

Learning and Skills Council Local Area Statement of Need

OLDHAM

2008/09

February 2008

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

Introduction

I am delighted on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Greater Manchester to present our Oldham Annual Statement of Need for 2008/09. This plan outlines the key priorities and challenges for Oldham 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 Oldham 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 sub-regional economic growth and the results are clear.

More young people are now participating in learning with two outstanding colleges in the borough providing further education and Apprenticeships. We are working hard to improve the responsiveness of the sector to 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 planning informed by our partners.

The success we have had to date has only been possible due to the commitment and support of key partners within Oldham. 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 strengthen our relationships locally 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 Oldham are equipped with the skills that will enable them to access the opportunities that will emerge over the next ten years.



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Challenges, key actions and measures of success for Oldham

As we move forward through 2008/09 we will need to ensure that we have an infrastructure of learning provision that reflects the changing policy landscape. The challenges and actions for Oldham 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:

- Narrow the gap for under-achieving groups and individuals
- Increase the range of vocational opportunities for young people through apprenticeships and diplomas
- Increasing Level 2 and Level 3 achievement by age 19
- Increase progression to Level 3 learning and beyond
- Ensure College Capital project, Regional Science centre and BSF form an integrated 'solution' for skills provision in Oldham

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

- Plan, through the Oldham Partnership, a **comprehensive 14-19 offer**, maximising the utilisation and impact of ESF to provide pathways for young people to progress into mainstream learning within the borough
- 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 Oldham **NEET Reduction Strategy** with a clear focus on vulnerable learners including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Continue to increase the number of teenage parents into education, employment or training, a key stretch target in **Oldham's Local Area Agreement**
- Work with partners, including Oldham MBC, GM Chamber, The Oldham College 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:

- Capacity to offer level 2 and 3 learning through flexible learning opportunities
- Increase employer engagement and responsiveness in the borough
- Deliver The Oldham College Capital project, Regional Science Centre and ensure they align with BSF and form an integrated 'solution' for skills provision in Oldham

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

- Expand the **Apprenticeship programme** including Programme Led Apprenticeships and provide for additional volumes of adult apprenticeships
- Ensure that there is a coherent employer offer across Apprenticeships, Train to Gain and FE which meets employers' needs in the borough
- Develop FE Capital strategies which respond to learner demand, and provide a quality learning experience, taking into account future post 16 developments in the borough with school presumptions, academies
- Working with the Local Authority on their BSF **Strategy for Change** to ensure a coherent approach to capital developments in Oldham
- Ensure that there are **effective local commissioning processes** that match provision in Oldham to the needs of learners and employers, building on strong performance and minimising poor performance.

Priority 3: Better Skills, Better jobs, Better Lives

Key Challenges:

- Improve the skill levels of those without a level 2 qualification within the borough
- Increase the participation in learning from within the most disadvantaged wards
- Respond to changing labour market by raising the skills levels of the workforce and/or re-skilling

We will focus our efforts and resources to engage more people from disadvantaged 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 **Oldham's LAA targets** through effective procurement and programme management to ensure the integration of employment and skills
- Work with the local authority and partners to ensure **a multi-agency approach** to maximise the opportunities for local residents and businesses in Oldham including the development of **Local Employment Partnerships**

- 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
- Use LSC and Local Authority data intelligence to **target areas of disadvantage** within the borough to ensure that there is equality of opportunity and increase participation of under-represented groups and reduce 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 and offers pathways from 1st steps learning into further learning and/or employment
- Support the Local Authority in order that its **workforce development strategy** focuses on Apprenticeships and those employees without a level 2 and/or with literacy and numeracy needs

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 Oldham 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 borough 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 Oldham Partnership Team and the Regeneration and Economic Development Department of Oldham MBC to develop a clear understanding of skills needs and to stimulate demand for learning by employers.
- Participate in the Economy and Enterprise Commissioning Board to ensure effective and coherent cross agency planning and monitoring delivery of services at executive level in the borough and contribute and agree targets for the new Local Area Agreement for Oldham
- Continue to work closely with Oldham's Children Services to ensure coherent planning pre and post 16 in the context of the development of the Authority's BSF Strategy and ensure coherent capital infrastructure planning across schools and FE colleges
- Work with Oldham Connexions to raise participation levels of young people and reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training, particularly vulnerable groups, and ensure that young people in jobs without training are progressed into structured learning

- As a member of the Changing for Children Strategy Group and the Oldham Partnership, ensure that the priorities and targets in the Children and Young People's Plan and 14-19 Strategy are met and delivered
- 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.
- Work closely with partners of Oldham's Skills and Work Group to ensure that actions within the LAA for Oldham are implemented and outcomes are met for addressing worklessness and raising skills levels
- Continue to develop our relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector in the borough to help capacity build the sector as part of our commitment to widening learner choice.
- Develop closer working with Jobcentre Plus and the Economy and Enterprise Unit to integrate skills and employment agendas, promote Local Employment Partnerships reflecting local strategy 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 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 Oldham.