

Learning and Skills Council Local Area Statement of Need

Bolton

2008/09

February 2008

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities
across Greater Manchester

Introduction

I am delighted on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Greater Manchester to present our Bolton Local Annual Statement of Need for 2008/09. This plan outlines the key priorities and challenges for Bolton and sets out how we intend to focus our efforts and resources over the forthcoming year.

The transformation of the learning and skills sector in Bolton has accelerated over the last 12 months and we are very proud of the effective partnership work which has been taking place. Together we have worked to tackle the issues we face that impact on local economic growth and the results are clear.

There has been a clear focus on ensuring that more young people are supported to participate in learning and we have invested over £500,000 through the NEET hotspot funding to target the high volumes of 16-18 year olds who remain disengaged. Our Entry to Employment programme in Bolton is outstanding and produces some of the highest positive progression rates in the country. Success rates continue to rise and the post-16 sector continues to add high levels of value at Level 2 for young people.

We are working hard to improve the responsiveness of the sector to the needs of learners and employers and have increased the proportion of our adult provision which is focused on the delivery of priority provision at Level 2, Level 3 and Skills for Life. Train to Gain volumes are increasing and we have achieved greater alignment with sector skills needs through effective borough based planning informed by the work of the Bolton Skills Board.

The FE estate in Bolton is undergoing radical transformation to maximise the colleges' ability to respond to local needs. The new 14-19 Centre in Farnworth opens its doors to learners in September 2008 providing additional new learning opportunities in the south of the borough. The exciting FE developments will continue to progress with the approval by the LSC nationally to provide a further £80 million investment to build state of the art facilities within the town centre by 2010. The co-location of the two colleges on a single learning campus will underpin all future planning of post-16 learning, helping to stimulate demand for learning and raise the aspirations of Bolton residents.

The success we have had to date has only been possible due to the commitment and support of key partners within Bolton. Partnership working has featured strongly in our approach to driving forward the learning and skills agenda and collaboration will continue to be fundamental to addressing the key issues we face. We will build upon the strong and effective relationships that are in place to ensure that learning and skills are positioned at the heart of local economic development and community regeneration through effective neighbourhood targeting. This will ensure that the people of Bolton are equipped with the skills that will enable them access the opportunities that will emerge over the next 10 years

[Insert Signature]

Claire Jackson
Partnership Director, Bolton
Greater Manchester
Learning & Skills Council

Challenges, key actions and measures of success for Bolton

As we move forward through 2008/09 we will need to ensure that we have a learning infrastructure that reflects the changing policy landscape. The challenges and actions for Bolton are based on the local Strategic Analysis, a robust review of supply, demand and need; as well as ongoing dialogue with key partner organisations. The analysis can be accessed at

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthWest/NorthWestStrategicAnalysis.htm>

Priority 1: Creating Demand for Skills

Key Challenges:

- Addressing high levels of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Increasing Level 2 and Level 3 achievement by age 19
- Increasing the range of vocational opportunities for young people through apprenticeships and diplomas

To increase the demand for learning we need to drive forward a cultural shift in the perception of learning within Bolton and ensure the benefits of skills acquisition are clear. In addition for 2008/09 we aim to:

- Plan, through the 14-19 Strategy Group, a **comprehensive 14-19 offer**, maximising the utilisation and impact of ESF to provide pathways for young people to progress into mainstream learning within Bolton
- Support the **introduction of the new Diplomas** from September 2008, building on the successful collaborative approach for Gateway 2 and beyond
- Increase the participation of young people, implementing the **Bolton NEET Reduction Strategy** with a clear focus on vulnerable learners including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Work with partners, including Bolton MBC, the Chamber and the brokerage service, to **promote the Skills Pledge** and increase the take up of Train to Gain and Apprenticeships

Priority 2: Transforming FE

Key Challenges:

- The need to increase capacity for level 2 and 3 learning through flexible learning opportunities
- Increase employer engagement to ensure local providers are responsive in meeting employer demand
- Align the current transformation of the FE estate within Bolton with the Local Authority's BSF programme for schools

Whilst the journey to self regulation has begun, we will support the continued transformation of the learning and skills system as a whole with a clear focus on the areas where we believe we can add the greatest value. These include:

- Supporting the Bolton WBL Network and the Council's Apprenticeship Development Group to **promote apprenticeship provision** to young people and increase employer engagement in vocational learning
- Through strategic investment, **expanding the apprenticeship programme**, including increased volumes of Young Apprenticeships, the expansion of Programme Led Apprenticeships and additional volumes of adult apprenticeships
- Working with the Local Authority on their BSF **Strategy for Change** to ensure a coherent approach to capital developments in Bolton
- Working with partners to respond to the findings of the **Bolton Joint Area Review**, ensuring the availability of appropriate post-16 learning opportunities
- Ensuring **effective local commissioning processes** that match provision in Bolton to the needs of learners and employers, building on strong performance and minimises poor performance

Priority 3: Better Skills, Better jobs, Better Lives

Key Challenges:

- Increase the proportion of residents accessing learning provision within Bolton to enable access to future employment opportunities
- Improve the skills levels of the working age population that have below Level 2 or no qualifications
- Increase participation in learning from within the most disadvantaged wards.

We will focus our efforts and resources to engage more people from disadvantage groups to increase overall participation and achievement levels. We will drive forward the integration of skills and employment and focus training on addressing skills shortages in local labour markets. In addition we will:

- Contribute to **Bolton LAA targets** through effective procurement and programme management to ensure the integration of employment and skills
- Provide an increased focus on **engaging employers in learning**, with a view to reducing the high numbers of young people who are in employment without any formalised learning
- Ensure equality of opportunity, **targeting areas of disadvantage**, which result in improved success rates for minority groups, increased participation of under-represented groups and reduced imbalances in learning and skills acquisition
- Work with further education providers and partners to target the learning offer to **adults without a Level 2 qualification**, focusing on those who are disengaged from learning and furthest away from the labour market

Partnership Working

Over the last twelve months the LSC has developed new and effective relationships with providers, partners and stakeholders and we will continue to embed these throughout our work in 2008/09. The impact of the Bolton Partnership Team has been positive and resulted in a clearer understanding of the key issues within the borough and supported our ability to align funding and resources to address local needs.

If we are to maximise the contribution of the learning and skills sector locally then we need to continue to drive forward partnership working. We will do this through the development of a shared understanding with partners of our joint agendas and targets; and in particular we will:

- Strengthen the relationship between The Bolton Partnership Team and the Regeneration and Economic Development Department of Bolton MBC to develop a clear understanding of skills needs and to stimulate demand for learning by employers.
- Continue to work in partnership with the Lifelong Learning Unit at Bolton MBC to ensure the effective integration of learning, skills and employment and respond to the challenges in Bolton's Strategic Analysis.
- Work through Bolton's Lead Agencies Group to agree a consistent set of meaningful targets relating to skills, 16-19 performance and post-19 achievement in the new LAA process.
- Develop close working arrangements with Bolton Children's Services Department within BMBC to ensure coherent infrastructure planning, aligning the BSF and academies programme to the current FE investment plans.
- Work with the Bolton Connexions Team to raise participation levels of young people, meet the September Guarantee and reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.
- Work closely with the 14-19 Strategy Group to enhance and extend the development of 14-19 opportunities including embedding the new Diplomas in the curriculum offer from September 2008.
- Continue to develop our relationship with the Bolton Voluntary and Community Sector network to help capacity build the sector as part of our commitment to widening learner choice.
- Work with partners to effectively respond to the findings of the Bolton Joint Area Review
- Develop closer working with Jobcentre Plus and Business Bolton to integrate skills and employment agendas, promote Local Employment Partnerships and increase take up of the Skills Pledge
- Work closely with our providers, schools and colleges to provide high quality choice for all learners and encourage cross-sector collaboration
- Strengthen our work with local employers, via Business Bolton and Sector Skills Councils to better understand the local demand for skills and qualifications, working in partnership to take forward skills development in key sectors for Bolton