

# The London Skills for Life Strategy supporting employability and inclusion

## January 2007 Update

### Introduction and background

Since May 2005, the London Skills Commission Skills for Life (SfL) Flagship Group has been involved in developing a London Skills for Life Strategy. The work began in response to the London Project Report (Strategy Unit, July 2004) and, through the **Multi Agency Skills Team (MAST)**, continues to provide a collaborative, cross-Departmental approach to take forward key national and regional policy developments.

This includes supporting the development of the London Skills and Employment Strategy, through the regional partners' work with the London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB). The approach adopted by London partners also embodies many of the recommendations of the Leitch report, enabling the region to make an early response to the need for significant change in the way that SfL and skills are planned, resourced and delivered in the capital.

This update is the most recent in a series of papers that report the key developments being taken forward by regional partners. Those for whom the work is not so familiar may find it helpful to look at the July and November 2006 papers in conjunction with this update.

### Embedding SfL at the strategic level

In the November 2006 Update, we reported that the London Skills for Life Strategy document had been created – bringing together the Strategic Action Plans for ESOL and for Literacy, Numeracy and Key Skills.

The next stage of development and implementation of the Strategy has been taking place – putting strategy into practice by embedding SfL as part of the agencies' core business to tackle worklessness and improve employability and business performance, as well as to support inclusion and community cohesion.

**MAST** is spearheading this work on behalf of the SfL Flagship and the individual partner organisations. As the mechanisms for LSEB are established, MAST will ensure that it works effectively with these to support successful development and implementation of the Skills and Employment Strategy.

The core membership of MAST has expanded and now includes:

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

JH Consulting and MQF Consultancy are continuing to support MAST in its work. Other regional partners, including the London Councils and Government Office for London also have key involvement in many aspects of MAST activity.

Those of you who read the November 2006 Update will notice a slight change in the title for the team – from Skills for Life to simply Skills. This change marks the new phase of multi agency collaboration which is designed to support better cohesion between the wide range of skills-focused initiatives and developments that are taking place in the Capital. It also recognises that Skills for Life must be seen as the underpinning elements of all skills development.

## A blueprint toolkit to improve employability and inclusion

Piloting of the Templates for SfL provision has continued. To date, around 25 providers have been involved in completing templates and others have begun exploring how they can use them for programme development and collaboration. In March, analysis of the main themes arising from the completed templates will take place.

This month the Template Toolkit has been updated to reflect the next stage in embedding SfL as an underpinning theme for skills development. The new version of the Toolkit focuses sharply on supporting all aspects of programme design so that it improves employability and inclusion, with SfL built in as an essential element. This approach is intended to encourage and support providers to step up the contextualising and embedding of SfL in their provision. The Toolkit can be viewed and downloaded at [www.jhconsulting.org.uk/strategy.asp](http://www.jhconsulting.org.uk/strategy.asp)

Now that piloting with a range of providers is well underway, we are moving into a new phase of roll out. In February and March a series of meetings, events and other activities are taking place. The principle for this roll out is to support existing and new programmes and initiatives through the use of the Templates as a development and collaboration tool. Key activity includes:

- Meetings, discussions and events with key **LDA, LSC and JCP staff** to explore the most effective ways of using the Templates to support their programmes and other work.
- An event for providers delivering **LDA funded provision** (including capacity building) to help them make the most effective use of the Templates as a development and collaboration tool. Similar events are planned through the LSC, including an event for work-based learning providers.
- A MAST event to help establish a '**skills campus**' in Southwark for workless people with poor skills levels (SfL and employability/vocational). This approach uses the Template for employability as a way of demonstrating how the range of services and support needed to help a workless person become more employable can be provided seamlessly by a range of providers through a 'virtual campus'.
- Continuing the MAST pilot work in **Hackney and Brent**, using the Templates with providers to support the development of collaborative approaches to delivering more effective services to help low skilled workless people into work. This pilot work includes strategic collaboration between the LDA, LSC, JCP and Local Authorities and is continuing to link with the City Strategy Pathfinders.
- Supporting the **Demonstration Pilots** currently being developed in 11 Colleges across London. The Demonstration Pilots are intended to show how colleges can develop their response to supporting people to gain skills and move towards the labour market and into work. They will inform the development of the new Skills for Jobs programme and will also feed in to the City Strategy Pathfinders. The Pilots focus on **changes in the approach to mainstream** delivery and 'culture'. They are not stand alone, time limited 'projects'. The Template for employability is being used to help develop and implement the original proposals for these pilots.

## Continuing to work on effective data solutions

The enhanced data capture and database tool for ESF is now being implemented by the LDA. The LSC and Jobcentre Plus, through MAST, are working closely with MQF Consultancy to identify how this new tool can be shared and used within their respective organisations. This work supports and reflects the developments and discussions at national level between the Department for Work and Pensions and LSC to find effective ways of sharing data.

## Further updates

Another update will be produced in March 2007. This and any other new documents relating to MAST's work can be found at [www.jhconsulting.org.uk/strategy.asp](http://www.jhconsulting.org.uk/strategy.asp)