

LSC report sets out funding priorities for learning and skills in England

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in the North East is looking to 'raise its game' with the publication of its Annual Statement of Priorities.

Entitled 'Raising our Game', the publication unveils plans to invest £11.2 billion nationally to help learners and employers during 2007-08. Seven billion pounds will be invested to enable more than 1.3 million young people in school, college or work-based learning to achieve qualifications. Plus, over £3 billion will be spent on adult learning, helping 4.2 million adults to improve their skills.

Chris Roberts, Regional Director, LSC North East said: "The North East is no different to other parts of England whereby it needs a highly skilled workforce if we are to meet not only today's challenges, but also the technological, demographic and global challenges of tomorrow. The LSC has already achieved its national Level 2 Adult skills target well ahead of schedule. One million adults have achieved essential Level 2 qualifications since 2002 and the LSC is on track to reach its goal of 3.6 million adults reaching Level 2 by 2010. Put simply, all of these people will have achieved the essential platform for success and progression in learning and work – and this can, quite literally, transform lives.

"But we have much more to do. 'Raising our Game' sets out how we intend to build on the progress and continue towards our goal of creating a skilled workforce to match the best in the world."

The LSC is aiming to have 90 per cent of 17-year-olds in education or training by 2015. The organisation will support 12 new employer-led National Skills Academies, to be opened by 2008, whilst an extra £16.7 million will be invested in the further expansion of

Apprenticeships for Adults. This is being funded through efficiency savings as a result of the restructuring of the LSC. As announced in the Government's White Paper, £25 million will be made available to provide free tuition for 19-25s working for their first full Level 3 qualification.

And the LSC is increasing the base rates for 16-18 provision in Further Education (FE) by 3.7 per cent, in line with the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) in schools. This will help to keep us on track to narrow the "funding gap" between school sixth forms and FE colleges.

Bill Rammell, Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education said:

"This Government is passionate about the role of Further Education in tackling our skills challenges and has matched that passion with record levels of investment and a 48 per cent increase since 1997. This increase is continuing this year. We are determined to improve the quality and status of vocational and work-based learning, equally important as a way into rewarding careers as more academic routes.

"Strong funding means the sector can respond confidently against a background of stability and rising learner numbers. It is absolutely right that more money goes towards the priority groups who need skills for good careers. Our target to have 90 per cent of 17-year-olds in education and training by 2015 is challenging but must be achieved if we are to thrive in the long term."

The LSC will encourage a more open market in FE and a broader curriculum in schools, colleges and training organisations, so that they can provide more choice, tailored around the needs of individuals and businesses.

The ambitious plans of the LSC are all designed to continue to improve the reputation of

learning and skills in England. The LSC's reform programme, *agenda for change*, pushes a record amount of money directly to the people who want to get on and improve their life chances.

The Annual Statement of Priorities complements the LSC's *agenda for change* transformation programme, reflects the FE White Paper and anticipates the Leitch Review of Skills later this year. It contains the LSC's funding priorities, achievements to date and planning approach for 2007/2008. Copies of the document are available on the LSC website at: www.lsc.gov.uk

ENDS

Editor's Note:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

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