

Learning and Skills Council North East

Higher Level Skills and Education Development Plan 2007-10

Introduction

The Learning & Skills Council North East has recently set out its intentions to strengthen its support for the development of higher level skills and education in the region. The North East's Development Plan 2007-10 articulates how the national LSC HE strategy's four key themes of participation, partnership, progression and provision will be taken forward. In doing so it sets out how the regional LSC will respond to the challenges laid down by the national strategy and the stretching targets identified in the Leitch Review, whilst taking into account the distinctiveness of the region. Under each theme a set of regional objectives and success measures have been established – these will provide the focus for the LSC NE's activity over the period 2007-10.

The Development Plan recognises the existing contribution of the universities, further education colleges and work based learning providers to meeting the region's current and future higher level skills needs. In particular, it acknowledges the central role the FECs play as direct/indirectly funded providers of HE (and non-prescribed HE), as well as providers of Level 3 provision for progression into HE. Moreover, there are a number of time-bound regional initiatives funded by the LSC and HEFCE within the purview of the plan (e.g. Aimhigher, North East Higher Skills Network, Train to Gain HE), which all have their own targets and performance indicators.

The LSC NE has thereby focused its efforts on securing joint approaches to delivering improved performance in achieving the region's higher level skills priorities as set out in the Regional Economic Strategy 2006-16¹, *Leading the Way*, and its associated Action Plan 2006-11². Underpinning this approach will be the principle of ensuring that there is a balanced representation of stakeholders, including HE providers, on appropriate regional forums.

¹ www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/res.cfm

² www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/res_action_plan.cfm

<p>higher-level skills training through Train to Gain, particularly new trials of HE skills within Train to Gain and the notion of a single broker with an integrated programme from basic to higher level skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FE colleges and HE institutions to consider the role of HE in its widest sense in the context of local and/or regional priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent generalist brokerage service integrated with the Train to Gain skills brokerage service at a regional level through Business Link North East • Additional funding (e.g. One NorthEast's Skills Solution Fund) accessed through the regional brokerage service provides support for employers seeking to develop their workforce at Level 4 and above 	<p>and learners in the region</p>	<p>covering skills needs at all levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with One NorthEast, Business Link North East and the HEFCE funded Higher Level Skills Pathfinder to increase the demand from employers in the region for higher level skills through, in part, the integrated Train to Gain brokerage service and funding support for development at Levels 2, 3, 4 and above
<p>Provision: Working with key stakeholders to ensure provision provides appropriate progression pathways from Level 3 (within the context of a reformed NQF) and becoming a key strategic partner in ensuring that higher level skills and learning are fit for purpose and responsive to employer needs</p>			
<p>The proposed key regional objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the balance and mix of provision, ensure the availability of appropriate vocational provision at Level 3 in order to support progression pathways • Working with key regional partners to support the engagement of employers in higher level skills and learning and linking this to the creation of a quality-marked nationwide network • Working with HEFCE regional consultants, Foundation Degree Forward regional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key manufacturing and service sectors for the North East identified in the Regional Economic Strategy • Providers of higher level skills in the region include five universities and the Open University in the North, three mixed economy colleges and 19 further education colleges, alongside a network of work based learning providers • Two networks of HE in FE provision exist led by the universities of Sunderland and Teesside • Significant investment in higher 	<p>Build capacity in HE providers to better respond to the region's current and future higher level skills needs</p>	<p>By 2010 the LSC NE will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented a strategic commissioning approach driven by regional and sectoral needs and employer and learner demand • Worked with One NorthEast, Association of Colleges, Universities for the North East, the HEFCE funded Higher Level Skills Pathfinder, North East Higher Skills Network, the Work Based Learning Providers Forum, Centres of Vocational Excellence and regional hubs of the National Skills Academies to build capacity in HE providers

<p>managers and the Skills for Business Network to support the expansion of Foundation degrees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with HEFCE regional consultants to identify expansion in priority areas Ensuring that the development of skills academies, second-phase Centres of Vocational Excellence and facilities for specialist provision take account of the need for progression pathways from Levels 2, 3 and above 	<p>level skills provision in the region by HEFCE and the LSC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LSC and HEFCE fund a range of regional initiatives which support the development of vocationally relevant provision, most notably the network 24 Centres of Vocational Excellence, the emergent National Skills Academies and the North East Higher Skills Network 	<p>Create and sustain mechanisms capable of better aligning supply and demand and needs across the region's priority sectors</p>	<p>By 2010 the LSC NE will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with relevant Sector Skills Councils, employers and other key partners (e.g. HEFCE, One NorthEast, Foundation Degree Forward) to commission provision, including Foundation degrees and non-prescribed HE, in key sectors for the North East Ensured that the development of the regional hubs of the National Skills Academies, second-phase Centres of Vocational Excellence and facilities for specialist provision meet regional, employer and learner needs and maximise progression into and through HE
<p>Participation: Better understanding of how participation can be measured, monitored and evaluated through the identification of more robust methods for capturing data, focused and fit-for-purpose information, advice and guidance for key cohorts, as well as examining how widening participation in HE can continue to be promoted</p>			
<p>The proposed key regional objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing regional benchmarks for progression rates of vocational and work-based learners into HE in order to inform future planning of appropriate Level 3 provision (and provision at Levels 4 and 5) Acknowledging the importance of QAA recognised Access to HE as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population in the North East is set to decline over the next 10 years Low productivity and a low skills economy persists in the region, alongside an over-reliance on a few key industries Low levels of attainment and participation prevail in the North East A total of 111,925 learners were 	<p>Provide the evidence base to inform strategic and planning decisions at a regional, sectoral and HE/FE provider level to improve progression</p>	<p>By 2010 the LSC NE will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with key partners (e.g. HEFCE, Aimhigher) and LSC funded providers to establish regional benchmarks in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understand the progression rates and support needs of learners (Train to Gain, vocational and work-based) into HE Inform future planning of

<p>a priority in the balance and mix of provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting attainment and achievement at Level 3 and thereby increasing the pool of learners able to enter HE 	<p>enrolled on HE courses in the North East – 6,235 of whom were registered at FE colleges in 2005/06 and 3,135 learners were enrolled on Access to HE courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The North East student population is changing as greater numbers of students choose to study at a local or regional institution, rather than to move away to study in other regions of the UK Efforts to widen participation in the region are currently supported by Aimhigher, the 14-19 Partnerships, Aspire and other regional initiatives 	<p>Support the development of a pool of learners able to engage in HE by strengthening support for attainment and achievement at Level 3</p>	<p>appropriate quality provision at Levels 3, 4 and 5 to ensure vocational and work-based progression pathways into higher level skills and HE exist</p> <p>By 2010 the LSC NE will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensured access to effective information, advice and guidance for employers and learners on vocational progression pathways provided by Aimhigher, Connexions, Job Centre Plus and other appropriate bodies
<p>Progression: Addresses current barriers to implementing a range of initiatives designed to support and enhance progression for both work-based learners and learners seeking to re-engage or engage with HE in order to ensure the availability of appropriate progression pathways</p>			
<p>The proposed key regional objectives for this theme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that all LSC-funded vocational and work-based learners at Level 3 have the choice of an appropriate pathway to Level 4 or 5 Reviewing the planning, funding and fees policy for progression pathways available for adult (non-traditional) entrants to HE, in the context of a possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 50% of the learners that study HE in the region are from the North East Region has the greatest level of graduate inflow into the region – for every 100 students from the North East at UK HEIs, there are approximately 147 students from the UK studying in the North East The trend is for less people to come into the region to study 	<p>Build and strengthen vocational progression pathways to enable learners to engage or re-engage with HE</p>	<p>By 2010 the LSC NE will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensured that the development of Diplomas in the North East provide effective progression to Levels 4 and 5 for all learners 14-19 Worked with the North East Higher Skills Network to ensure effective progression pathways into and through HE exist in the three key sectors of engineering, health and social care, and

<p>entitlement for 19–25-year-olds in relation to Level 3 achievement (and the possibility of accounts for learners over 25 to achieve a first, full level 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to support existing regional widening participation and progression initiatives, such as Aimhigher 	<p>higher education but this has been balanced by increasing numbers of students from the North East studying at the region’s institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of graduates entering the North East workforce has increased, as has the proportion of graduates entering the region’s workforce who either studied in, or came from, the North East 	<p>Promote and achieve a step change in widening participation in HE</p>	<p>leadership and management</p> <p>By 2010 the LSC NE will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with Aimhigher, 14-19 partnerships, Aspire and other initiatives to raise aspirations, attainment levels and progression rates into HE of young people
---	--	--	---