for SfL being agreed. These are:

- **Goal 1:** To reflect and address the differing needs, characteristics and goals of 14-19 year olds and adults requiring Skills for Life through templates that detail how provision will be tailored.
- **Goal 2:** To ensure that people have the Skills for Life that they need for work by delivering job-focused provision and establishing regional coordination for employment-focused Skills for Life.
- **Goal 3:** To target public investment on priority Skills for Life groups through a financing model that makes the best use of public resources, and that stimulates private sector investment.

- **Goal 4:** To ensure that promotion of SfL learning is targeted on identified priority groups.
- **Goal 5:** To ensure consistently high quality across all Skills for Life provision, recognising its essential role in underpinning all curriculum provision.
- **Goal 6:** To coordinate London's Skills for Life provision through a Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) body that develops and delivers a coherent regional purchasing strategy. The body will be led by the LSC, under the auspices of the RSP, with the integral involvement of the LDA, JCP and other key partners.

WOULD YOU LIKE MORE DETAILS?

- *Developing a 3 Year Strategic Action Plan for SfL in London: Summary of evidence and recommendations for ESOL*
- *Developing a 3 Year Strategic Action Plan for SfL in London: Summary of evidence and recommendations for literacy, numeracy and key skills*
- *The draft 3 Year Strategic Action Plan for ESOL*
- *Three Year Strategic Action Plan for Skills for Life in London: Summary of the six strategic goals*

The foundations that will enable London's SfL partners to achieve these goals are now being laid. The rest of this update outlines some of the specific developments.

Sharpening the focus of provision to make it more effective

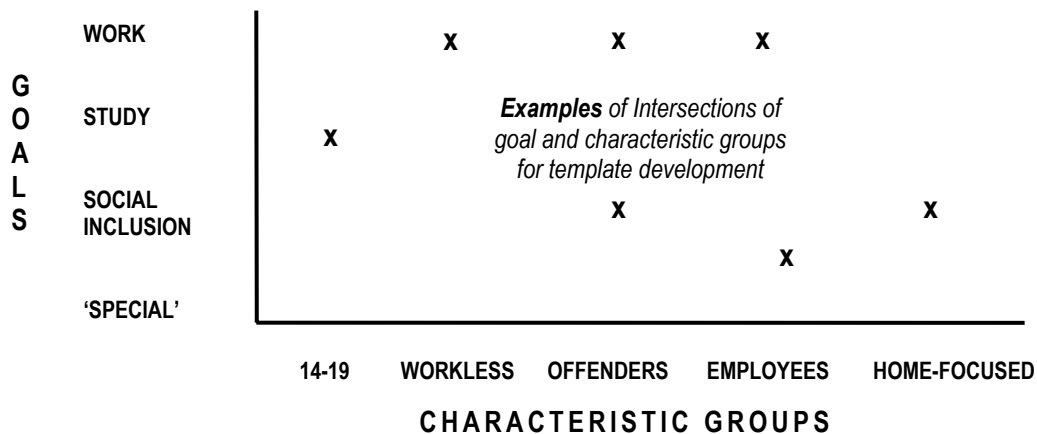
The evidence shows that whilst there is some really effective SfL provision, a significant amount is not sufficiently tailored to the differing needs of learners and employers. To address this critical issue, provision matrices are being developed for each of the SfL areas that can accommodate the:

- different goals of learners - why they want to develop their SfL;
- the needs and background of different groups of learners;
- different learning styles for both embedded and discrete provision, and
- the different support and access requirements learners may have.

The objective is to be clear about the **variations** in provision needed in the design and delivery of provision for different groups of learners who want to develop their skills for different purposes. The governing principle of this approach is to tailor provision to meet the needs of *each* learner and enable them to achieve their learning goal.

At the same time, the approach promotes **clarity** about the purpose of each type of provision, and how its content and delivery meet this purpose. Learners need this level of clarity to choose the learning that is right for them to achieve their purpose. Strategic and funding bodies need clarity to identify priority areas for public funding and to plan the balance of different types of provision. Providers need clarity to ensure that what they're delivering is fit for purpose.

The first stage in the process is to segment the SfL markets, identifying key groups that will have common characteristics and to identify the range of goals that individuals and employers may have. The goals and learner characteristics form the two axes of the matrix, as shown in the following example for ESOL:



Once matrices have been drawn up, templates for tailored provision for each of the goal and group 'intersections' can be developed. Templates for SfL provision for the work and social inclusion goals have been drafted. They include a set of core elements for all provision, covering aspects such as initial screening and assessment, teacher qualifications etc., and templates that describe the minimum requirements for tailored provision, varying according to the goal and learner group. Work-focused provision is being prioritised in order to address critical needs amongst people who are workless and employees who have SfL needs. In West and East London, this work is being dovetailed with that to develop and implement the City Strategy Pathfinders.

The templates for provision are there as a framework for clarity and to ensure minimum requirements are met. We are now in the process of seeing how a range of existing provision matches to the templates. This is being done through a pilot toolkit which can be found at www.jhconsulting.org.uk. The next stage of roll out will be for all providers to match their provision against the templates, further developing or terminating provision that is not a good fit. This is seen very much as a mutual learning process, and there will be opportunities for modifying templates where it is very clear that some effective provision does not present a good fit.

Work is now starting on establishing specification matrices for literacy, numeracy and key skills. This should be completed by early summer.

WOULD YOU LIKE MORE DETAILS?

→ *Toolkit for matching provision against the SfL templates. Part 1 (guidance) and Part 2 (blank template for completion)*

Bringing greater coherence to planning and investment

Segmenting the SfL markets is not only vital to ensure that differentiated provision can be delivered, but also clearly plays a role in identifying the priority groups and goals for public investment. The approach is intended to encompass all provision, not just that which is funded wholly through public investment or that contributes to the achievement of Government targets. This will include 'first step' programmes that exist to enable learners to achieve entry requirements, as well as interventions such as job brokerage or highly tailored employer provision where qualifications are not appropriate.

Market and goal segmentation, and the resulting provision matrices are now being used to inform the development of a regional purchasing strategy and mechanism. The regional purchasing strategy will ensure that Skills for Life provision meets clear specifications that address the range of needs identified across the Skills for Life market.

It will involve reviewing the overall balance of public investment on literacy, numeracy, ESOL and key skills against the priorities for public investment, as well as aligning resources from the most appropriate Government departmental and non-departmental sources with priority goals and groups.

This work is just beginning, but the key stages include:

- Continuing to refine the information that we have on existing funding sources. This will help to map more accurately the current mix of provision as well as to help align partner funding and priorities with the templates. Partners will also be asked to identify the triggers for, and any limitations on the use of funding streams.
- Identifying the costs and funding mechanisms for the different provision templates. This is particularly important, and challenging in identifying the costs and funding mechanisms for SfL provision that is embedded in vocational and other learning.
- Identifying gaps or duplication in provision. These may be focused on groups, geographical areas, employment sectors etc. and will include consideration of how Government priorities to tackle worklessness, workforce development and social cohesion can be addressed.
- Exploring how gaps can be filled, through re-deployment of existing public investment. Employer and/or learner contributions will be sought to finance learning where appropriate, in line with the type of provision being purchased.
- Drafting a purchasing strategy and protocol that details how partners will implement ongoing joint planning and purchasing of provision.

Although resources are stretched, we know that the purchasing strategy and mechanism must take into account the need to reach groups that until now have not been able or motivated to take up learning. These groups will differ across the four SfL areas and are now in the process of being identified. Promotional techniques to engage these different segments will be developed once it is clear which groups are to be targeted. Where appropriate, targeted promotional activities will be built into the templates for provision.

A joint data capture system is also being established to provide **essential** information for improved review and planning, drawing on the work of the national Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) and RSP data groups. Data capture will include learner tracking and progression, the type and distribution of provision, qualification and job outcomes, financing sources. The objective will be to establish simple, yet effective data co-ordination that can inform the regional planning and purchasing functions.

Again, this work is in its early stages. The LDA is leading on developing an enhanced database for its ESF provision, giving a starting point that is intended to help move all partners towards common data capture, as well as to provide consistency of data capture across other funding streams within partner organisations. Partners are also identifying other elements of their existing individual data capture to feed into the development process. Work will take place to explore how existing management information systems and databases can be used to form a common data capture system. This is intended to avoid creating additional burdens on strategic funders or providers.

Raising quality and developing the SfL workforce

The development of the provision templates will contribute to raising quality standards, but it is fully acknowledged that the work to develop and deliver a Strategic Action Plan for SfL in London must be supported by other quality initiatives and by workforce development.

LSC members of the London Sfl Partnership (more details on page 5) will continue to support the delivery of the DfES Sfl Quality Initiative, working with the new Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA). The London Strategic Unit for the Learning and Skills Workforce (LSU) will form the workforce development arm of the London Sfl Partnership. The LSU is currently drafting a regional Sfl workforce development strategy and will work closely with the Sfl Partnership to support its delivery.

Who oversees and coordinates the work?

The Sfl Flagship Group oversees the work to develop and implement the Strategic Action Plan. Key partners include:

- **Learning and Skills Council (LSC):** Philippa Langton (Chair), Pip Kings, Helen Cross
- **London Development Agency (LDA):** Maxine Jones, Tania Fletcher, Phil de Montmorency
- **Jobcentre Plus (JCP):** Iain Dewar
- **Government Office for London (GOL):** Iain McNab
- **Association of London Government (ALG):** Dianna Neal
- **Association of Colleges (AoC):** Frank McLoughlin
- **NIACE:** Judy Gawn
- **London Strategic Unit for the Sfl Workforce (LSU):** Pat Hulin

Representatives from other organisations are also invited to participate when particular areas of expertise are required, for example, to explore the qualification framework or national research. JH Consulting works with the Flagship Group to develop and produce the Strategic Action Plans and related documents referred to in this update.

The development of the Strategic Action Plan for ESOL was overseen by the ESOL Steering Group, a sub-group of the Sfl Flagship that was convened specifically for this purpose. Since the Plan for ESOL has now been drafted, the Group has been incorporated into the Flagship Group to promote a cohesive approach to developing the Strategic Action Plan for all Sfl.

Other time-limited working groups are convened for particular tasks, for example, developing and testing the provision matrices for the various areas of Sfl. As the work continues, especially with respect to developing, testing and rolling out the templates for Sfl, the range of organisations involved in the work will increase and broaden to ensure that the significant base of expertise and experience is used to inform the strategy and its implementation.

Establishing a regional Sfl body

The London Sfl Partnership is now being established to take forward the further development and implementation of the Strategic Action Plan. This is not a new organisation, but represents the formalisation of relationships that have been developed between key partners, especially the LSC and LDA during the last twelve months.

The Partnership is led by the LSC and overseen by the London Skills Commission. It includes the two current Regional Sfl Managers as the core personnel (currently Pip Kings and Helen Cross). Representatives from the LDA (Phil de Montmorency), Jobcentre Plus (Darren Wolfenden) and other key agencies are closely involved in the Partnership.

The Partnership will coordinate swift responses to critical gaps in provision and changes in demand for different types of provision by co-ordinating all Skills for Life provision through the regional purchasing strategy. This will include overseeing the development, implementation, and quality of specifications for Skills for Life.

A key role of the Partnership will be to establish effective channels of communication with the wide range of Government Departments and other organisations that are critical to the successful implementation of the SfL Strategic Action Plan. These will include the Home Office and Department of Health as well as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Quick view of key milestones and anticipated timetable

Milestone	Timescale
Draft ESOL Strategic Action Plan and Evidence Base	Nov 2005
First pilots of draft ESOL templates begins	Dec 2005
SfL Partnership established	April 2006
Launch of the draft SfL Workforce Development Strategy	June 2006
Segmentation and provision matrices completed for all SfL	July 2006
Roll out begins of SfL templates toolkit to match existing provision	Aug 2006
Protocols for purchasing strategy agreed	Sept 2006
Joint data capture pilot process starts	Sept 2006
Official launch of Strategic Action Plan for SfL and underpinning evidence base	Nov 2006

These milestones represent the key development points of the SfL strategy. Implementing the strategy and rolling out the use of the SfL templates will involve a wide range of activity, including detailed briefings and workshops with providers and other key partners.

It is intended that these events are delivered as far as possible through existing SfL and other fora, to help 'embed' the strategy into existing work and structures, as well as to avoid placing additional burdens of time on partners. During these events and through the contact that providers have with individual partners, more detailed discussions on important aspects of implementation, for example, funding and data capture can take place.

A communication strategy is also being established to ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed of the progress of developing and implementing this vital part of London's skills development. Further updates of progress will be provided as part of this communication strategy.