

Skills Funding Agency

European Social Fund

SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY & Young Peoples Learning Agency

Co-financing Plan for the North West of England
For the period January 2011 to December 2013

22nd March 2010

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Section A: CFO Status

1. Contribution to Delivery of the Regional ESF Framework

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 In June 2007, the Secretaries of State of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and Department for Children, Schools And Families (DCSF) announced the Machinery of Government changes, which will result in the dissolution of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) at the end of March 2010 and the transfer of responsibilities for 14-19 education and training to the Local Authorities (LAs) and the establishment of two new agencies: the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), the Skills Funding Agency.
- 1.1.2 As part of its remit, the Skills Funding Agency will replace the Learning and Skills Council as an accountable body for ESF resources.
- 1.1.3 These funds will target support both the 14-19 and 19+ age groups and deliver employment and skills outcomes and results that support the regional and national ESF Programme. In this role the Skills Funding Agency will be required to work closely with LAs and the YPLA in order to effectively deploy ESF resources to support the young people's agenda.

1.2. Developing the Co-Finance Plan

- 1.2.1 The Skills Funding Agency has worked with both Government Office for the North West (GONW) and the other designated Co-Finance Organisations (CFOs) in the North West to determine the respective contributions to the Revised North West ESF Regional Framework 2011-13 (ESF Regional Framework). In addition to GONW those involved were Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). The proposed activities, outcomes, results and associated budgets are the result of that dialogue.
- 1.2.2 The elements of this Co-Financing Plan (CFP) relating to 14-19 education and training have been jointly planned and developed with the YPLA and LAs, which have the statutory duty to make education provision for young people aged between 14 and 19.
- 1.2.3 The 2011-13 phase is the second part of the current ESF Programme. The Skills Funding Agency aims to sustain the momentum gained in the first half of the programme. In some instances we intend to sustain existing activity whilst adapting that activity to meet changing circumstances and national & regional policies and priorities.

The current LSC ESF 2007-10 Co-Finance Plan extends into 2011 and 2012 and the Skills Funding Agency will seek to ensure that newly commissioned activity is complementary. This is especially true on Merseyside where the ending of the 'phasing in' period means that significantly less funding is now available.

Tables 1 and 2 set out the proposed share of the budget which the Skills Funding Agency is seeking and the overall spending profile.

1.3 The North West Context

- 1.3.1 This Co-Finance Plan (CFP) describes the activities, outputs and results which we intend to procure to contribute to the employment and skills priorities in the Revised North West ESF Regional Framework 2011-13 and the England Operational Programme. It covers the three-year period from 2011-2013, noting that expenditure is eligible until the end of 2015, although it is envisaged that provision will be completed well before the end of 2015.
- 1.3.2 Recognising the specific circumstances of the North West, and in line with the guidance to CFOs, this CFP covers the whole region, but shows separately the specific activities, financial profiles, target groups, outputs and results for phasing-in funding in Merseyside. Although this funding will fall to the level of non phasing-in regions from 2011, the funding is still ring-fenced. Throughout this document the following definitions will apply:

The term **Northwest** is defined as:

The sub-regions of Cumbria, Cheshire & Warrington, Greater Manchester and Lancashire together with Halton in Greater Merseyside.

The term **FMPIA** (Former Merseyside 'phasing-in' Area) is defined as:

The area embracing the local authority boundaries of: Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral.

- 1.3.3 The CFP has, therefore, been structured in the following manner:

- Section A Background and contribution to the ESF Framework
- Section B Proposed activities in each of the areas defined above
- Section C Programme Management including Cross Cutting Themes
- Section D Annexes - Budgets and Volumes

- 1.3.4 Separate schedules have been included in annex A for the North West and the Former Merseyside phasing-in Area.

1.4 Summary Budgets

- 1.4.1 The proposed budgets have been discussed and agreed with the other CFOs and GONW.
- 1.4.2 The planning assumption is that a similar level of activity will take place in each year with a moderately lower spend in 2011 (30% of the total) with the balance of 70% divided equally in 2012 and 2013.
- 1.4.3 The LSC's current CFP runs until 2012 albeit it is expected that the majority of activity will end in December 2010. In developing the new plan the Skills Funding Agency will seek to:
- Ensure that the two programmes are complementary;
 - Work closely with partners and other CFOs to ensure maximum added value;
 - Ensure coherence with other programmes especially those for the unemployed;
 - Reflect the impact of significantly reduced funding in Merseyside and to work with partners to agree priorities for the 2011 funding;
 - Complement other European programmes and in particular the European Regional Development Fund programme.

1.4.4 ESF Allocations and Proposed Skills Funding Agency Budget

North West		
Priority 1	North West Allocation	Skills Funding Agency
74.5% Employment	59,278,912	14,938,286
23% NEETS	20,994,614	20,994,614
2.5% Community Grants	2,058,295	2,058,295
Priority 1 Total	82,331,821	37,991,195
Priority 2		
30% Basic Skills	15,343,012	15,343,012
35% Level 2	15,343,012	15,343,012
35% Level 3+	20,457,350	20,457,350
Priority 2 Total	51,143,374	51,143,374
Merseyside		
Priority 1	Merseyside FMPIA	Skills Funding Agency
74.5% Employment	11,365,294	2,864,054
23% NEETS	4,025,208	4,025,208
2.5% Community Grants	394,629	394,629
Priority 1 Total	15,785,131	7,283,891
Priority 2		
30% Basic Skills	2,630,855	2,630,855
35% Level 2	2,630,855	2,630,855
35% Level 3+	3,507,805	3,507,805
Priority 2 Total	8,769,515	8,769,515

Table 2 – Planned Spend			
Skills Funding Agency Priority 1 Northwest			
Calendar Year	ESF (£)	Public Match (£)	ESF and Match (£)
2011	11,397,359	11,397,359	22,794,718
2012	13,296,919	13,296,919	26,593,837
2013	13,296,919	13,296,919	26,593,837
TOTAL	37,991,197	37,991,197	75,982,392
Skills Funding Agency Priority 2 Northwest			
Calendar Year	ESF (£)	Public Match (£)	ESF and Match (£)
2011	15,343,012	15,343,012	30,686,024
2012	17,900,181	17,900,181	35,800,362
2013	17,900,181	17,900,181	35,800,362
TOTAL	51,143,374	51,143,374	102,286,748
Skills Funding Agency Priority 1 Merseyside FMPIA			
Calendar Year	ESF (£)	Public Match (£)	ESF and Match (£)
2011	2,185,167	2,185,167	4,370,335
2012	2,549,362	2,549,362	5,098,724
2013	2,549,362	2,549,362	5,098,724
TOTAL	7,283,891	7,283,891	14,567,783
Skills Funding Agency Priority 2 Merseyside FMPIA			
Calendar Year	ESF (£)	Public Match (£)	ESF and Match (£)
2011	2,630,855	2,630,855	5,261,710
2012	3,069,330	3,069,330	6,138,660
2013	3,069,330	3,069,330	6,138,660
TOTAL	8,769,515	8,769,515	17,539,030

1.5 The ESF Regional Framework

- 1.5.1 The Skills Funding Agency's intention is to develop and deliver a CFP which addresses the priorities and delivery the outcomes set out in the ESF Regional Framework.
- 1.5.2 Within the context of a single national ESF programme we have responded to the ESF Regional Framework by addressing the Priorities contained in the national ESF Plan.
- 1.5.3 The Regional Skills and Employment Board (RSEB) have identified a number of key challenges for the region as part of the work towards developing the Regional Strategy 2010. <http://www.nwda.co.uk/PDF/RES06v2.pdf>

Short-Term Challenges

- Impact of Recession upon Employment and Redundancy: Respond to the economic recession by tackling the economic and social effects of redundancies and lower levels of recruitment across the region.
- Impact of Recession upon the Region's Skills Needs: Responding to the challenges of economic recession by helping employers to plan and provide for their current and future skills needs.
- The impact of graduates and school leavers entering a reduced jobs market, coupled with Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) welfare reforms which will move Incapacity Benefit clients onto active benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

Long-Term Challenges

- Employment and Worklessness: Providing the support that the workless need to gain sustainable and rewarding employment, especially those from the groups and communities most adversely affected by unemployment, a lack of work or underemployment.
 - Aspirations and Achievement of Young People: Raising the aspirations and attainment amongst young people, especially amongst 16-19 year olds, and stimulate an interest in and progression towards higher skills.
 - Adult Skills: Ensuring a commitment amongst adults to the skills and qualification they need for employment, with a focus on Skills for Life and Level 2 attainment, as well as attainment at Level 3 and higher skills.
 - Employers Investment in Workforce Development and Related Practice: Stimulate employers to invest more in workforce development at all levels, including innovation, leadership and management, and entrepreneurial skills.
 - The challenge of an older workforce and the impact this has on the labour market as when we move out of recession into a growth period.
- 1.5.4 The Skills Funding Agency also acknowledges the specific challenges which have arisen as a consequence of the economic downturn. These will remain relevant for the period of the CFP.

1.6 The Approach to Plan Development Plan

1.6.1 The Skills Funding Agency's ESF CFP embraces activity which extends beyond the core remit of the Skills Funding Agency for adult and employer skills a Joint Co-financing Plan Board will be established in the North West in line with other regions. Membership will include:

- Skills Funding Agency;
- YPLA and LAs (representatives from the Regional Planning Group) to oversee the 14-19 element;
- National Apprenticeship Service;
- Government Office;
- NWDA 19+ element;
- GONW, Jobcentre Plus, NOMS and other CFOs (not NW) or other partners may be invited to a sit on the Board as observers.

1.6.2 The Board will be responsible for:

- Agreement of strategic and operational priorities to create the Skills Funding Agency CFP 2011-2013 and associated specifications for delivery of provision;
- Where possible, ensuring equitable distribution of the budget and delivery of the Skills Funding Agency CFP across the region in accordance with the Regional ESF Framework 2011-2013;
- Agreement of arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of the Skills Funding Agency CFP performance and impact;
- Ensuring the Skills Funding Agency CFP is developed so that it reflects sub regional and local priorities, and fits with LAA/ MAA priorities and local targeting against regional ESF specifications;
- Agreement of the Skills Funding Agency CFP for submission to the ESF Regional Committee for their endorsement.

1.6.3 The most significant changes arising from the Machinery of Government changes relate to the revised planning and management arrangements for NEET facing activity within Priority 1. The transfer of statutory responsibility for 16-19 to LAs and the YPLA will require the development of processes to ensure that LAs and the YPLA are effectively engaged in the planning and commissioning of ESF funded activity and that it is coherent with other 14-19 strategic plans.

1.6.4 The elements of this CFP relating to 14-19 education and training have been jointly planned and developed with the YPLA and LAs, which have the statutory duty to make education provision for young people aged between 14 and 19. The North West 14-19 Regional Planning Group has acted as the steering group to develop the 14-19 elements of this plan.

1.7 Skills Priorities and Programmes for the Unemployed

1.7.1 The Skills Funding Agency will continue to work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that development and delivery of the CFP is contributing towards the employment and skills priorities which have been established through:

- The Regional Strategy
- Regional Priorities Statement North West England
- City Employment Strategies in Greater Manchester and Merseyside;
- The four Multi Area Agreements in the North West;

- The City Region Employment and Skills Strategy in Merseyside;
 - The Greater Manchester Strategy.
- 1.7.2 In addition the Skills Funding Agency will work closely with the Greater Manchester authorities in relation to the new statutory powers in relation to adult skills.
- 1.7.3 There is now a greater emphasis on intermediate and higher-level skills. During the 2011-13 period up to 40% of Priority 2 resource can be used to train people to NVQ Level 3 equivalent and above, compared to 28% during 2007-10 (and the 5% ceiling on Level 4 skills has been removed). At least 30% of Priority 2 ESF must be spent on tackling basic skills deficits and 30% targeted at Level 2 training (compared to a minimum of 35% each during 2007-10). In the North West, partners have agreed the following split of funding: 35% on foundation and basic level skills; 30% on Level 2 skills support; and 35% at Level 3 and above.

Section B

Proposed Activity in the Northwest and Merseyside

2. Priority 1: Increasing the Participation of Young People

2.1 The North West Context

- 2.1.1 The ESF support for young people in the region comes through **Priority 1 – Extending Employment Opportunities – Reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or are at risk of becoming NEET, in order to improve their employability and skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work.**
- 2.1.2 As a consequence of the many economic and social challenges the North West has faced over the past two decades, the educational underachievement of its young people and preparation for work are major issues for the region and continue to be constraints upon its economic performance. For the best part of a decade, the region has made good progress in terms of the educational achievement of young people at 16 and their subsequent academic and vocational achievement at 17 and 18. However, the proportion of young people aged 16 and 17 years who are classified as NEET remains a key issue and there are also important challenges around Level 2 and Level 3 attainment amongst 16-19 year olds.
- 2.1.3 These issues are greatest in the region's urban heartlands of Greater Manchester and Merseyside, but also parts of Lancashire. A related issue is the need to stimulate a greater interest amongst young people in progressing to higher education and hence achievement of a Level 4 qualification. The region is also faced with a demographic challenge with fewer young people entering the market at 16-19.
- 2.1.4 The critical challenge is to raise aspirations and attainment amongst young people, especially amongst 16-19 year olds, and stimulate progression towards higher skills. Ensuring quality information advice and guidance is essential if young people are to understand future employment opportunities across the region and make informed choices about the education and training they can access to maximise their life chances.
- 2.1.5 The number of young people not in education, employment or training remains persistently high in some areas of the North West. The YPLA will work with Local Authorities to identify those areas where there are high concentrations and high volumes of NEET and where ESF can add most value to existing interventions. The most significant feature underlying the headline figures is the contrasting performance of different Local Authority areas in which most NEET rates fell but some increased, including The Cheshires, Lancashire, Oldham and Stockport.
- 2.1.6 Significant resources have already been targeted at reducing NEET. ESF activity will continue to be targeted where it can make a significant contribution to engaging young people and providing progression to level 2 and level 3 attainment by adopting a flexible approach to the use of resources.
- 2.1.7 Data for December 2009 shows that the proportion of young people NEET in the North West increases from 5.0% at age 16 to 6.8% at age 17. Some progress has been made in reducing the higher rate at 17 which had been 7.7% twelve months earlier. More remains to be done to address the rise in the NEET rate between age 16 and 17. This problem is most acute within parts of the urban conurbations of Manchester and Liverpool. NEET at aged 18 increased from the previous year, from 9.0% in December 08 to 9.1% in December 09, with higher levels in parts of Manchester and Liverpool.

- 2.1.8 Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) are disproportionately represented in the NEET group. In the North West 4.7% of young people aged 16-19 have a LDD. However those with LDD make up around 15% of the NEET group. Around 16.6% of all young people with LDD in the region are NEET.
- 2.1.9 Young offenders also continue to make up a significant proportion of the NEET cohort and there has been limited progress towards meeting the national target of 90% in learning or employment. Further activity will be procured, specifically targeted at meeting the needs for this group.
- 2.1.10 A further issue is the raising of the participation age; there is a requirement that all young people will remain in education or training to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015. There is therefore a need to trial new forms of provision for this age group, targeted at the NEET cohort, in preparation for this.
- 2.1.11 Many of the key groups referenced above are often concentrated in deprived areas. While the designation of interventions by local authority, ward, or postcode is too restrictive, there is a spatial concentration of worklessness in many urban areas in the North West.
- 2.1.12 Priority One interventions will therefore support the Regional Worklessness Strategy which recommends focussing employability interventions on the most deprived communities. In the North West, this means a priority on the areas covered by City Employment and Skills Strategies (i.e. Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Pennine Lancashire) areas remote from growth (e.g. Barrow and West Cumbria), Urban Regeneration Company (URC) areas and Housing Market Renewal areas.
- 2.1.13 However, this criteria will be used as a tool to prioritise activities, rather than exclude other areas. ESF will also support interventions in other areas of higher deprivation. Any additional areas identified in CFO Delivery Plans which fall outside these spatial priorities, would have to meet an alternative threshold criterion (as is the cases under ERDF Priority 4, Action Area 4-3). The suggested criterion is the degree of concentration of worklessness as measured by the proportion of working age population claiming key out of work benefits. Interventions specifically targeted on people with health issues will be focused on those local authorities with the highest rates of Incapacity Benefit claimants.
- 2.1.14 There is no specific sectoral targeting in Priority 1. However, access to employment actions must be linked to the jobs being created (in the wider economy and by other publicly-funded economic development interventions), both in terms of sectors/occupations.
- 2.1.15 Action Area 1-2 activity must directly support the 14-19 commissioning plans agreed by Local Authorities and the sub-regional groupings on 14-19. The SFA, YPLA and the local authorities will establish specific planning and commissioning processes through the mechanism of a Service Level Agreement to achieve this. Activities around NEET prevention, such as curriculum development and early intervention (14-16) and NEET responses (16-18), should be seen in a wider context (i.e. 14-25), and linked to subsequent employment opportunities and/or progression to HE/higher level skills development.

2.2 Skills Funding Agency Activity

2.2.1 Young People in Jobs Without Training (JWT)

ESF can be used to meet local demand and encourage young people in jobs without training to undertake accredited learning at Level 2 or Level 3 as JWT will continue to be an important policy area in the period up to raising the participation age.

2.2.2 Foundation Learning

For young people, Foundation Learning (FL) is the national route of learning for 14 to 19 year-old learners working predominantly at Entry Level or Level 1. FL Learners follow personalised programmes with qualifications drawn off the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

ESF should focus on supporting Foundation Learning in the following ways.

- Access – working with young people to encourage them to start on a Foundation Learning programme; removing barriers to participation.
- Support activities – improve retention and success rate through extra support activities, such as extra parenting support and long term mentoring.
- Post activities – focusing on re-establishing contact with non successful learners; extra support for positive destination learners, such as those in further learning or in employment with training.

2.3 Activities To Be Supported

Initiatives to reform vocational routes for, and develop vocational skills among, 14-19 year olds;

- Actions at the point of transition to prevent young people becoming NEET by supporting programmes with a vocational dimension which increase the likelihood of young people making an effective transition at 16;
- Initiatives to help raise awareness of the world of work, enterprise and entrepreneurship among young people (including work placements);
- Activities to engage 16-19 NEETs, tackling barriers to learning and helping them to access mainstream provision;
- Activities to reduce youth unemployment by developing the employability and skills of young people
- Support for employers offering employment with training to members of the NEET group or identified potential NEET young people
- Activities to provide learning and training to young people serving a custodial sentence in preparation for re-entry into the labour market
- Transitional support for those NEETs at risk of becoming workless adults
- Activities to support Young People leaving care

2.4 Target Groups

2.4.1 There are a range of groups that are under-represented in the labour market and within which a higher proportion of people are economically inactive. There will therefore be a particular focus on:

- Disadvantaged groups such as disabled people, lone parents, care leavers, substance misusers, ethnic minorities and people with low or no qualifications;
- Offenders and ex-offenders

- Newly redundant and unemployed people from disadvantaged groups to prevent them becoming long-term unemployed, as well as existing unemployed and inactive people;
- People with multiple barriers to work and multiple disadvantages (in line with the Freud report);
- People with physical and mental health issues;
- Other socially excluded adults (Public Service Agreement 16) not referenced above.

2.4.2 Many of the key groups referenced above are often concentrated in deprived areas. While the designation of interventions by LA, ward, or postcode is too restrictive, there is a spatial concentration of worklessness in many urban areas in the North West.

2.4.3 In the North West, this means a priority on the areas covered by City Employment and Skills Strategies (i.e. Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Pennine Lancashire) areas remote from growth (e.g. Barrow and West Cumbria), Urban Regeneration Company (URC) areas and Housing Market Renewal areas.

2.4.4 Action Area 1-2 activity must directly support the 14-19 commissioning plans agreed by Local Authorities and the sub-regional groupings on 14-19. The Skills Funding Agency, YPLA and the LAs will establish specific planning and commissioning processes through the mechanism of a Service Level Agreement to achieve this. Activities around NEET prevention, such as curriculum development and early intervention (14-16) and NEET responses (16-18), should be seen in a wider context (i.e. 14-25), and linked to subsequent employment opportunities and/ or progression to HE/ higher level skills development.

2.4.5 The North West and Merseyside allocations have been broken down to LA level based on the % volume of NEET in December 2009. The table attached shows the proposed LA allocations including the number of beneficiaries and outcomes.

2.4.6 Given the importance of targeted intervention at the LA level the proposed activities and scale of intervention for each local authority area are set out in Annex A. The table also highlights those LAs with increases in NEET LLDD and 17/18 year olds. These beneficiaries will be a particular focus for LAs.

3 Tackling Worklessness

3.1 The North West Context

3.1.1 In identifying the target groups and the proposed range of activities the Skills Funding Agency has sought to ensure coherence with national Government policy and programmes and sub-regional strategies. As a consequence of both the economic downturn the Government's response and continued reform of the welfare system it is essential that the proposed activities are coherent with mainstream programme and importantly the plans and programmes of the other CFOs in the North West. The Skills Funding Agency fully recognises the range of existing programmes which are already in place. As a consequence we are seeking to build on those existing programmes.

3.1.2 The Skills funding agency will seek to ensure that there is a full range of provision across the whole of the North West but will work alongside other agencies during the commissioning phase to ensure that resources are effectively targeted.

3.1.3 Considerable work has been undertaken during the first half of the programme to ensure that ESF provision is adapted to the local context to ensure that it fits with sub-regional interventions including City Employment Strategies. Activities have been adapted to ensure that they continue to add value in response to new programmes

such as the Young Persons Guarantee and other policy developments such as the introduction of Flexible New Deal.

3.1.4 The Revised North West ESF Regional Framework makes reference to the fact that considerable resources have been deployed through mainstream government programmes to support the young jobless and those people in previously in work and who have become unemployed as a consequence of the downturn. There is recognition that for those groups furthest from the labour market the prospects of securing and sustaining work becomes greater. The Skills Funding Agency has reflected this in our proposed activities and target groups.

3.2 Skills Funding Agency Activity

3.2.1 Programmes for the Unemployed

ESF can be used to provide a range of pre-employment activities to support unemployed individuals, including JCP customers, into work. The activity suite includes the Employability Skills Programme (ESP) and both discretely funded and ESF co-financed activities. New ESF funded activities will focus on supporting and adding value to existing programmes that deliver short sharp skills interventions, longer term work focussed training programmes or ESP delivery. It should help individuals move into or towards realistic labour market opportunities.

3.2.2 Programmes for the economically inactive

Unemployed individuals not claiming out-of-work benefits often face multiple barriers to employment and ESF funding can be used to provide the skills support such individuals need alongside other support. ESF can be used to provide a range of pre-employment activities similar to those for the unemployed but without the labour market sector-specific provision. However, ESF can be used to provide first steps into work for those not claiming out-of-work benefits and not ready for employment. This can include actively seeking them out and engaging them on a learning journey, preferably accredited.

3.2.3 Adult Advancement and Career Service

The Adult Advancement and Careers Service commences on 1 August 2010. The service will be provided through three channels: online; telephone; and face to face. The service offer will provide labour market focused careers and skills information and advice to adults aged 19 or over (or 18 and over for Jobcentre Plus clients or those in custody from 1 August 2012). ESF funding should focus support on the work that the service carries out.

ESF funding should focus support on the work that the service carries out with the following national priority groups: low skilled adults (i.e. without a full Level 2 qualification, especially women) who are locked in low paid, low skilled jobs; young adults aged 19-24 without a Level 3 qualification; adults facing redundancy, newly redundant or at a distance from the labour market; Jobcentre Plus customers in receipt of out of work benefits; people from ethnic minority communities; older people; carers as defined by the Department of Health Guidelines; offenders in custody and in the community under the supervision of probation services and ex-offenders; and people with learning difficulties or disabilities (including those with mental health conditions).

3.2.4 Foundation Learning Curriculum

The Foundation Learning Curriculum (FLC) aims to develop a more focused and strategic approach to Entry Level and Level 1 that includes, but is not limited to, the units and qualifications within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) through the use of personalised learning programmes.

ESF should focus on supporting Foundation Learning in the following ways.

- Support activities – improve retention and success rate through extra support activities, such as extra parenting support and long term mentoring
- Post activities – focusing on re-establishing contact with non successful learners; extra support for positive destination learners, such as those in further learning or in employment with training.

3.2.5 Adults with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

A range of provision exists for adult learners with learning difficulties or disabilities (LLDD) but the expectations for these learners and the outcomes from this provision are changing. In order to meet the needs of these learners, in terms of skills development and employment opportunities and to enhance the provision and outcomes, ESF monies can be used to provide these enhancements and to drive improvements and innovation in provision for these learners. This could include additional employability skills such work experience or internships, job coaching and job mentoring.

3.2.6 Community Grants

Community Grants is a small programme, where a co-ordinating body is selected to manage a funding 'pot' that provides cash grants to small community group organisations. These grants aim to reach the hardest-to-reach participants and provide first tier contact work with the long term aim of encouraging people onto mainstream and other ESF funded activities. The programme also has a small budget to capacity build the organisations including support to potentially enable more of them to become providers in their own right.

In the Northwest the LSC currently manages the programme. Separate arrangements exist in the Merseyside 'phasing in' area under the complementary strand. In the 2011-13 phase of the programme this separate arrangement will end. The Skills Funding Agency will work with third sector partners to agree the best approach for managing community grants with one or more grant co-coordinating bodies in the region.

3.3 Proposed activities and Target Groups

3.3.1 Provision of Support Individuals Prior to Labour Market Engagement

Activities	Target Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivational and confidence building training to raise the aspirations of individuals • Pre-employment training that focuses on short sharp certificated skills training to meet identified labour market vacancies • Activities to provide pathways to employment such as pre-vocational training, practical soft skills and workplace skills 	<p>JSA Claimants 18+</p> <p>People on Incapacity Benefit or economically inactive in the labour market</p> <p>Examples of Priority Target Groups</p> <p>Young people 18-24</p> <p>Over 50's</p> <p>People with disabilities or learning difficulties</p> <p>Offenders in the Community</p> <p>Lone Parents</p> <p>Low Skills</p> <p>Victims of redundancy</p> <p>Ethnic minority groups</p>

3.3.2 Activities to support individuals to enter and sustain employment opportunities

Activities	Target Groups
<p>Activities to support individuals to enter and sustain employment opportunities including job search and employability skills and post employment mentoring and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Development Support linked with Self Employment • Skills for Life Training • Vocational Training and qualifications including units towards Level 2 to support access and progression in work with further training • Re- training for people at risk of redundancy • Re-engaging inactive older workers in the labour market and retraining older workers to support sustainability in the labour market • Skills development to address barriers to retention in work and transition skills support to aid progression and sustainable employment, this may include skills coaching and mentoring. 	<p>JSA Claimants 18+</p> <p>People on Incapacity Benefit or economically inactive in the labour market</p> <p>People newly in employment who have experienced long or persistent/ intermittent durations of unemployment</p> <p>People under threat or notice of redundancy</p> <p>Examples of Priority Target Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18-24 year olds • Over 50's • People with disabilities or learning difficulties • Offenders in the Community • Lone Parents • Low Skills • Those affected by loss of employment • Minority Groups

3.3.3 Activity to Support the Removal of Labour Market Barriers

Activities	Target Groups
<p>In Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of the Skills Funding Agency co-financed skills activities with City and other area based initiatives to tackle worklessness particularly as they relate to priority groups • Alignment to ensure complementarities of skills provision with other co-financed provision that is specifically addressing support to remove barriers to the labour market. 	<p>People on Incapacity Benefit or economically inactive in the labour market</p> <p>Examples of Priority Target Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 50's • People with disabilities or learning difficulties • Offenders in the Community • Lone Parents • Low Skills • Minority Groups <p>The target groups embraced by Public service Agreement 16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offenders in the community - care leavers - adults in contact with mental health services - adults with learning difficulties

4 Priority 2: Developing a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce

4.1 Adding Value to National Programmes

4.1.1 ESF activities are expected to integrate with employer responsive provision, including support for Train to Gain and Apprenticeships or adding learner volumes where demand exceeds mainstream Skills Funding Agency budgets.

4.1.2 Train to Gain

Train to Gain is a national service for employers designed to help them identify and address the skill needs of their workforce. Free, impartial advice on skills is available from the Business Link network, with Skills Funding Agency funded training provision available across a range of qualification levels to meet employer needs.

ESF can be used both to fund Train to Gain-like provision where mainstream budgets are unable to meet the level of demand from employers, and to deliver additional support to workplace delivery that enhances the Train to Gain offer.

4.1.3 Apprenticeships

The Apprenticeship family delivers a range of programmes, focussing on NVQ delivery with supporting functional skills and technical certificates. These programmes target Level 2 and 3. Where provision has sufficient funding available, ESF should focus on the following priorities.

- Continued delivery of additional Apprenticeships beyond the numbers that mainstream funding can support – Skills Funding Agency could prioritise additional starts funded through ESF so that a proportion are focussed on learners who will undertake a first Level 2 or 3 qualification.
- Support and funding of ‘non employed’ Apprentices.
- Depending on the conclusion of future investment priorities for 2010/11 and beyond, Skills Funding Agency may also have specific delivery priorities for ESF in respect of those who wish to undertake an Apprenticeship and already have a Level 2 or 3 qualification.

4.2 Delivering the ESF Framework.

All Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have been asked to produce a Regional Skills Strategy which will link economic and skills issues together, in each region. The NW Regional Skills Strategy will be form part of the new Integrated Regional Strategy, RS2010.

RDAs have also been tasked to produce Regional Priority Statements which will then inform the new Skills Funding Agency’s investment plans, following regional consultation the 2010/11 Northwest Statement is available to download.

[Developing the Workforce: Strategy & Policy - Northwest Regional Development Agency](#)

The statement synthesises the priorities for sectors, spatial targeting and targeting by employer and learner types. It sets out overall priorities for North West of England for the year 2010/11 and is set in the context of the draft Northwest Integrated Regional Strategy (RS2010). This document will inform discussions on skills between the Skills Funding Agency and its provider base and highlights where skills development is essential to take the North West forward.

Based on experience gained in the 2007-2010 period the Skills Funding Agency considers that the most effective approach to delivering the ESF Regional Framework is to develop a range of activities which are within four broad programme areas.

These broad programme areas are designed to ensure coherence with mainstream skills programmes and to ensure that ESF adds maximum value.

4.2.1 Train to Gain for High Growth Employers

This programme is intended to support employers to up-skill their workforce to intermediate and higher levels, and to enhance existing mainstream support for employers such as Train to Gain. The programme will be targeted at regional priority sectors, linked to the NWDA's Regional Priorities Statement.

Activities	Target Groups
<p>In Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training leading to Level 2 qualification • Retraining of people already at Level 2 where there is a need to adapt to specific sectoral change and the changing nature of employment demand • Activities to support progression to Level 3 • Training leading to Level 3 qualifications • Intermediate and professional skills • Stimulating demand for training amongst employers and employees • Training for managers and workers in small enterprises <p>The programme would be predominantly funded from Level 3+ and Level 2 funding lines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMEs in regional priority sectors • Sectors with replacement demand at intermediate skills levels • Small employers with high growth potential

4.2.2 In Work Training For Labour Market Entrants Or Returners

This programme will support individuals who have recently regained/ gained employment, particularly where they have done some skills development through LSC/ JCP pre-employment skills programmes, but where the individual can improve their chances of sustainable employment through further skills development.

This programme is designed to support the concept of an integrated employment and skills journey for individuals as they move to employment, and support employers to develop and retain their recent recruits. This programme is designed to be delivered in the workplace, alongside other ESF and mainstream programmes designed to support wider workforce development for employers.

Activities	Target Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for Life, including basic literacy, numeracy and ESOL • Vocational training for low-skilled workers, including the continuation of qualifications started through pre-employment programmes • Mentoring for employers and employees; • Support to promote retention of employment by disabled employees or those with other health conditions (inc mental health conditions) • Training leading to level 2 qualifications (especially for people without Level 2) • Retraining of people already at Level 2, where there is a need to adapt to specific sectoral change and the changing nature of employment demand <p>The programme would be predominantly funded from the Skills for Life and Level 2 funding line</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All employers providing employment opportunities as the economy moves out of recession. • Companies who are recruiting adults who are 25 and over • Companies committed to the Skills pledge who provide a guarantee of training to Level 2

4.2.3 Support For Restructuring, Inward Investment And Business Competitiveness

This programme will provide a rapid response fund to support skills development in companies which are inward investing, undertaking significant expansion or restructuring. It is being established both to stimulate and to address demand for workforce development amongst SMEs and large companies in the North West Region.

The aim is to enable the North West region to compete with other regions to attract new employers, ensure companies are competitive following restructuring and to enable workers affected by restructuring to re-skill.

The programme will also support interventions which enhance the development of intermediate and higher level skills and may also support companies in providing new entrants including graduates and Apprentices to progress to higher level skills required to sustain business competitiveness.

The programme will provide access to mainstream provision where that meets employer and individual needs.

Activities	Target Groups
<p>This programme could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retraining for workers who face redundancy or who have been made redundant, and who do not have accredited skills • Retraining of people already at Level 2 where there is a need to adapt to specific sectoral change and the changing nature of employment demand • Activities to support progression to Level 3 • Training leading to Level 3 or 4 qualifications • Intermediate and professional skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers of any size restructuring • Business restructuring to sustain competitiveness • SMEs in regional priority sectors • Sectors with replacement demand at intermediate skills levels • Small employers with high growth potential

4.2.4 Expanding Employer Engagement in Apprenticeships

The programmes are aimed at supporting both individuals and employers to better engage in the apprenticeship programme. The programme has three elements.

- i. The provision of Intensive training for individuals (mainly young people) at foundation tier level, including skills for life, which will enable them to meet the entry requirements of an Apprenticeship.
- ii. Support of training providers and employers to incentives the development of Apprenticeship provision in regional priority sectors where current engagement by employers is limited.
- iii. The procurement of additional volumes of Apprenticeship opportunities especially for adults over 25. There is significant unmet demand amongst both employers and individuals to secure training at this level through the apprenticeship route. The priority will be for older worker to progress from level 2 to level 3.

Activities	Target Groups
<p>Training leading to Level 2 qualifications (especially for people without Level 2 qualifications, part-time workers and workers in sectors with a weak training record)</p> <p>Retraining of people already at Level 2, where there is a need to adapt to specific sectoral change and the changing nature of employment demand</p>	<p>Individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals seeking to undertake an Apprenticeship who are presently unable to meet the entry requirements • Individuals requiring re-training • Individuals seeking to enhance their skills to Level 3 <p>Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers of any size with a need to upskill existing staff • Employers with skills shortages at Level 2 • SMEs in regional priority sectors • Sectors with replacement demand at intermediate skills levels <p>Small employers with high growth potential</p>

Activities	Target Groups
<p>Training leading to Level 3 qualifications (especially for people without Level 3 qualifications, part-time workers and workers in sectors with a weak training record)</p> <p>Retraining of people already at Level 2, where there is a need to adapt to specific sectoral change and the changing nature of employment demand</p> <p>Development of Apprenticeships routes to support the expansion and routes into programmes at level 4</p>	<p>Individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals, especially adults seeking to undertake an Apprenticeship who are presently at Level 2. • Individuals requiring re-training • Individuals seeking to enhance their skills to Level 3 <p>Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers of any size with a need to upskill existing staff • Employers with skills shortages at Level 3 • SMEs in regional priority sectors • Sectors with replacement demand at intermediate skills levels • Sectors seeking to develop level 4 progression routes • Small employers with high growth potential

Activities	Target Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes which seek to increase employer investment in Apprenticeships including incentives to recruit • Activities which enable employers to better engage in Apprenticeship programmes and other programmes leading to intermediate qualifications 	<p>Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers of any size with a need to upskill existing staff • Employers with skills shortages at Level 2 and 3 not currently engaged • SMEs in regional priority sectors • Sectors with replacement demand at intermediate skills levels • Small employers with high growth potential

Section C Managing the Co-Finance Plan

5. Commissioning, Added Value and Cross Cutting Themes

5.1 Match funding and Priorities

- 5.1 It is possible for the Skills Funding Agency to use a range of non-formula funded (NFF) provision, negotiated extensions of provision and/ or single tendered provision as match funding, provided it is against agreed programmes with a standard unit cost or rate. Additional match may be drawn from other sources, if required.

The Skills Funding Agency is a single national organisation but regions will need to identify regional allocations from national programmes. Budget figures are from 2009-10 financial year.

5.1.1 Match funding used in Priority 1

The funds below are annual budgets, subject to review and we reserve the right to identify appropriate match programmes and utilise them as required.

Match would be sourced from a mixture of budgets, which could include the following.

- 14-19 Foundation Learning Curriculum programmes and 16-18 Apprenticeships via the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). The national budget for 16-18 apprenticeships is £780 million.
- Adult Learner Responsive (ALR) formula funded provision, Programmes for the Unemployed and the Adult Advancement and Careers Service. The main ALR budget is £1.46 billion.
- The national budget for the Employability Skills Programme is £48.6 million.

5.1.2 Match funding used in Priority 2

The funds below are annual budgets, subject to review and we reserve the right to identify appropriate match programmes and utilise them as required.

- For Priority 2 the match for ESF can be sourced from Train to Gain and adult Apprenticeship programmes.
- The national budget for the Train to Gain programme is £888 million.
- The national budget for the 19+ Apprenticeship programme is £398 million.

5.2 Funding and added value

- 5.2.1 The LSC has endorsed a commissioning strategy for the Skills Funding Agency, which details how ESF should be targeted by the Skills Funding Agency to ensure complementarity and enhance the added value of ESF. Commissioning strategy documents can be shared with the LSC/ Skills Funding Agency stakeholders.

The purpose of the proposed commissioning strategy is to ensure that ESF truly adds value and enhances national strategies.

The key issue for the strategic direction of ESF in the 2011-13 programme is that we must ensure that ESF supports the main policy directions for the Skills Funding Agency/ YPLA.

The Commissioning Strategy ensured that:

- sufficient regional flexibility is retained to meet regional skills needs;
- appropriate contract lengths are sought for ESF provision (including the use of short contract periods where policy change is expected);
- ESF can achieve its full programme targets;
- there is a balance between targeted provision supporting disadvantaged groups and additional volumes of mainstream provision; and
- activity, outputs and evaluation from ESF are used to inform mainstream development and approaches.

5.2.2 The regional ESF framework ensures that ESF adds most value to regional strategies and funding streams in 2011-2013.

5.2.3 How ESF and match funded activity complement each other

Activities funded by ESF or by the Skills Funding Agency/ YPLA funding that is used for match will directly contribute to the priorities and outputs as set out in the ESF Regional Framework. Therefore, both funding methods will contribute to the Co-financing plan targets.

5.3 Project selection and tendering arrangements

5.3.1 Methods of tendering to be used

The tendering process for both ESF and match can be done through the Open and Competitive Tendering (OCT) process. The Skills Funding Agency and YPLA can also use the standard rates flexibility offered by the European Economic Recovery Plan, without always going through the OCT process.

5.3.2 OCT process

Stage 1: QPF / ACTOR

The Skills Funding Agency will use the Qualified Provider Framework (QPF) until the end of 2010.

The LSC replaced its pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) with a dynamic system that now allows providers to apply to pre-qualify at any point during the year, according to their business need and at a time convenient to them. As of 31 October 2008, the LSC opened a QPF for providers of education and training services. The QPF is a maintained list of all providers from which the LSC (and Skills Funding Agency from 1 April 2010) will secure education and training services. This list will incorporate those providers with whom the Skills Funding Agency will negotiate and/ or invite to tender. This will reduce provider effort by ensuring they are only invited to tender for appropriate provision based on the data supplied at pre qualification.

Pre-qualifying questions are mainly based on performance management, health and safety, equality and diversity, capacity and resource.

The Skills Funding Agency will use the ACTOR by the end of 2010.

ACTOR (Approved Colleges and Training Organisations Register) will replace the QPF by the end of the year 2010. The system is in development and is expected to be available at the end of July 2010.

Stage 2: Submission of Tenders

All successful organisations are then invited to tender for the provision they initially applied for. This bid (tender), once submitted electronically to the managed web host will be appraised using agreed criteria, again using trained evaluators. Following assessment a moderation process will take place.

The standard rates flexibility

Agreement was reached recently with the European Commission to allow the Skills Funding Agency to use the EC methodology for flat rates for standard scales of unit cost for both match funding and ESF.

This new approach allows the Skills Funding Agency to procure without going through the OCT process. QPF/ACTOR is open to all providers for pre-registration.

OCT would be used if:

- standard rates or funding methodology is not established;
- ACTOR can not supply a conclusive list of providers for tendering (for instance, if too many providers have the same pre-qualification score).

How will procurement comply with national legislation?

All procurement processes used by the LSC/ Skills Funding Agency are complying with the Public Contracts Directive (2004/18/EC) implemented in the UK by Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006/5).

5.3.3 Commissioning Timetable

Activity	Milestone
Co-Finance plan Approved	June 2010
Initiate the development of Invitation to Tenders with key stakeholders and agree processes and project timescales: NEET <ul style="list-style-type: none">• YPLA and LAs through RPG Apprenticeships <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NAS Adult Skills including programmes for the Unemployed <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater Manchester -Commission for the New Economy• Merseyside FMPIA and Halton Liverpool City region Skills and Employment Board• Other sub-regions MAAs and other sub-regional economic development partnerships• Other CFOs – Jobcentre Plus and NOMS	May 2010
Complete development of ITTs	August 2010
Launch procurement round	6 -9- 2010
Application window closes	8-10-2010
Assessment period contract awards and award period	October 2010
Outcomes announced	12-11-2010
Contracts completed and agreed	14-1-2011
Activity commences	14-1-2011

5.4 Provider Funding and Monitoring

5.4.1 Contracts costs agreed during the OCT process

The rates payable in the contract will either be based around mainstream programme rates or established in advance in the tender specification. The set rates will allow for regional variations in cost weighting and for hard to reach element of potential participants. The national ESF Policy team have defined a set of standard deliverables for the new ESF programme and all payable deliverables are now based on delivery

5.4.2 Flat rates for standard scales of unit cost

The flat rate approach (formula funding) has been agreed by the EC and ESFD as eligible. Rates will be established in advance, fair, equitable and verifiable. The main funding rates will be published in time for the start of the 2010/11 academic year and available for the first round of contracting.

5.4.3 Advance payments

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for the Skills Funding Agency to provide advance payments for small providers or those in the voluntary and community sector and to assist in their cash flow in the early days of the project. Advance payments will always be fully recovered during the lifetime of the project, whether the provider delivers or not.

5.4.4 Payment arrangements for providers

Providers will be paid by the Skills Funding Agency based on agreed monthly payment profile which will form part of the contract between the Skills Funding Agency and providers. Payments will be generated through a Centralised Contract Management (CCM) system, which will feed into the Skills Funding Agency payments system. Payments will be made to the provider via BACS on an agreed date in the month (based on the number of working days elapsed).

The settlement system allows providers to make monthly monitoring returns to the Skills Funding Agency to report on activity carried out in the previous month. The return will be based on both the Individual Learner Record (ILR) returns and returns for non-ILR based delivery via a Delivery Statement. These returns will feed into the CCM system, which will perform automatic reconciliation on a quarterly basis. This reconciliation will make adjustments to subsequent payments based on profile payments made against each activity that the provider has not carried out.

Releases for CCM are scheduled throughout 2010.

5.4.5 Actual costs contracts

The Skills Funding Agency does not intend to pay providers on an actual costs basis. All contracting will be based on contract costs and will be awarded through open and competitive tendering or through the negotiated process. (The Skills Funding Agency reserves the right to pay providers by other eligible methods if required in exceptional circumstances)

5.4.6 Arrangements for monitoring ESF providers

Contracts are assigned to an account manager and a senior account director at inception stage. Financial profiles in contracts are inextricably linked to delivery; therefore, monitoring of financial performance is centred on appropriate and suitably evidenced delivery.

Contractors will return learner data electronically to the Skills Funding Agency with a monthly or quarterly report of all deliverables within the contracts combined. The required evidence to support these deliverables is identified within the contract. The evidence is held by the provider and will be retained in line with ESF requirements.

Performance monitoring of individual projects is undertaken in accordance with the frequency detailed in the contract. The monitoring process includes a pre-determined and reviewed schedule of provider visits and evidence checks by Skills Funding Agency staff.

5.4.7 Contract Monitoring

Contracts are monitored against:

- the objectives of the contract;
- the timely and accurate return of records and reports to the Skills Funding Agency;
- delivery of the agreed outcomes, outputs and milestones (as documented in the contract);
- the evidence of delivery (utilising a predetermined sample size);
- beneficiary eligibility (as documented in the contract); and
- where possible, learner records will be automatically monitored electronically using the ILR Dbase and the ensuing financial variance addressed.

There are agreed variances for under-performance of ESF contracts. Where performance variances are greater than this, a business case is required to be authorised at Director level. If, for some reason, this can not be performed through CCM, alternative methods must be found.

Where indicated, underperforming contracts will have payments halted and/ or claw backs enacted. Re-profiling will occur based on actual delivery to date and a newly agreed future delivery profile.

The Skills Funding Agency will keep an overview on expenditure and outputs to ensure that co-financed activity is performing within acceptable parameters and in line with the funding profiles submitted to GO.

5.4.8 Project Delivery and Outcomes

The nationally driven procurement process, alongside the use of the CCM system, ensures the consistent use of a range of robust outcomes – the contract schedules will be completed using this information and an agreed profile against each outcome will be agreed.

The contract/ provider will be risk assessed to determine the frequency of monitoring needed. For example, a new provider delivering new provision would be classed as higher risk to start with, whilst a known provider with a good track record of delivery would be classed as lower risk.

The account manager will look at the performance data submitted by the provider on a regular basis (in line with risk rating) and will identify any under- or over-performance in the delivery of the expected outcomes. Obvious causes of performance variance, such as data issues, will be investigated and eliminated in the first instance.

Project and performance variance will be discussed with the provider. Frequency of monitoring will be adjusted as part of the process, if appropriate. Payments will be reconciled/ adjusted as necessary and, if warranted, payments will be placed on hold whilst the performance issues are addressed.

5.4.9 Quality Standards Including How Ofsted Recommendations Will Be Addressed

All Skills Funding Agency providers are required to comply with rigorous quality standards, including minimum performance levels set out in our *Planning for Success* framework (December 2005), which covers planning and quality. Providers are also subjected to inspection through the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). This ensures that local communities have access to relevant and high quality learning opportunities; that individuals of all ages and backgrounds acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to realise their potential, improve their life chances, and contribute to economic growth; and that employers are able to recruit and develop the skilled and qualified workforce they need for business success. Inspection will continue to focus on the Common Inspection Framework and will contribute to the new Quality Assurance System. We are intent on excellent provision for the benefit of employers and learners alike as a route to excellence.

The Skills Funding Agency will focus on investing in high-quality provision. The Framework for Excellence and the minimum levels of performance policy will be used to drive quality improvement in the sector.

The account manager will assess success rates from minimum levels of performance report and assess outcomes with previous reports. The account manager will also check learner health and safety assessment and liaise with the regional Health and Safety team to ensure actions are completed, and retrieve provider Self Assessment Reviews (SARs), Quality Improvement Plans and Provider Development Plans.

When Ofsted recommendation reports highlight areas of development, the Provider's Self Assessment Report will be listing the actions needed to address the issues. These will be reviewed with the Account Manager. Where possible, the Skills Funding Agency will provide funding towards support mechanisms (consultancy type of support). If the reports included the judgement of inadequate for 'effectiveness of provision', the Skills Funding Agency will issue a Notice for Improvement with actions to undertake and will reserve the right to take the provision away from the provider where there has been failure of deliver the actions set.

5.4.10 Financial Performance

Financial profiles in contracts are inextricably linked to delivery; therefore, monitoring of financial performance is centred on appropriate and suitably evidenced delivery. Learner records will be automatically monitored electronically using the ILR database and the ensuing financial variance addressed.

The Strategic Finance team will complete a Cash Flow Report, providing a view of planned and actual payments made on a monthly basis.

For each provider, the Financial Summary Report shows a summary of their current approved allocations, their status, version number and the total value for the period selected.

5.4.11 Audit

Provider Financial Assurance (PFA) teams include ESF in their annual work plans. The teams endeavour to audit each contract at least once during the life of the contract. PFA will contact the relevant contract/ relationship staff before the audit commences to obtain contract details, and will keep these staff members informed throughout the audit.

The audit approach places significance on the assessment of risk and the key controls providers are expected to establish for administering contracts. Emphasis is given to advising providers on how their controls can be improved and the sharing of good practice identified by PFA from previous ESF audits. Where control weaknesses are

identified, recommendations for improvement will be based on diagnostic work that identifies the reasons for errors occurring. This consultative approach should lead to a reduction in recurring errors and greater added value from the audit process.

The assurance approaches are tailored to reflect the differences in actual costs and beneficiary contracts.

Audit opinions are given on providers' use of funds and internal controls. The assurance report, including details of any funds at risk relating to the contract, will be discussed with the contracting and relationship staff involved.

5.5 Equality and diversity

5.5.1 Action to promote equality and diversity is an integral part of the Skills Funding Agency business objectives. A world-class workforce can only be created if we remove barriers, eliminate discrimination, address disadvantage and raise the aspirations of both present and potential learners.

5.5.2 The LSC Single Equality Scheme shows how this is put into practice. By incorporating individual schemes for race, disability and gender equality into one overarching scheme, the LSC (and therefore the Skills Funding Agency) is creating a coherent framework for promoting equality and diversity within the organisation and across the learning and skills sector. Its objectives are aligned with the LSC/ Skills Funding Agency national priorities so that it will operate strategically, in the mainstream of our work.

5.5.3 As part of building equal opportunities into implementation and following the policy of 'rural proofing,' the plan should indicate what actions will be taken to alleviate the difficulties faced by people in rural communities in accessing provision (for regions which have rural communities).

5.5.4 Data will be analysed to ensure that providers are targeting at people in rural communities. This will be monitored and discussed at review meetings with providers. Actions will be undertaken if needed.

5.6 Sustainable Development

5.6.1 Sustainable development is focused on providing a better quality of life for everyone now and for generations to come. This is achieved through considering and balancing the long-term effects of social, economic and environmental issues and impacts. (*Securing the Future – UK Sustainable Development Strategy, 2005*)

5.6.2 The European Commission has expressed concern that projects in the last ESF programme addressed mainly the social aspects of sustainable development. Therefore, there is a renewed focus on the environmental aspects of sustainability for 2007-13.

5.6.3 The Skills Funding Agency approach is to encourage specific environmentally focussed projects where these clearly link to regional skills priorities (e.g. renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste management etc.) and at the same time begin mainstreaming the environmental aspects of sustainable development through working with providers.

5.6.4 The Skills Funding Agency will build in sustainable development to tendering, procurement and contracting processes in 2010/11.

- 5.6.5 It is important to note that funding used as match should have the same approach to sustainable development as ESF projects.
- 5.6.6 Equal opportunities and sustainable development policies need to be reviewed annually, so the plan should confirm that this will continue to happen
- 5.6.7 Providers are contractually obliged to comply with Equal Opportunities policy. 2010/11 contracts will also include a sustainable development clause.
- 5.6.8 Both policies will be reviewed annually.
- 5.6.9 The Revised ESF Regional Framework makes specific reference to Support for UK Low Carbon Transition Plan. For 2011-2013, there is an explicit focus on training for the new jobs that will be created as the economy recovers, especially 'green jobs' in a low carbon economy. The Skills Funding Agency will work with partners to target resources on specific sectors and skills needs in support of national low-carbon objectives.

5.7 Health

- 5.7.1 In the North West in 2011-13, health is to be included as a third ESF Cross-Cutting Theme (in addition to Sustainable Development and Gender Equality & Equal Opportunities). ESF money cannot be used directly to fund health and social services. Rather, it must be used to tackle health-related activity that directly supports entry to or progression within the labour market.
- 5.7.2 In this context the Skills Funding Agency has identified those individuals currently in receipt of health related benefits including Employment Support Allowance as a specific target group for programmes which aim to support those individuals into sustained employment.

6. Consultation

- 6.1.1 In order to maximise the added value of the ESF programme the Skills Funding Agency is committed to sustaining an ongoing dialogue with partners. Throughout the period of developing the Co-finance Plan we will consult with key partners, providers and other potential CFOs. Outlined below is an overview of the processes that we will employ to maintain an active dialogue with key stakeholders in the region:
- 6.1.2 At a regional level the LSC has been directly involved in the development of the Revised ESF Regional Framework for the North West through the mechanism of the ESF Working Group.
- 6.1.3 The Skills Funding Agency has already begun to put in place mechanisms as set out in Section A to ensure an ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders in relation to young people, employer skills and programme for the unemployed.
- 6.1.4 The Skills Funding Agency intends to publish this document on Monday 22 March. The consultation period in which comments should be submitted ends at 12 noon on Monday 19 April.

Consultation Timetable	
Date	Stage
22 March	Draft Plan – Published
25 and 26 March	Consultation Events
19 April	Closing Date
26 April	Revised plan submitted to the Joint Co-Finance Plan Board
14 May	Approved Plan submitted to GONW

6.1.5 An electronic copy of this document is available at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthWest/ESF/ESF+Co-finance+plans/> together with a series of consultation questions.

APPENDICES

Annex A: Proposed Activity to Address NEET

Northwest	AA1-2: Increasing Participation of Young People	Aim <i>Reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or are at risk of becoming NEET, in order to improve their employability and skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work.</i>				
Specific Area of Activity		Provision of Support Prior to Labour Market Engagement				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives to reform vocational routes for, and develop vocational skills among, 14-19 year olds; • Actions at the point of transition to prevent young people becoming NEET by supporting programmes with a vocational dimension which increase the likelihood of young people making an effective transition at 16; • Initiatives to help raise awareness of the world of work, enterprise and entrepreneurship among young people (including work placements); • Activities to engage 14-19 NEETs, tackling barriers to learning and helping them to access mainstream provision; • Activities to reduce youth unemployment by developing the employability and skills of young people • Support for employers offering employment with training to members of the NEET group or identified potential NEET young people • Activities to provide learning and training to young people serving a custodial sentence in preparation for re-entry into the labour market • Transitional support for those NEETs at risk of becoming workless adults • Activities to support Young People leaving care 						
LSC proposed activity	Target groups and any spatial or geographic targeting	Budget (ESF only)	Type of Beneficiaries	Number	Result	Number (exc match)
Activities to engage 14-19 NEETs, tackling barriers to learning and helping them to access mainstream provision	Reducing the number of young people in The Cheshires and Warrington who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in order to improve their employability and skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work.	£2,664,896	Young people who live in The Cheshires and Warrington SRG area and are currently NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	1,092	Number and % of 14-19 year old NEETs or at risk, in education, employment or training on leaving	241
	<i>Cheshire East</i>	<i>£1,058,456</i>		<i>434</i>		<i>96</i>
	<i>Cheshire West</i>	<i>£1,007,898</i>		<i>413</i>		<i>91</i>
	<i>Warrington</i>	<i>£598,541</i>		<i>245</i>		<i>54</i>

LSC proposed activity	Target groups and any spatial or geographic targeting	Budget (ESF only)	Type of Beneficiaries	Number	Result	Number (exc match)
Activities to engage 14-19 NEETs, tackling barriers to learning and helping them to access mainstream provision	Reducing the number of young people in Cumbria who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in order to improve their employability and skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work.	£1,205,237	Young people who live in the Cumbria SRG area and are currently NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	493	Number and % of 14-19 year old NEETs or at risk, in education, employment or training on leaving	109
	Reducing the number of young people in Lancashire, BwD and Blackpool who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in order to improve their employability and skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work.	£5,582,581	Young people who live in the Lancashire SRG area and are currently NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	2,287	Number and % of 14-19 year old NEETs or at risk, in education, employment or training on leaving	505
	<i>Blackburn with Darwen</i>	<i>£707,812</i>		<i>290</i>		<i>64</i>
	<i>Blackpool</i>	<i>£797,512</i>		<i>327</i>		<i>72</i>
	<i>Lancashire</i>	<i>£4,077,258</i>		<i>1,670</i>		<i>369</i>
	Reducing the number of young people in Greater Manchester who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in order to improve their employability and skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work.	£11,541,901	Young people who live in the Greater Manchester SRG area and are currently NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	4,728	Number and % of 14-19 year old NEETs or at risk, in education, employment or training on leaving	1,045
	<i>Bolton</i>	<i>£1,417,255</i>		<i>581</i>		<i>128</i>
	<i>Bury</i>	<i>£758,370</i>		<i>311</i>		<i>69</i>
	<i>City of Manchester</i>	<i>£2,247,384</i>		<i>921</i>		<i>203</i>
	<i>City of Salford</i>	<i>£932,877</i>		<i>382</i>		<i>84</i>
	<i>Oldham</i>	<i>£1,071,503</i>		<i>439</i>		<i>97</i>
	<i>Rochdale</i>	<i>£913,306</i>		<i>374</i>		<i>83</i>
	<i>Stockport</i>	<i>£1,338,971</i>		<i>549</i>		<i>121</i>
	<i>Tameside</i>	<i>£931,246</i>		<i>382</i>		<i>84</i>
	<i>Trafford</i>	<i>£637,683</i>		<i>261</i>		<i>58</i>
<i>Wigan</i>	<i>£1,293,306</i>		<i>530</i>		<i>117</i>	

Merseyside FMPIA	AA1-2: Increasing Participation of Young People	Aim <i>Reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or are at risk of becoming NEET, in order to improve their employability and skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work.</i>				
Specific Area of Activity		Provision of Support Prior to Labour Market Engagement				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives to reform vocational routes for, and develop vocational skills among, 14-19 year olds; • Actions at the point of transition to prevent young people becoming NEET by supporting programmes with a vocational dimension which increase the likelihood of young people making an effective transition at 16; • Initiatives to help raise awareness of the world of work, enterprise and entrepreneurship among young people (including work placements); • Activities to engage 14-19 NEETs, tackling barriers to learning and helping them to access mainstream provision; • Activities to reduce youth unemployment by developing the employability and skills of young people • Support for employers offering employment with training to members of the NEET group or identified potential NEET young people • Activities to provide learning and training to young people serving a custodial sentence in preparation for re-entry into the labour market • Transitional support for those NEETs at risk of becoming workless adults • Activities to support Young People leaving care 						
LSC proposed activity	Target groups and any spatial or geographic targeting	Budget (ESF only)	Type of Beneficiaries	Number	Result	Number (exc match)
Activities to engage 14-19 NEETs, tackling barriers to learning and helping them to access mainstream provision	Reducing the number of young people in Greater Merseyside who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in order to improve their employability and skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work.	£4,025,208	Young people who live in the Greater Merseyside SRG area and are currently NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	1,150	Number and % of 14-19 year old NEETs or at risk, in education, employment or training on leaving	250
	<i>Halton</i>	<i>£376,223</i>		<i>107</i>		<i>23</i>
	<i>Knowsley</i>	<i>£394,004</i>		<i>113</i>		<i>24</i>
	<i>Liverpool</i>	<i>£1,196,051</i>		<i>342</i>		<i>74</i>
	<i>Sefton</i>	<i>£652,306</i>		<i>186</i>		<i>41</i>
	<i>St Helens</i>	<i>£481,041</i>		<i>137</i>		<i>30</i>
	<i>Wirral</i>	<i>£952,583</i>		<i>264</i>		<i>57</i>

Annex B: Priority 1 Outputs and Results Northwest and the Merseyside (FMPIA)

Target	Northwest	Merseyside : FMPIA
Outputs (Both ESF funded and match funded)		
Total number of participants	17300	2850
1.2 Number and % of participants who are unemployed		
(a) Number	4800	850
(b) Percentage	27%	29%
1.3 Number and % of participants who are inactive		
(a) Number	3900	762
(b) Percentage	22%	26%
1.4 Number and % of participants age 14 to 19 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET		
(a) Number	8600	1150
(b) Percentage	49%	40%
1.5 % of participants with disabilities or health conditions	22%	22%
1.6 % of participants who are lone parents	12%	12%
1.7 % of participants aged 50 or over ¹	18%	18%
1.8 % of participants from ethnic minorities	17%	17%
1.9 % of female participants	51%	51%
Results (Both ESF funded and match funded)		
1.10 Number and % of participants in work on leaving		
(a) Number	1914	354
(b) Percentage ²	22%	22%
1.11 Number and % of participants in work six months after leaving		
(a) Number	2262	419
(b) Percentage	26%	26%
1.12 Number and % of economically inactive participants engaged in jobsearch activity or further learning		
(a) Number	3915	725
(b) Percentage	45%	45%
1.13 Number and % of 14 to 19 year old NEETS or at risk in education, employment or training on leaving		
(a) Number	3870	517
(b) Percentage ³	45%	45%
1.14 Regional target(s) ⁴		

¹ Percentage of unemployed and inactive participants (1.2 + 1.3) aged 50 or over. Excluded from participant total all NEET participants (1.4)

² Percentage of total completed Priority 1 participants in work on leaving

³ Percentage of completed NEET participants (i.e. 1.4) in education, training or employment

⁴ Must be based on participant data that CFOs already collect

Annex C: Priority 2 Outputs and Results Northwest and the Merseyside (FMPIA)

Target Outputs	Northwest	Merseyside (FMPIA)
2.1 Total number of participants	42750	8200
2.2 Number and % of participants with basic skills needs		
(a) Number	18400	3500
(b) Percentage	43%	43%
2.3 Number and % of participants without level 2 qualifications		
(a) Number ⁵	18800	3600
(b) Percentage	44%	44%
2.4 Number and % of participants without level 3 qualifications		
(a) Number ⁶	5500	1100
(b) Percentage	13%	13%
2.5 % of participants with disabilities or health conditions	15%	15%
2.6 % of participants aged 50 or over	20%	20%
2.7 % of participants from ethnic minorities	8%	8%
2.8 % of female participants	50%	50%
Results		
2.9 Number and percentage of participants gaining basic skills		
(a) Number	8280	1500
(b) Percentage ⁷	45%	45%
2.10 Number and % of participants gaining level 2 qualifications		
(a) Number	7550	1350
(b) Percentage ⁸	40%	40%
2.11 Number and % of participants gaining level 3 qualifications		
(a) Number	1665	315
(b) Percentage ⁹	30%	30%
2.12 Regional target(s) ¹⁰		

⁵ Excludes participants with basic skills needs (i.e. 2.1)

⁶ With a Level 2 qualification but without a Level 3 qualification

⁷ Percentage of completed participants without basic skills (i.e. 2.2) who gained basic skills

⁸ Percentage of completed participants without Level 2 (i.e. 2.3) who gained Level 2 qualification

⁹ Percentage of completed participants with Level 2 but without Level 3 (i.e. 2.4) who gained Level 3 qualification

¹⁰ Must be based on participant data that CFOs already collect

Annex D: Outputs and Results ESF and Match combined (Northwest)

Priority 1 North West	2010				2011				2012				Total
	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	
Output													
1.2 Number and % of participants who are unemployed	400	400	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	0	0	4800
Results													
1.10 Number and % of participants in work on leaving	0	100	100	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	125	0	1200
1.11 Number and % of participants in work six months after leaving	0	0	135	150	150	150	152	152	152	152	151	0	1344
1.12 Number and % of economically inactive participants engaged in jobsearch activity or further learning	0	180	200	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	200		2160
Output													
1.3 Number and % of participants who are inactive													3900
Results													
1.10 Number and % of participants in work on leaving	0	0	45	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	45	30	715
1.11 Number and % of participants in work six months after leaving	0	0	50	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	70	65	920
1.12 Number and % of economically inactive participants engaged in jobsearch activity or further learning	0	0	100	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	55	1755
Output													
1.4 Number and % of participants age 14 to 19 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	0	700	920	920	920	920	920	920	920	910	550	0	8600
Results													
1.13 Number and % of 14 to 19 year old NEETS or at risk in education, employment or training on leaving	0	200	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	70	3870

Outputs and Results ESF and Match combined (Northwest)

Priority 2 North West	2010				2011				2012				Total
	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	
Output													
2.2 Number and % of participants with basic skills needs	0	1200	2150	2150	2150	2150	2150	2150	2150	2150	0	0	18400
Results													
2.9 Number of participants gaining basic skills	0	0	250	500	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1000	1000	30	8280
Output													
2.3 Number and % of participants without level 2 qualifications.		1300	2200	2200	2200	2200	2200	2200	2200	2100	0	0	18800
Results													
2.10 Number of participants gaining level 2 qualifications	0	0	200	550	900	900	900	900	900	900	900	500	7550
Output													
2.4 Number of participants without level 3 qualifications	0	200	575	675	675	675	675	675	675	675	0	0	5500
Results													
2.11 Number of participants gaining level 3 qualifications	0	0	0	0	250	250	255	255	255	250	150	0	1665

Annex E: Outputs and Results ESF and Match Combined (Merseyside)

Priority 1 Merseyside (FMPIA)	2010				2011				2012				Total
	Feb	May	August	Nov	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	
Output													
1.2 Number and % of participants who are unemployed	0	80	100	100	100	100	100	90	90	90	0	0	850
Results													
1.10 Number and % of participants in work on leaving	0	10	20	25	25	25	25	25	16	16	15	0	212
1.11 Number and % of participants in work six months after leaving	0	0	15	23	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	238
1.12 Number and % of economically inactive participants engaged in jobsearch activity or further learning	0	10	30	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	25	385
Output													
1.3 Number and % of participants who are inactive	0	82	90	90	90	90	80	80	80	80	0	0	762
Results													
1.10 Number and % of participants in work on leaving	0	8	12	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	5	145
1.11 Number and % of participants in work six months after leaving	0	0	9	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	0	185
1.12 Number and % of economically inactive participants engaged in jobsearch activity or further learning	0	19	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	0	343
Output													
1.4 Number and % of participants age 14 to 19 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	25	45	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	0	1150
Results													
1.13 Number and % of 14 to 19 year old NEETS or at risk in education, employment or training on leaving	0	30	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	40	520

Priority 2 Merseyside (FMPIA)	2010				2011				2012				Total
	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	Feb	May	Aug	Nov	
Output													
2.2 Number and % of participants with basic skills needs	0	215	365	365	365	365	365	365	365	365	365	0	3500
Results													
2.9 Number of participants gaining basic skills	0	0	50	200	200	200	200	200	200	125	125	0	1500
Output													
2.3 Number and % of participants without level 2 qualifications.	0	225	375	375	375	375	375	375	375	375	375	0	3600
Results													
2.10 Number of participants gaining level 2 qualifications	0	0	50	170	170	170	170	170	170	140	140	0	1350
Output													
2.4 Number of participants without level 3 qualifications	0	60	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	0	0	1100
Results													
2.11 Number of participants gaining level 3 qualifications	0	0	0	0	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	0	315