

Strengthening the Links between Young Learners and Employers

September 2006

Of interest to employers, area, regional and local LSC staff involved with 14–19 reform, Local Authorities, Schools, Colleges, Training Providers, Regional Skills Partnerships, Government Officers, Education Business Link Organisations (EBLOs) including Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) and Regional Development Agencies.

This document aims to provide a framework for regional, area and local discussion on the future planning and strategic direction for education business link (EBL) activity within the wider 14–19, schools and Further Education reform agenda. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is keen to promote an open and flexible approach together with the right structures through which to deliver future EBL delivery which takes into account local and regional priorities.

© For action

National responses to this framework are requested by 30 November 2006, and should be sent:

By email: Bridie.Sullivan@lsc.gov.uk

Or by post:
Bridie Sullivan
Senior Policy Manager 14–19 Provision and
Attainment
Learning and Skills Council
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

www.lsc.gov.uk

Contents

	Paragraph numbers
Foreword	–
Background	1
Funding	4
New Context	9
Aims	13
Proposals	14
Local level	15
Regional level	18
National level	21
In summary	23
Timescales	
LSC business cycle 2006/07	24
LSC business cycle 2007/08	25
Planning and Procurement 2007/08	26
Planning	27
The service	29
Procurement and contracting	32


Annexes

- A: Background and Policy Context of Education Business Link Activity
- B: References

Foreword

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is committed to continuing to develop education business links between schools, colleges, other delivery partners and employers. These are key to our purpose of improving the learning and skills of all young people in England. We have achieved a great deal, with many thousands of young people experiencing high-quality work experience placements, either as part of their work-related learning curriculum or through the Increased Flexibility and Young Apprenticeship Programmes. These resources have helped to make the all-important links between the learning experiences of young people and the skills and expertise of local and national employers. All of this activity has only been made possible through joint working by the LSC with a wide range of strategic and delivery partners.

We are now in a new and challenging period in which coherent employer links are essential to deliver the 14–19 reform and skills agendas. As part of the LSC's *agenda for change*, we have strengthened our national, regional, area and local capacity. This document fulfils a long-standing commitment for the LSC, and relates to a particular aspect of the delivery of work-related learning. It sets out the LSC's framework for discussion about how best to meet the challenges ahead in relation to education business link activity in bringing together the full range of work experience and employer focussed activity 14–19. The LSC will be working with the DfES over the coming months as part of our overall review of the delivery chain for work-related learning. Local regional and national discussions taking place as part of the review will make a key contribution to that work.



Julia Dowd
Director of Young People's Learning Team
National Office

Strengthening the Links between Young Learners and Employers:

Learning and Skills Council-funded Education Business Link Activity and 14–19 Reform

Background

1 Education business link (EBL) activities are resourced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and managed by the LSC. Over recent years, such activities have developed and supported links between employers and the curriculum and much progress has been made. Many young people and their teachers and lecturers are working with employers in innovative ways, and schools in particular are taking advantage of new opportunities created for developing enterprise activity. All of this helps young people to be more prepared and better qualified for the world of work, contributing to their personal fulfilment as well as better meeting the needs of employers. The LSC recognises the significant contribution of all those involved in EBL activities, whether acting individually or as part of private and public sector organisations, and in particular that of employers, whose investment, commitment and efforts have made such good progress possible.

2 New education business link consortia were formed by Government Offices (GOs) in 2000. This led to the creation of consortium arrangements in each of the local Learning and Skill Councils (LLSCs). EBL delivery organisations who worked in each area and who had a proven track record of delivery were encouraged to work together in the structure of the new consortium. The key aim of the consortium was to provide a single point of contact to schools and

businesses providing a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of EBL activity within the LLSC boundary. The membership of the consortia and the eventual structure of the consortium and its eventual structure varied widely across local LSC regions, many involving Connexions and Local Authorities as part of the planning and strategic delivery of the services. Core members of the consortia have been education business link organisations (EBLOs) such as Education Business Partnerships (EBPs), Science and Technology Regional Organisations (SATRO), TRIDENT, Business in the Community (BiTC) and Understanding Industry (UI). Young Enterprise (YE) and businessdynamics (bd now merged with The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)) are two other core delivery partners who have principally delivered enterprise education either as part of delivery contracted locally or through an LSC national contract. All these organisations receive funding from sources other than the LSC, and the activity they support is targeted not just at the 14 to 19 age group.

3 Many of the existing brokers of education-business links provide an effective and high-quality service and we anticipate their continuing participation in LSC-funded EBL activity. We aim to ensure that their participation takes place in a more coherent structure, with greater transparency in the LSC funding process, and with clearer arrangements for quality assurance and management information.

Funding

4 Education business link (EBL) activities are partially resourced by a ring fenced budget of £25m from the Department for Education and Skills and managed by the LSC, which has historically enhanced the level of funding through local initiative fund – in many cases this has considerably increased the sum available.

However, pressure on LSC budgets from increased 14–19 participation plus reduced local initiative funding have meant that opportunities for enhanced EBL funding from LSC resources have been reduced. DfES money is used to greater effect in supporting employer engagement by being flexible enough to be aligned to other budgets and programmes that give young people work-related learning experiences.

5 DfES funds for education business link activity are allocated to the regions as part of the LSC's regional allocation, but are not ring-fenced.

6 Education business link activity funded by the LSC currently covers four areas:

- work-related learning in the curriculum
- work experience for Key Stage 4 pupils
- employer engagement
- professional development placements in business for teachers.

7 In 2003/04, the LSC also funded the enterprise adviser service, which was a time-limited programme introduced to support the specific development of enterprise education in targeted schools. In 2005/06, the LSC received further DfES funding to support this service within a new delivery framework that encouraged enterprise links with a much wider range of secondary schools, enabling many more young people to benefit. No further specific funding for enterprise has been allocated by DfES to the LSC for 2006/07, although further DfES enterprise funding has been put in place to support a new Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) enterprise network.

8 The development of the Enterprise Adviser Service (EnTAs) and the recent launch of the Schools' Enterprise Education Network (S'EEN) are both elements of the DfES Enterprise strategy. In addition to the creation of the Enterprise Advisory Service and the new S'EEN network, Phase 1 of the strategy involved the creation of the 151 Enterprise Pathfinders and Phase 2 of the strategy involved all schools receiving enterprise

funding from September 2005 - a total of £60m for each of three academic years. Using the experience of 700 enterprise pathfinder schools, the DfES has developed national guidance on teaching enterprise effectively. The guidance was introduced to secondary schools in a series of conferences that enabled headteachers and senior managers to discuss enterprise education with local peers, helping them develop and refine their delivery plans.

New Context

9 Increased momentum in the Government's 14–19 reform agenda and its implementation will have an additional impact on the delivery of work-related and vocational learning and on employer engagement. The *14–19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan* sets out these proposals in more detail. As the LSC works with our partners in implementing these policies, we need to challenge and develop our approach to education business link activity to ensure that activities drive us in the direction of 14–19 reform and deliver the greatest impact and best value for money.

10 The LSC gave a commitment within the *14–19 Implementation Plan* to consult on the wider reforms of the education business link work that it funds, including the all important brokerage role. This document takes that consultation forward. The LSC has a unique position from which to promote change and support innovation through its area, local, regional and national structure. The challenge ahead of us all is to promote best practice in incorporating EBL activities across the full range of LSC-supported 14–19 activity, particularly as part of local 14–19 learner entitlements. The LSC is at the forefront of brokering relationships between key stakeholders. Efficient brokerage systems can successfully support the frontline activity of all delivery partners, including schools and colleges.

11 Work-related learning in the curriculum is central to 14–19 reform and the LSC has expanded 14–16 vocational delivery through the Increased Flexibility and Young Apprenticeship Programmes, both of which are seeing many more young people directly experiencing a high-quality vocational curriculum. The introduction of the first five specialised diplomas in 2008 will provide industry-verified applied learning, linked to interdependent general learning, with real opportunities to practise skills. The diploma will include a minimum of 10 days' work experience at each level. Education business link activity should support and enhance these curriculum developments.

12 Supporting the introduction of local 14–19 learner entitlements, places and prospectuses will mean that imaginative funding solutions will be needed, involving a range of key stakeholders. Education business link activity needs to be clearly identified as an integral element of an overall plan for provision for all young people in an area not an add on. New ICT systems are being developed which offer the opportunity for young people to access information which supports work-experience placement choice as well as careers information and post 16 course choices. An overall plan for provision should aim to provide a brokerage system which offers young learners a quality service.

Aims

13 The challenge ahead of us all is to work in partnership with all our providers to deliver education business link activity within the new 14–19 reform agenda.

The aims of the LSC’s proposals for EBL activity are to:

- support the implementation of school, further education and 14-19 reform
- support the range of delivery partners working in partnership across local areas, who deliver the activities
- align EBL activities within local and regional plans for 14–19 and Skills Strategy implementation
- gain maximum value and impact for young people from the investment available.

Proposals

14 The LSC believes that the key to achieving the above aims is a combination of strategic planning and brokerage between employers and schools, colleges and training providers.

Local level

15 Through the formation of LSC area partnership teams, delivery and liaison will primarily continue to be carried out at this level which usually equates to local authority areas.

16 Local partnership teams will work to an LSC local and regional strategic remit for the delivery of EBL activity. The delivery model will reflect local and regional priorities within a national strategic framework, and ensure high quality provision is available.

17 Robust and clear arrangements will be in place for planning and delivering EBL activity, while taking into account local expertise with clear and open practices for tendering and procuring services.

Regional level

18 Education business link activity will become part of mainstream strategic planning arrangements. The new LSC structure has a strengthened regional presence linking with government offices, development agencies and skills partnership structures. It is important to ensure that links with employers to support 14–19 reform also recognise and take account of the networks being established to support the adult skills agenda.

19 Regional working has developed in different ways to reflect differences in the economy, demographic and social environment and sector skill priorities. It is important that future EBL activity reflects this diversity through the partnerships and structures developed.

20 The processes of allocating funds, any associated tendering activity and monitoring progress would be embedded within the LSC’s business cycle and its quality and performance management processes.

National level

21 LSC national office will manage relationships with national stakeholders and lead the development of a policy framework including over quality assurance, to ensure consistency across the country. New minimum data requirements will be put in place to provide data that will helpfully inform future strategy and planning.

22 LSC national office will be working with the DfES over the coming months looking at the overall delivery chain for work-related learning. We will work with the Department – drawing in other key partners, including the QCA and the Skills for Business Network – to undertake such a review. Discussions at local and regional level will make a key contribution to that work.

In summary

23 EBL activity is needed to support both current and planned 14–19 curriculum development leading to the following outcomes:

- improve the quality of young people's learning experience through their contacts with the world of work
- increase the number, range and quality of vocational learning opportunities for young learners aged 14–19 in line with the development of specialised diplomas, Young Apprenticeships and Foundation-level qualifications
- engage employers - national, large and small to medium sized businesses — in developing and delivering the vocational curriculum and in particular the emerging specialised diplomas
- create imaginative partnerships and ways of working that can deliver high-quality work-related learning experiences for young people within and outside of the work-place
- make coherent links between employers and education and training providers across the full range of 14–19 provision
- develop work-related curriculum experiences to support the KS4 work-related learning framework
- offer training and support for existing and future teachers, lecturers and others in the workforce
- deliver safe working placements for young people, including rigorous induction and support in unfamiliar working environments
- develop enterprise education, including social enterprise
- broker partnership work across institutions and with other providers
- maximise the effective use of extra resources devolved to school (for example enterprise monies) to support the vocational curriculum.

Timescales

LSC business cycle 2006/07

24 The key milestones for the LSC's 2006/07 business cycle in relation to EBL activity are:

- DfES funds for EBL allocated to the regions as part of LSC's regional allocations
- new LSC structure includes area partnership teams and regional centres
- national EBL contracts replaced by regional and sub-regional contracts where appropriate.

LSC business cycle 2007/08

25 The key milestones for the LSC's 2007/08 business cycle in relation to EBL activity are:

- LSC regional strategic planning cycle in place, incorporating planning and strategic information from local partnership teams
- local and regional delivery pathways understood by schools, colleges and training providers working with LSC partnership teams
- EBL procurement practice fully integrated into normal LSC procurement practice within the LSC business cycle (see paragraphs 25–39 below).

Planning and Procurement 2007/08

26 The aim is to bring the planning and procurement practices for EBL activity fully within the normal procurement practices of the LSC business cycle, taking into account the LSC provider procurement strategy.

Planning

27 Strategic planning for EBL should be part of a regional strategic planning cycle which should inform the regional and sub-regional EBL contracting processes for delivering EBL activity. This planning should be informed by area partnership teams

28 A proper distinction needs to be made between the strategic planning of EBL delivery and those who supply services to meet these strategic aims.

The service

29 We envisage a model of regional and sub-regional EBL delivery incorporating national, local and regional priorities. LSC funding for this delivery will be contained within the LSC's regional allocation.

30 The delivery model may involve a lead provider or lead providers, who will co-ordinate the delivery of EBL in a region or sub-region.

31 The delivery arrangements may vary, but it is expected that in most cases, a lead provider will sub-contract with organisations that can help meet the requirements of LSC priorities.

Procurement and contracting

32 The EBL service described above is categorised as a priority service under EU public procurement directives and is subject to advertising in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) and to open and competitive tendering arrangements. This will ensure that the process is open, clear and transparent.

33 The **minimum criteria** for planning, contracting and funding EBL activity should:

- be fit for purpose
- deliver value for money
- be customer led
- reflect local, regional and national priorities.

34 To comply with EU directives, the LSC, as a single body, is required to have a co-ordinated approach to this procurement. Regions are therefore asked to advise LSC national office of their procurement intentions if it is thought that the delivery model departs from the model described above.

35 No supplier who wishes to tender for a contract or who stands to be in receipt of a contract should be involved in decisions related to the award of contracts. This ensures a proper distinction between the roles of a supplier and of the purchaser, thus avoiding any potential conflict of interest.

36 The tendering and contracting processes must explicitly show how the supplier will give value for

money and in particular how the contract takes account of, and contributes to, the full range of current programmes and initiatives that support vocational learning such as work experience, enterprise and employer engagement with schools and colleges.

37 Regional contracts based on transparent tendering processes within a regional specification and achieving economies of scale across a region could be part of this new framework.

38 Not all EBL activity lends itself to regional contracts. The intention is to promote high-quality EBL delivery from existing and new providers. This is in line with the Government's *Five Year Strategy* (DfES, 2004), which seeks to open up opportunities for high-quality educational delivery to new providers, where appropriate. Sub-regional contracting and sub-regional delivery, as part of a regional specification, would also belong within this framework. High-quality local provision from new providers should be able to benefit from these new contracting arrangements.

National office role

39 The role of the national office in procuring and contracting EBL activity will be:

- production and publication of contract notification in OJEU and arrangements for national publicity
- development of a generic specification and invitation to tender
- development of quality and evaluation criteria and other standard documentation for use in the process.

Regional office role

40 The role of the regional offices in procuring and contracting EBL activity will be:

- arrangement of local advertising of the service to serve expressions of interest
- development of regional specification for integration with the national invitation to tender
- evaluation of tenders
- decision-making processes
- contract management.

Annex A: Background and Policy Context of Education Business Link Activity

Introduction

1 Education business link (EBL) activity supports links between the curriculum and young people's transition to the world of work, enabling students to engage with and understand the world of work before making decisions about their future. EBL activities enable employers to be involved in supporting young people and contributing to the development of work-related learning (WRL) opportunities. LSC-funded EBL activity is aimed at all learners and must include those with special educational needs and those at risk of exclusion.

2 In September 2004, a statutory requirement for WRL in the curriculum for 14–16 year olds at Key Stage (KS) 4 was introduced into schools. Work-related learning is defined as:

planned activity that uses the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work, including learning through the experience of work; learning about work and working practices; and learning the skills for work.

3 Direct experience of the world of work should be at the heart of WRL and all areas of the curriculum can contribute towards this. The building blocks for WRL should start below KS4 and whilst the LSC's priorities are 14-19 we acknowledge that this is built on significant business link activity at Key Stages 1,2 and 3.

4 Also included in WRL is an emphasis on enterprise skills and enterprise education. Through this work, young people are expected to develop enterprise capability, supported by financial capability and economic and business understanding. Social enterprise, involving the identification of a social need rather than a business context, is included within the definition of enterprise education.

5 The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has produced a non-statutory framework that sets out the minimum provision for all young people. The framework has nine elements that together can deliver the statutory requirement. The nine elements of provision are:

- recognise, develop and apply skills for enterprise and employability
- use experience of work, including work experience and part-time jobs, to extend understanding of work
- learn about the way business enterprises operate, working roles and conditions, and rights and responsibilities in the workplace
- develop awareness of the extent and diversity of local and national employment opportunities
- relate their abilities, attributes and achievements to career intentions and make informed choices based on an understanding of the alternatives
- undertake tasks and activities set in work contexts
- learn from contact with personnel from different employment sectors
- have experience (direct or indirect) of working practices and environments
- engage with ideas, challenges and applications from the business world.

6 For some students, work-related learning is built into their subject learning, into citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and supplemented by careers education and work experience. For others, it may be delivered through study for a vocational qualification. However, in all these programmes there is a need to:

- support and supplement the curriculum
- develop and share resources
- build capacity and expertise among learning providers
- fully engage employers as key partners.

Policy Context

7 The 14–19 White Paper (DfES, 2005a) sets out proposals for the transformation of secondary and post-secondary education. Within this is an enhanced set of pathways for young people to choose from at KS4. This is central to the aim of raising achievement for all 16 year olds with improved progression rates post-16. The Government's *14–19 Implementation Plan* (DfES publication, 2005) sets out in detail how 14–19 reform is being delivered.

8 The developing work with sector skills councils (SSCs) on the specialised diploma framework will present challenges to all providers and organisations working in 14–19 partnerships. Every young person aged 14–19 will be entitled to access specialised diplomas at 3 levels in any of the 14 proposed lines of learning that reflect major employment sectors in England. The diplomas will incorporate work placements (for a minimum of 10 days) and simulated or linked employment activities as part of their structure. The development of strengthened links with local employers will be essential to ensure effective delivery. Likewise, continuing developments in the KS4 curriculum are likely to increase the emphasis on learning in real work environments, and will require imaginative solutions from schools, colleges and training providers in partnership with employers and other partners.

9 As part of the drive to improve attainment and participation 14–19 the DfES Schools Engagement Programme pilot has been introduced from this September. The purpose of the programme is to motivate underachieving 14–16 year olds who are likely to be stimulated by a different learning environment to re-engage them. This is a nationwide programme initially rolled out to 21 pilot areas across all nine LSC

regions with further further areas likely to join the programme in September 2007. This programme will enable young people to have a personalised curriculum including work-placements and practical activity.

10 The Skills Strategy White Paper (DfES, 2005b) sets out the economic and social importance of preparing a flexible workforce for the future through which we can build a responsive and competitive economy. The challenge is to have a well-educated and highly skilled workforce in England that can compete successfully on an international level with the fast-developing new economies of the world. Experience of the world of work and an understanding of the skills needed to compete successfully in a world economy are central to the experience of young people at school and college.

11 *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003) sets out five outcomes the Government wants to achieve for all children and young people:

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- economic well-being.

Clearly, early preparation for the world of work is crucial to economic well-being. Support for a vocational curriculum as one of many curriculum pathways is central to a young person's enjoyment and achievement in their learning throughout the 14–19 phase, and enterprise behaviour is an important feature of this development. Being healthy and staying safe must continue to be uppermost in planning work placements and employer links, as young people all need rigorous induction and support in unfamiliar environments.

12 The Green Paper *Youth Matters* and the DfES response *Next Steps* sets out proposals to offer opportunity, challenge and support for teenagers. The proposals seek to engage more young people in positive activities and encourage them to volunteer and become involved in their communities. The promotion of enterprise education, including social enterprise, can directly support these aims, and work experience can provide a practical context for career choices.

13 The FE White Paper: *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*, sets out a comprehensive and ambitious programme of reform for the learning and skills sector. The proposed reforms will equip the sector to deliver the 14–19 and Skills Strategies, and meet the challenge of future skills needs for the economy that is being mapped out in Lord Leitch’s current review. The White Paper further extends some of the key principles of wider reforms of public services to this vital phase of education, notably putting greater choice in the hands of employers and learners.

14 Regional 14–19 strategy needs to take into account the full reform agenda for schools and colleges so that synergy between the different providers across 14–19 can be fully utilised.

Annex B: References

DfES (2003) Every Child Matters, CM 5860, Norwich: HMSO at
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications

DfES (2004) Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Putting people at the heart of public services, CM6272, Norwich: HMSO at
www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/5yearstrategy

DfES (2005a) 14–19 Education and Skills, CM 6476, Norwich: HMSO at
www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills

DfES (2005b) Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work, CM 6483, Norwich: HMSO at
www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/skillsgettingon

DfES (2005c) Youth Matters, CM 6629, Norwich: HMSO at
www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth

DfES (2005) 14–19 Implementation Plan
www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills

Learning and Skills Council
National Office

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
T 0845 019 4170
F 020 7682 3675
www.lsc.gov.uk

© LSC September 2006

Published by the Learning and Skills Council.

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial educational or training purposes on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented.

This publication is available in an electronic form on the Learning Skills Council web site:
www.lsc.gov.uk

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-060321

If you require this publication in an alternative format or language please contact the LSC Help Desk: 0870 900 6800