

# The London Skills for Life Strategy

## November 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 Strategy 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.

This update is the third in a series of papers that report the key developments for the London Skills for Life Strategy. The July update outlines the background to the work in greater detail. Those for whom the work is not so familiar may find it helpful to look at the July paper in conjunction with this update which focuses on reporting on progress.

### The changing context for SfL

Since July there have been significant developments in London's policy context and infrastructure. This includes the outcome of the 'London Powers' debate, resulting in the Mayor having greater involvement and influence across a variety of areas vital to the Capital, including adult skills. London Region Learning and Skills Council, the London Development Agency and other key agencies are working closely with the Mayor and his advisers in agreeing how best to tackle London's skills requirements.

The London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB) has now been convened. A key task of LSEB will be to draw up the London Skills Plan. Clearly, Skills for Life is integral to any plan that seeks to improve London's skills base. Therefore, the work to implement and further develop the London Skills for Life Strategy will be in close partnership with LSEB.

Other significant developments for the operating context of the London SfL Strategy include the work of the Mayor's Board for Refugee Integration in London and its strategy to promote refugee integration in the capital. The focus on tackling the twin themes of child poverty and worklessness are also of major importance for SfL, including the creation of the City Strategy Pathfinder areas in west and east London.

### New Strategy document

The overall purpose of having a joint regional Strategy for SfL in London is to establish more effective and coherent planning, purchasing and delivery of SfL in the capital. Until recently, the London SfL Strategy was in the form of two separate documents – the 3 Year Strategic Action Plans for ESOL and for Literacy, Numeracy and Key Skills.

These two documents have now been brought together as the London SfL Strategy. The document contains an introduction and background to the work, followed by the two Strategic Action Plans. Creating this unified SfL Strategy for London is intended to underline the importance of cohesiveness across the SfL areas. For example, we know that significant numbers of people who require ESOL also have numeracy needs. By bringing the Strategic Action Plans

together in one strategic document, we make the public commitment to ensuring that all areas of SfL are included in this vital area of skills development.

#### KEY DOCUMENTS

- *The London Skills for Life Strategy*
- *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 Multi Agency Skills for Life Team (MAST)

The SfL Flagship Group continues to oversee the work to develop and implement the Strategic Action Plan. The joint regional body described in the July update has now been fully established and 'branded' as the Multi Agency Skills for Life Team (MAST). The core members of MAST are:

- **Learning and Skills Council (LSC):** Pip Kings, Helen Cross
- **London Development Agency (LDA):** Tania Fletcher, Phil de Montmorency
- **Jobcentre Plus (JCP):** Iain Dewar

MAST reports to the SfL Flagship Group. Its role is to lead on the implementation of the London SfL Strategy. This involves members of the team working within their own organisations to 'embed' the Strategy, as well as leading on joint activities including the BHS pilots and the development of the routeways broker concept (discussed further on page 4). MAST meets approximately every two to three weeks, with frequent communication and discussion between meetings. JH Consulting is continuing to support MAST in the implementation of the Strategy.

Of course, the Strategy cannot be properly implemented without the involvement of other key partners including the London Councils and Government Office for London. MAST liaises with these organisations regularly to maximise its impact in establishing coherence in the planning and purchasing of SfL provision in London.

### Rolling out the SfL templates

The London SfL Strategy includes two goals that are focused on ensuring that SfL provision is able to meet the differing needs of individuals and of employers more effectively. The 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.

Progress is now being made in piloting the templates in a variety of ways:

**The Brent, Hackney and Southwark (BHS) pilots** are focused on enabling more effective multi agency approaches to be taken to meet the needs of people who are workless **and** who have SfL needs. In Brent and Hackney this work is intended to help support the development of approaches for the City Strategy Pathfinders.

Structured discussions have been held for each Borough between the major agencies (LSC, LDA, JCP and Local Authority). Ideas for pilot activities are being developed and should be agreed by Christmas and in some cases earlier. There are likely to be a maximum of two pilots in each Borough. Activities will focus on how to reshape, develop and join up existing provision so that it is more effective in helping people into sustainable work as well as addressing their skills needs. This will include establishing continued learning post job-entry, but in ways that are sustainable once the pilot period has come to an end.

The work-focused SfL template will form the starting point for providers wishing to be involved in the pilots. Providers will be asked to complete the template by matching their current provision against it and indicating which areas will need to be developed. This is also intended to help providers establish more effective collaboration – for example, it may be that a SfL provider wishes to work with an organisation providing job brokerage rather than developing this service in-house.

Funding partners in each Borough are committed to the principle that any additional funding will be used to reshape and develop existing provision, not to create new provision. Where there are **sustainable** resources for new vocational provision that fills gaps and responds to employer needs, there may be 'new' SfL provision, but this will be embedded into the vocational provision rather than delivered as discrete courses.

In addition to the BHS Pilots, providers that have been successful in getting an LSC contract to deliver short SfL courses for JCP customers are being required to complete the SfL template as part of their contracting process. The LSC, LDA and JCP are all now involved in establishing how the SfL template will be rolled out to their providers. This will involve working through existing provider contracting, monitoring and assessment processes and mechanisms.

The SfL template toolkit will also be incorporated into the **Libraries for Learning Project**. This project is delivered by MLA London (Museums, Libraries and Archives) to roll out the libraries Compact, which delivers a whole organisational approach to Skills for Life. Hackney, Southwark and Brent will be the first boroughs targeted to train staff, run SfL taster courses and signpost and track learners to more formal provision. The aim for this is to engage people and combat social isolation within the groups that are unable to access mainstream provision.

The SfL toolkit is currently downloadable as a paper document from the [www.lsclondon.gov.uk](http://www.lsclondon.gov.uk) and [www.jhconsulting.org.uk](http://www.jhconsulting.org.uk) websites. With its role as a development tool in mind, it is planned to create an electronic version. This will become part of a regional SfL quality toolkit (currently under development and based on the toolkit developed by London West LSC), and in conjunction with the LDA's Just the Job toolkit for job brokerage.

#### KEY DOCUMENTS

→ *SfL Template 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

The SfL Flagship partners and MAST have continued to make progress in developing the protocols and mechanisms that will make joint planning and purchasing a reality. An ideas building event was held in September, resulting in some significant progress. Planned actions include:

- Creating a unified planning flowchart detailing the critical planning points of key partners. This is to enable a joint timeframe for development and planning that maximises the opportunities provided by partners' planning cycles.

- As opportunities arise, eg: for ESF etc, using a single prospectus approach that tells the story of what organisations collectively want to achieve. A prospectus would contain separate 'chapters' for each organisation, enabling each to detail their specific 'slant' on the use of the funding being tendered for.
- Developing the concept of 'routeway' brokers who can bring together the various elements of IAG, JCP, job brokerage and other support into a holistic service that meets the wide range of needs of workless people. This idea is in the development stage and really reflects the need to join up the variety of existing services such as IAG, job brokerage, workplace assessors and Skills Coaches. The BHS Pilots are spearheading some of the work seeing how the Routeway Broker concept can be applied in each borough to join up existing services and plug gaps.
- Taking forward the new common data capture approach through its second stage of development. The LDA has led on the development of an enhanced data capture and database tool for ESF which can be shared with other CFOs as a starting point for piloting joint data capture. Jobcentre Plus also has the database arising from the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study which is capable of providing a significant range of information.

### **Further updates**

Another update will be produced in January 2007, reporting on the progress of the BHS Pilots and other key areas of implementation for the London SfL Strategy.