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Leading learning and skills

Learning and Learning and Skills Council County Durham Annual Plan 2007-08

March 2007

Of interest to National, Regional and Local Learning and Skills Colleagues

Introduction

We are pleased to present the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) County Durham Local Annual Plan 2007–2008. This plan sets out our challenges and priorities, how we will target our resources and the activities we will undertake. It has been developed within the context of the LSC Regional Commissioning Plan, County Durham Economic Strategy, County Durham Local Area Agreement and County Durham Children and Young People's Plan.

Although this is a one-year plan it supports the delivery of the longer-term vision for the North East:

> *The North East will be a region where present and future generations have a high quality of life. It will be a vibrant, self reliant, ambitious and outward looking region featuring a dynamic economic, a healthy environment and a distinctive culture. Everyone will have the opportunity to realise their potential.*[1]

Throughout 2005-2006 we continued to make significant progress in transforming the learning infrastructure to meet the needs of learners and employers in the county and to address national, regional and local priorities. Key achievements include:

- An increase in the number of young people participating in learning
- Higher levels of achievement of Level 2, Level 3 and Skills for Life qualifications by young people and adults – ensuring they have a strong foundation for future employability
- A significant increase in the proportion of adult learners on full Level 2 or full Level 3 programmes
- Significant increase in success rates of young people and adults in further education in the county.
- Nationally recognised success in delivering the Employer Training Pilot (EQ8) providing a solid foundation for the implementation of Train to Gain.
- Progress in local 14-19 reform and the development of local collaborative consortia to strengthen learner choice

Whilst much has been achieved, our challenge now is to accelerate the delivery of high quality learning and skills, driving economic competitiveness and making a real difference to the people who live and work in the county.

Our providers and partners play a crucial role in helping us address this agenda. We are grateful for their continued commitment and their invaluable contribution to the success achieved to date.

We look forward to building on our strong achievements and to working closely with you all in the delivery of this plan.

James Ramsbotham
Chair, LSC County Durham

Tom Crompton
Area Director
LSC County Durham, Tees Valley

[1] This vision, as stated in the Regional Economic Strategy, was agreed as part of the 'Shaping Horizons in the North East' process.

Local Context

This section summarises the key learning and skills needs for County Durham drawn from regional and local analysis and presented alongside the four national LSC priorities.

National Priority 1: Raise the quality and improve the choice of learning opportunities for all young people to equip them with the skills for employment, further or higher learning, and for wider social and community engagement.

- Participation in education and training at 16 has increased over the past 5 years, however, considerable variations in the levels of participation remain within the county.

- Progression into higher education remains low.

- The proportion of young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) remains a key concern with the proportion rising from 10.6% in March 2005 to 11.3% in March 2006. There was a significant reduction in the proportion of young people whose destination was not known over the same period (9.3% - March 2005; 6.3% - March 2006).

- There are relatively high concentrations of young people in the NEET category in areas of significant deprivation. There are a number of groups of young people who are over-represented in the NEET category, including males (particularly 17 year olds), young offenders, and young people with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities.

- Achievement at GCSE is a crucial indicator of future participation and achievement in learning. The GCSE results for 2005/2006 demonstrate an increase of 4.4. percentage points in the proportion of young people achieving 5 A*-Cs. Whilst the results remain below the national average the gap is closing significantly.

- The number of young people participating and successfully completing Apprenticeships has increased significantly over the past two years. However, there remains a need to increase the number of Advanced Apprenticeships delivered.

- Overall success rates in 2005-2006 for young people and adults in Further Education are above the national and regional average. There has been a significant increase in success rates from 66% in 2004-2005 to 75% in 2005-2006.

Key issues to address:

- **Increase participation in learning** by removing identified barriers, supporting transition and increasing retention
- Support measures to **engage young people not in education, employment or training** (NEET)
- Support more young people to achieve a **Level 2 qualification and a level 3 qualification by the age of 19**
- Increase the uptake and achievement of **Apprenticeships** and **Advanced Apprenticeships** in work based learning
- Strengthen the learner offer and improve **learner choice**
- Tackle **poor quality provision**, particularly in some areas of work based learning
- Increase the number of **Entry to Employment** learners who progress into positive outcomes
- Support the needs of **young people at risk** such as young offenders
- Increase the capacity of local provision to meet the needs of **Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities**
- Encourage more progression to **Higher Education**

National Priority 2: Raise the skills of the nation, giving employers and individuals the skills they need to improve productivity, employability and social cohesion.

- The skills profile reveals that County Durham has a higher proportion of adults with no qualifications compared to England as a whole and a lower proportion with higher level skills.

- The number of adults with literacy and numeracy needs remains a key issue with 63% of adults having below level 2 literacy and, of particular concern, 86% below level 2 in numeracy.

- Key groups of adults remain disengaged from any form of learning including the unemployed, the economically inactive, offenders and those with no qualifications.

- There has been a significant shift in the adult learning offer, with a move away from short course, non-accredited provision towards the supply of full Level 2 and Level 3 courses. The proportion of adult learners on full Level 2 or full Level 3 programmes has increased from 8.6% in 2004/2005 to 17.3% in 2005/2006.

- The demand for lower level skills is projected to decline although replacement demand remains significant, for example, in construction. Employer demand for higher level skills continues to increase, particularly at Level 3 and Level 4.

- Demand for skills is expected to occur in a number of sectors in the County including Health and Social Care (including the NHS), the Public Sector and Retail and Business Services. Sectors such as Hospitality, Leisure and Travel and Tourism remain prominent sectors within the county and the region.

Key issues to address:

- Raise the quality of **information, advice and guidance** that both employers and adults receive
- **Increase demand for skills** amongst employers and individuals
- Continued alignment of LSC funded provision to **LSC priorities and local skill needs**
- Delivery of the **priorities in Sector Skills Agreements** in the local context
- Increase the number of adults achieving **skills for life** qualifications
- Increase the number of adults with **Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications, including leadership and management, and targeting important sectors for economic growth**
- Increased contracting for **demand led provision** in sectors where there is clear demand
- Drive further improvements in the **quality of local provision**
- Support the development of **high quality specialist provision**

National Priority 3: Raise the performance of a world-class system that is responsive, provides choice and is recognised and valued for excellence.

- The provider base in the county is made up of four Further Education Colleges, Schools with Sixth Forms and a varied number and type of providers delivering vocational learning.

- Two of the four FE colleges have had new builds in the past few years, most recently New College in Durham. Bishop Auckland College is near completion of phase one of a new build and East Durham and Houghall Community College is planning to commence the new build of its facilities in Peterlee in 2007-2008.

- Building Schools for the Future (BSF) plans to refurbish or replace schools with state of the art buildings, materials and technology.

- The Employer Training Pilot and subsequently Train to Gain have impacted positively upon the provision of full Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in the county.

- The introduction of the new standard of provider responsiveness will ensure that providers are able to evidence their ability to respond to the needs of employers.

- There is a need to continually improve the quality of learning provision in County Durham, building upon the increase in success rates of learners and challenging poor quality provision.

- There are relatively low levels of fee income collected by colleges in the county.

- There is significant movement of learners out of the county and across the region. This movement is particularly prevalent to the south of the county.

- Collaborative working across the county has increased and will continue to do so to ensure the delivery of the learner entitlement.

- Issues remain within the county regarding the availability of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- Transport continues to act as a barrier to learning for some, including those with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key issues to address:

- Support sustained improvements in the **quality and responsiveness** of local provision
- Support the development of high quality **specialist provision**
- **Promote equality and diversity in learning**
- **Ensure the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met**

National Priority 4: Raise our contribution to economic development locally and regionally through partnership working

- The current and future structure of the local economy is a key factor in determining the demands for skills and qualifications.

- County Durham has an economically active workforce of around 73% of working age people compared to 78% in England as a whole. Whilst the local resident labour force is expected to grow, the rate will be amongst the slowest in the country.

- The county displays particularly high rates of inactivity and disengagement from the labour market; this is particularly prevalent in the east of the county and rural areas in the west. A targeted approach with partners will be needed in order to identify and reach these groups of people.

- 70% of the 2015 workforce is already in employment. This factor combined with an ageing population means that reaching potential learners through and with employers is a significant challenge for the county.

- The growth in employment in workplaces in Durham is expected to be primarily within the service sector but it should be noted that the county has an above average proportion of employment in the high performance engineering sector.

- The Local Area Agreement (LAA) is now in place, setting out a collaborative approach to deliver a challenging shift in the adult population achieving a full Level 2.

- The voluntary sector is a significant employer in the county and plays a key role in engaging and delivering learning to the ‘harder to reach’ groups within the community.

- Whilst influencing the uptake of skills development, the voluntary and community sector are working closely within a network to build capacity and capability to make a significant difference to community engagement and achievement.

Key issues to address:

- Support **economic development** by providing the skills needed to support lifelong employability
- **Improve the skills of workers in key sectors of the economy,** including the public sector
- **Support those out of work access sustainable employment**
- **Continue to increase the capacity of the voluntary sector** to engage harder to reach groups

LSC Priority 1: Raise the quality and improve the choice of learning opportunities for all young people to equip them with the skills for employment, further or higher learning, and for wider social and community engagement.		
Issue	**Action**	**Measure of Success**
Learner participation and reducing NEET	Increase the participation of young people in learning: • Work with partners and providers including the Local Authority, Connexions and others to develop a co-ordinated strategy to reduce the number of young people NEET. • Support the development of an action plan with clear responsibilities for **identifying and responding to 'blocks' to engagement of young people who are NEET in over-represented groups** - young mothers, 17 year olds who are no longer in learning, offenders, those in care/care leavers, learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those with mental health issues • Encourage and support greater collaboration between partners to implement **September Guarantee, Clearing House, on-line prospectus and common application process** • Implementation of Post Inspection Action Plan including **Durham 1000**, **support for young people with additional learner needs** and activity to improve retention in colleges and work-based learning providers. • Continue to develop **transition arrangements for young people with SEN** into post 16 education, employment and training. • **Maintain an increase in EMA take-up** for eligible 16 year olds • Encourage the integration of FE and WBL **through Programme Led Pathways** to improve participation rates • Increase the number of learners in **E2E progressing into positive outcomes**	• Contribute towards the county target of 10.5% - the proportion of young people in the NEET group • Participation Task Group action plan to be completed and implementation to begin by April 2007. • Implement the September Guarantee • Support the delivery of the Post Inspection Action Plan in line with the outcomes, timescales and costs identified for 2007-2008 • Deliver ESF contracts supporting projects linked to the Action Plan (e.g. Durham 1000) by March 2008 • 98% eligible 16 yr olds take up EMA entitlement • 53% of Entry to Employment (E2E) leavers progress into employment, work based learning or further education
Attainment at Level 2 and Level 3	Increase the number of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19: • **Continue to expand full Level 2 and Level 3 provision** and ensure appropriate progression pathways are in place • Target young people with a partial Level 2, and those in jobs without learning. • Improve the choice for learners and encourage progression through the development of **flexible and responsive curriculum pathways**.	• 67% of young people reaching Level 2 at 19 and 39% reaching a Level 3 at 19 • 3% improvement in FE Level 2 success rates for young people • 3% improvement in WBL Level 2 success rates for young people

	• Encourage support, including clear progression routes, for those individuals who are high achievers.	
Learner choice and provider collaboration	Ensure the implementation of the learning entitlement for all young people: • Continue to lead the 14-19 Strategic Group and four Area Advisory Groups in partnership with the Local Authority to ensure **strategies for engagement and retention of young people in responsive and appropriate provision** with ongoing advice and guidance and clear progression pathways • In partnership with the Local Authority, lead **a review of 14-19 learning provision available to young people in Derwentside and the South West** of Durham and support action to address identified underperformance and gaps in provision • Encourage the development of collaborative arrangements and increase provider capacity to support the **successful introduction of diplomas** in the county • **Target Young Apprenticeship activity** to extend and embed collaborative working in key sectors in the county • **Increase employer engagement with young people and the 14-19 education and training sector** and ensure the provision of quality work experience in key sectors working with Education Business Link partners • Promote the importance of enterprise, science and languages in the 14-19 curriculum	• Local area 14 – 19 prospectus to be available online by end of May 2007 • All 14-19 partnerships supported in planning, delivery and management of appropriate learning provision • 5650 young people on work experience at year 10/11
LSC Priority 2: Raise the skills of the nation, giving employers and individuals the skills they need to improve productivity, employability and social cohesion.		
Issue	**Action**	**Measure of Success**
Aligning provision to LSC priorities	Deliver the funding priorities in the LSCs Annual Statement of Priorities and Regional Commissioning Plan: • **Reduce non-accredited provision,** where appropriate, through specific agreements with all local FE providers • **Increase provision and participation at full level 2 and 3** through mainstream FE, WBL and Train to Gain with a particular emphasis on the proportion of full level 2 that will be 'first' • **Increase the success rates** of provision at full Level 2 and Level 3 through the review and agreement of performance	• Reduction in the amount of non-approved provision that does not contribute to LSC targets to 30% • 3% improvement in Level 2 success rates in FE • 3% improvement in Level 3 success rates in FE • Additional 1551 first full Level 2 qualifications in FE compared to 2006/2007 • 3% improvement in Level 2 success rates in WBL • 3% improvement in Level 3 success rates in WBL

	indicators in provider development plans • **Challenge poor quality and unresponsive provision**	
Skills for Life	• **Increase Skills for Life achievements** by agreeing with local FE providers an increase in the proportion of Skills for Life provision that contributes to the national target • Ensure implementation of the policy to remove automatic fee remission for ESOL learners	• Increase the FE skills for life provision mix which counts towards the national target to 70%
Ensuring local provision meets local and regional skills needs	• Promote responsiveness to the **sector qualification strategies** of the Sector Skills Councils • Review provider development plans to ensure they reflect SSA priorities • Encourage provider strategies for migrant workers, paying particular attention to geographical hotspots e.g. Derwentside • Targeted purchasing of Advanced Apprenticeships to respond to specialist Level 3 needs in key local sectors including Construction, Tourism, Engineering, Public Administration, Health & Social Care • Work with partners to encourage the development of higher level management and leadership skills within the self-employed, SME's and Public Sector.	• Sector priorities integrated into provider development plans. OSAT, BIT level 2&3, ITQ • Contribution to the OSAT Level 2 regional target of 5644 Contribute to regional Train to Gain targets of: o 7,850 Learners gain first level 2 qualifications o 90 Level 3 qualifications achieved o 1,650 learners to gain Skills for Life qualifications • Create an additional 4% in learning Advanced Apprenticeships (the largest proportion to be in: Construction, Tourism, Engineering, Public Administration, Health & Social Care
Information, advice and guidance	**Embed good quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG**) within the learning offer for adults: • Ensure full and effective delivery of mainstream IAG services to adults without a Level 2 • Improve the performance of next steps provider • Ensure the effective implementation of the outcomes of the national review of IAG in partnership with the local IAG Board • Work with Union Learning Representatives to encourage demand for learning, particularly from individuals who do not have a first Level 2 qualification	• 23480 adults receive information • 4040 adults without a full Level 2 receive advice
Adults at risk – Offender Learning	Improve the achievement levels of learners on Skills for Life and full Level 2 programmes delivered in Custody through the **Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)**	Contributing to regional targets of: • 1440 Skills for Life achievements towards the national target • 20 first full level 2 qualifications that count towards the national PSA level 2 target

		138 Durham and 126 Northumbria Skills for Life achievements delivered within Durham and Northumbria Probation areas that count towards the national target
Higher Education	Work in partnership with Aim Higher to **promote Higher Education as a progression route** to young people in FE and Advanced Apprenticeship	• Promote Higher Education within local strategies and provider plans
LSC Priority 3: Raise the performance of a world class system that is responsive, provides choice and is valued and recognised for excellence.		
Issue	**Action**	**Measure of Success**
Quality and success	Implement the requirements of the Regional Quality Improvement Strategy to provide quality and choice of learning opportunities for all learners in County Durham • Ensure that provider plans include measures to bring about an **improvement in success rates** • **Challenge poor quality and unresponsive provision** through planning discussions, applying the policy for Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP). • **Define and identify coasting provision and have in place effective actions to achieve improvement** • Introduction of the **new standard of employer engagement and vocational excellence** • Ensure that as National Skills Academies become operational they are appropriately embedded to support key sectors • Ensure provider plans contain Learner Engagement Strategies • Ensure provider plans identify potential for attracting **fee income**	• All self-assessment reports reviewed by 31 Dec 07 • All sector subject areas graded satisfactory or better • 50% of providers use National Learner Survey as benchmarking tool during 2007/08. • 3% increase in Level 2 success rates in FE • 3% increase in LLDD success rates in FE • 3% increase in WBL framework success rates
Learning Infrastructure	• Work with partners to develop a flexible range of learning provision to include self-directed learning, e-learning and informal learning opportunities • **Implement County Durham's Capital Strategy** to complete changes to FE Estate.	• All four colleges to be progressing towards completion throughout 2008 including the rebuild of the EDHCC Peterlee site and phase 2 of Bishop Auckland College
Equality and Diversity	Influence and support provision to ensure Equality and Diversity is promoted and embedded in all learning delivery and continue to support specific learner groups in County Durham so that they can enter and stay in learning and achieve their potential:	• Local baseline and future targets for participation and success rates of all minority groups reflect Regional plans and are agreed by June 2007 • Framework achievement rates for LLDD learners

	• **Establish local EDIM's** ensuring these targets match local population profiles. • Work with regional groups and networks to improve opportunities and support for ALL individuals and minority groups • **Increase the capacity of providers to deliver more innovative provision, and develop more new provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD**): • Build Capacity in County Durham to support more learners with ASD in post-16 provision • Engage mainstream providers both FE and ACL to support the work of the Offender Learning and Skills Service through **delivery of provision to offenders in the community**	across all provision are within 3% of overall achievement rate
LSC Priority 4: Raise our contribution to economic development locally and regionally through partnership working		
Issue	**Action**	**Measure of Success**
Local Area Agreements/LEGI County Durham Economic Strategy and City Regions	• Support the content and development of Block 4 of the County Durham Local Area Agreement and the LEGI programme • Lead on the implementation of learning and skills elements in the forthcoming local county strategies • Develop a clear strategy for skills and inclusion in the new County Durham Economic Strategy (2007-2012). • Ensure the skills needs of the county are reflected in the city region plans for Tees Valley and Tyne & Wear; • Develop and agree clear actions for skills linked to the key regeneration projects in the county priority areas such as sciences • Align LSC mainstream resources to reflect the emerging needs of the county. • Ensure effective links with employer groups to reflect the higher level skills needs of the current and future workforce	• Contribute to the 7 Local Strategic Partnerships through participation in the executive groups, helping to align resources (LSC, NRF, LEGI, ESF) to meet local needs • Complete LAA/CDSP funded county wide Skills Survey to help identify current skill levels and future priorities. Contribute to the development of the new partnership structures emerging through LAA • Ensure LSC targets are communicated within LAAs, LEGI, County Durham Economic Strategy and City Region Development Plans • Where possible ensure that funding is aligned with partners to maximise the delivery against targets • Lead the development of skills action planning to support regeneration projects e.g. Netpark and Eastgate
Worklessness and Disadvantaged Communities	Enable those who are excluded from the labour market to access learning and sustainable employment: • Enhance the effectiveness of learning in disadvantaged communities through close partnership working with Local Authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships	• Use Single Programme and ESF to deliver a programme for 500 unemployed/ incapacity benefit claimants linked to work opportunities and Train to Gain • Use planned national "Skills for Jobs" programme in County Durham to meet the needs of hard to reach

	• Work closely with JobCentre Plus to engage workless adults to improve economic inclusion and activity • Maintain entry level provision with supported progression to engage those outside the labour market. • Ensure an effective partnership is in place to deliver a strategic and co-ordinated approach to personal and community development learning • Continue to work with the voluntary and community sector to communicate and engage with the 'harder to reach' groups in the local community	groups and local employers
Voluntary and community sector	• Further build capacity within the sector to increase its contribution to the delivery of accredited learning opportunities in priority areas.	• Engage with local and regional networks to enable the sharing of good practice • Use resources to support the networks to develop the capability for Self Assessment

Aggregate Volumes

LSC Funded Participation	16 - 18 (Learner Volumes)	Adult (Learner Volumes)
Number of FE learners (total)	5,891	24,066
Number of FE Full Level 3 Learners	1,672	1,763
Number of learners undertaking an Advanced Apprenticeship (Average in Learning)	419	346
Number of FE Full Level 2 Learners	1,450	5,406
Number of learners undertaking an Apprenticeship at Level 2 (Average in Learning)	1,426	437
Number of FE learners undertaking Skills for Life qualifications that directly contribute to PSA target	3,010	2,155

Outcomes	16 - 18 (Learner Achievements)	Adult (Learner Achievements)	16 - 18 Success Rates(%)	Adult Success Rates(%)
Number of FE Learners achieving a Full Level 3 qualification	1,087	1,287		
Number of Learners achieving an Advanced Apprenticeship Framework	148	129	47.9	37.6
Number of FE Learners achieving a Full Level 2 qualification	1,164	3,171		
Number of Learners achieving an Apprenticeship Framework at Level 2	613	244	52.7	55.1
Number of FE learners achieving a Skills for Life qualifications that directly contribute to PSA target	2,642	1,656		
Number of Advanced Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship learners achieving a Skills for Life qualifications that directly contribute to PSA target	641	447		

Funding Summary	Funding (£)
FE 16 - 18	0
FE Adult	0
FE Additional Learning Support	0
Advanced Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships 16-18	0
Advanced Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships Adult	0

Partnership Working

The LSC is proud of its strong record of effective partnership working at regional, sub-regional and local level. We are also proud of the success this has brought in helping us improve local provision so that it better meets the needs of the local and regional economy.

The implementation of Theme 7 of the LSCs *agenda for change* reform programme has strengthened our interface with partners at all levels. This is imperative in meeting the challenges we have set in transforming learning and skills. In meeting this challenge we are working with partners in a number of ways:

County Durham LSC is part of the Board arrangements for the **County Durham Strategic Partnership** and **Local Area Agreement** (LAA) **Partnership**. The LAA focuses resources in the county into a number of themes and targets. The 'stretch' targets include increasing achievement at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths), and increasing the achievement of Level 2 qualifications by adults. The LSC is committed to supporting the LAA Partnership to achieve these targets

The LSC is actively involved in both the Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear **City Region** partnerships and is contributing to the development of employment and skills proposals.

The collaborative approach to implementing the 14–19 reform is led by a Strategic Group jointly chaired by the Local Authority and LSC and supported by four Area Advisory Groups. County Durham LSC is also a member of the **Children's Executive Board**. Through these partnership arrangements we will be taking joint action to address the issues raised within the Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP) including reducing the proportion of young people in the NEET category and supporting learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The LSC is committed to maintaining its role working with the **Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP)** to support economic regeneration. Our continued commitment to the LSPs is important in strengthening the links between learning, community development and neighbourhood renewal.

The regional support team are strengthening our engagement with strategic partners at the regional level. Through the **Regional Skills Partnership** and implementation of the Regional Skills Action Plan the LSC will continue to work with One NorthEast, Business Link, Jobcentre Plus and other key partners to maintain a structured and co-ordinated approach to strategic planning at the regional level.

The work of LSC North East on meeting sector skills needs covers a range of sectors of strategic importance in the area, and involves a strong strategic interface with Skills for Business, the Sector Skills Development Agency, and the relevant **Sector Skills Councils.** The sector team are ensuring sector needs and the Sector Skills Agreements fully inform the strategic purchasing of LSC funded provision.

Equality and Diversity

The LSC has a duty to promote equality and diversity across all learning and skills provision to ensure that we meet the diverse needs of all sections of society. We will

discuss with providers through our planning dialogues how they are embedding good equality and diversity practise into all their activities. In spring 2007 we will draw up a regional strategy and action plan for equality and diversity, informed by a national Single Equality Scheme and the ONE Equality and Diversity Strategic Action Plan.

Regional Equality and Diversity Impact Measures, aligned to PSA targets, will be identified by early 2007 based on a regional analysis of participation and achievement. These will be taken forward by local partnership teams with further details set out in local delivery plans. We also recognise the importance of embedding equality and diversity in our own workforce through the identification, development and dissemination of good practice.

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

The LSC is committed to meeting the learning needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By April 2007 a regional strategy will be published, informed by the national strategy and the recent regional review of provision. The key areas of focus will be:

- investing in provision: understanding demand and developing more high quality, learner centred provision to increase the number of opportunities for learners to study locally
- raising the quality of provision: actively supporting programmes that enable individuals to progress to meet their aims and aspirations
- working with partners to develop a co-ordinated regional approach to LLDD workforce development
- increasing economic participation through sustainable employment - sharing good practise and working with partners to increase employment opportunities.

The County Durham partnership team will be working closely with relevant providers and partners in the county to ensure that these priorities are addressed.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of learners is a fundamental issue for the Learning and Skills Council. We believe that learners are entitled to learning that takes place in a safe, healthy and supportive environment. LSC policy is to adopt a ‘best practice’ role with regard to the promotion of learner health and safety, by applying the following four core principles to:

- expect that colleges and other providers funded by the Council will fully meet their legal obligations and “duty of care” to learners
- seek assurance that colleges and other providers have suitable and sufficient arrangements for learner health and safety
- take appropriate action where expected standards are not met or maintained
- promote the raising of standards for learner health and safety through support, and challenge, as appropriate.