

Learning and Skills Council Local Area Statement of Need

Wigan

2008/09

December 2007

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities
within Wigan

Introduction

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

The transformation of the learning and skills sector in Wigan 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 and we have invested an additional £600,000 through the NEET hotspot funding to target the high volumes of 16-18 year olds who remain disengaged.

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 liaison with the Wigan Economic Development Partnership.

However we still need to increase the participation and achievement of young people and to develop appropriate progression routes to enable them to achieve their full potential and secure sustainable employment. Discussions are taking place between the Learning and Skills Council and the Local Authority to align potential LSC capital funds and future plans relating to BSF. Additionally, the 14 to 19 partnership have jointly endorsed the establishment of sector specific skills centres within the borough and these will assist in providing seamless provision from schools to post 16 destinations.

We need more adults to be undertaking learning at Level 2 and, increasingly important to the economy, at Level 3 and we will work hard to stimulate demand for skills both from individuals and employers. This is a key challenge for the borough given the increasing levels of inward investment and requirement for higher level qualifications. In order to raise aspirations of young people and adults in the borough and to ensure that the borough is well positioned to contribute to the skills agenda, Wigan and Leigh College are seeking to establish a Higher Education institution which will provide progression for adults.

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

[Insert Signature]

Carol Bluer

Partnership Director, Wigan
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Learning & Skills Council

Challenges, key actions and measures of success for Wigan

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 Wigan are based on our regional and sub-regional Strategic Analysis, a robust review of supply, demand and need; as well as ongoing dialogue with key partner organisations. The analysis can be accessed at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthWest/NorthWestStrategicAnalysis.htm>

Priority 1: Creating Demand for Skills

Key Challenges:

- Addressing high levels of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Reducing the numbers of young people who are in employment without any formalised learning
- Increasing Level 2 and Level 3 achievement by age 19
- Increasing the range of vocational opportunities for young people through apprenticeships and diplomas

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

- Plan, through local 14-19 Partnerships, **a comprehensive 14-19 offer**, maximising the utilisation and impact of ESF to provide pathways for young people to progress into mainstream learning within Wigan
- Support the **introduction of diplomas** and build upon the collaborative working arrangements that have been established and ensure that these become
- Increase the participation of young people, implementing the Wigan **NEET Reduction Strategy** with a clear focus on vulnerable learners including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Continue to raise the profile of learning and celebrate success by holding the **2nd Wigan Learner Awards Event in 2008** and promoting the benefits of learning to help raise aspirations
- Work with partners, including Wigan MBC, the Chamber, Wigan and Leigh College and the brokerage service, to **promote the Skills Pledge** and increase the take up of Train to Gain

Priority 2: Transforming FE

Key Challenges:

- The need to increase capacity for level 2 and 3 learning through flexible learning opportunities
- Increase and improve employer engagement to ensure local providers are

responsive in meeting employer demand

- Aligning the plans for FE capital infrastructure and facilities with the BSF programme for schools

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:

- Supporting the Wigan Vocational Network and the 14 to 19 Strategic Partnership Group to promote apprenticeship provision to young people and increase employer engagement in vocational learning
- Through strategic investment, **expanding the apprenticeship programme**, including increased volumes of Young Apprenticeships, the expansion of Programme Led Apprenticeships and additional volumes of adult apprenticeships
- Work with the Local Authority to on their BSF strategy to ensure a coherent approach to capital developments in Wigan
- Ensuring **effective local commissioning processes** that match provision in Wigan to the needs of the learners and employers, building on strong performance and minimising poor performance
- **Continue to drive up quality** and in particular, purchasing learning opportunities which exceed Minimum Levels of Performance and give value for money

Priority 3: Better Skills, Better jobs, Better Lives

Key Challenges:

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

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

- Contribute to Wigan LAA targets through effective procurement and programme management to ensure the integration of employment and skills
- Provide an increased focus on **engaging employers in learning**, with a focus on increasing apprenticeship places and reducing the high numbers of young people who are in employment without any formalised learning
- Ensure equality of opportunity, **targeting areas of disadvantage**, which result in improved success rates for minority groups, increased participation of under-represented groups and reduced imbalances in learning and skills acquisition

- Work with further education providers 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
- Work with colleges, providers and the Local Authority to develop employability programmes to increase the number of people accessing training and support the move from benefits to sustainable employment
- Work with JobCentre Plus and partners to establish Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) to help disadvantaged people into work through working in partnership with employers.
- Develop a learning pathway which starts with personal, development and leisure learning through to first steps to engage with those who are workless encouraging them to learn, progress and get a job.

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 Wigan Partnership Team has been positive and resulted in a clearer understanding of the key issues within each of our localities 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 Wigan Partnership Team and the Economic Regeneration Team of Wigan MBC to develop a clear understanding of skills needs and to stimulate demand for learning by employers - those that already exist and those that are committing to inward investment opportunities
- Work with the Local Strategic Partnership and Strategic Management Group to agree and review progress against a consistent set of meaningful targets relating to skills, 16-19 performance and post-19 achievement in the new LAA process
- Work with our 14 to 19 Strategic Partnership to raise participation levels of young people and reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.
- Work with the Wigan Connexions Team to raise participation levels of young people, meet the September Guarantee and reduce the number of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.
- Through the 14 to 19 Strategic Partnership, enhance and extend the development of 14-19 opportunities including developments relating to the new Diplomas
- Develop closer working arrangements with Wigan's Children and Young Peoples' Services Department within WMBC to ensure coherent infrastructure planning, aligning the BSF and potential FE investment plans

- Continue to develop our relationship with Voluntary and Community Sector network to help capacity build the sector as part of our commitment to widening learner choice.
- Develop closer working with Jobcentre Plus to integrate skills and employment agendas, promote Local Employment Partnerships and increase take up of the Skills Pledge
- Work closely with our providers, schools and colleges to provide high quality choice for all learners and encourage cross-sector collaboration
- Strengthen our work with 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 in Wigan