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Leading learning and skills

Learning and Skills Council Berkshire Annual Plan 2007-08

March 2007

Of interest to National, Regional and
Local Learning and Skills Colleagues

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Introduction

This plan sets out our local response to the LSC's national Annual Statement of Priorities and to our South East Regional Commissioning Plan. These documents highlight the LSC's key role in raising skill levels to improve productivity, employability and social cohesion through a set of four interlinked priorities, which will focus our actions and resources.

Our vision for Berkshire is of high performing and responsive learning and skills provision that matches the strong economy of the area, addresses its diversity and responds to the changing needs of its employers and individuals. We are mindful that a number of economic indicators point to the area being near a "tipping point", where employers, faced with the infrastructural, environmental and labour market pressures of the area, could choose to move elsewhere. Addressing equality and diversity issues will be integral to our work.

Progress in many areas over the last year is encouraging – with increasing numbers of young people participating in learning, more learning contributing to priority skill areas and targets and a wider range of employer focussed interventions to raise responsiveness to local skills needs. The building blocks are being put in place to align partners' resources as part of a new co-ordinated approach to community development.

The key challenge for the South East is building the skilled workforce needed for the region to remain competitive in a global market. In Berkshire we need to recognise that there are wide variations in skills levels which impacts upon the prosperity of the area and opportunities for individuals. Therefore we will prioritise LSC resources on skilling individuals to at least level 2 and we will work with providers and partners to help more employers recognise the value of investing in the workforce at level 3 and beyond.

We will also focus in 2007-8 on continuing to target and prioritise our investments alongside the resources and interventions of our partners. We will also re-prioritise resources by not funding poor quality provision and commissioning provision which offers value for money, is high quality and increases choice.

Much needs to be done however in working towards our vision and there a number of key priorities for the year ahead:

- Implementing, with the unitary authorities, the six local 14-19 strategies, leading to a wider range of high quality vocational opportunities and stronger collaboration, supported by comprehensive advice and guidance;
- Developing a wider range of high quality Apprenticeships, which meet the needs of employers and young people and achieve higher rates of completion;
- Working with providers to respond significantly and more effectively to employers' skill needs, with a focus on sectors key to the local and regional economies;

- Increasing the proportion of adults achieving level 2 and level 3 qualifications, especially through Train to Gain services;
- Addressing the needs of low or unskilled individuals, some with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to develop employability skills and improve access to the labour market;
- Further improving the quality of provision, so that all learners experience provision that is satisfactory or better and introducing new provision to fill gaps by area and sector; and
- Continuing to support innovative capital and collaborative projects, including vocational centres, which will build capacity to deliver higher performing learning and skills provision.

Over the past year the LSC has restructured significantly. We now have a well resourced regional office and an established Thames Valley area office. Our partnership and economic development teams have a strong local perspective and focus, working increasingly closely with partners and providers across Berkshire.

We look forward to the year ahead – this plan describes the context and the actions we believe are necessary to achieve our vision. It is clear that many challenges exist but we are confident in our ability to meet these challenges and to deliver the skills necessary to strengthen further Berkshire’s economy and prosperity.



Kathryn Cook
Chair



David Ansell
Area Director

Local Context Summary

Berkshire comprises six unitary authorities of Bracknell Forest, Reading, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough, West Berkshire and Wokingham. It is a diverse area ranging from the predominantly rural and relatively prosperous areas such as West Berkshire to the urban areas of Reading and Slough where significant pockets of deprivation exist.

Productivity in Berkshire is the highest in the South East and one of the highest in the UK. Latest data shows that it has the highest productivity output in the South East based on Gross Value Added (GVA) measures¹ at £20,000m, which equates to 15% of the South East total (£134,800m). The GVA per head in Berkshire is 50% higher than that of the South East as a whole and 65% higher than the UK. Earnings in Berkshire are also the highest in the South East.

Overall, the population in Berkshire over the last decade grew by 4.3% (33,400 individuals), which was 0.9 percentage points below the South East region's rate, giving a total figure of 812,000². This is primarily attributed to a 2.4% decrease in the population of children (less than 14 years of age) and lower rates of increase in the population aged 15-64.

Population projections over the next five years suggest a total increase in Berkshire of 1.0% (9,000 individuals)³. This percentage increase is less than half that projected for the South East (2.4%). There are around 54,000 15-19 year olds and it is projected that the population of children aged under 15 will decrease further over the next five years by 4,500. There is a small projected increase of 5,000 for the 15-64 population over these five years and an increase of 7,800 of those aged 65 and over. High levels of in-migration in Slough, in particular, over the last seven years has also caused a significant population rise although this is yet to be fully captured within official statistics.

Census data indicates a BME population of 11% for Berkshire – ranging from 36% in Slough to 5% for Bracknell Forest - the South East figure is 5%. Particular concentrations of some ethnic groups, such as Pakistani and Bangladeshi, tend to have lower educational achievement than the average across all groups.

Over 38,000 businesses are based in the area and total employment stands at 510,000⁴. Of these, 300 businesses employ more than 200 individuals, representing a third of the workforce. Almost nine out of 10 jobs (88%) are in the service industry - one of the highest percentages in the South East. Compared to other areas in the region, Berkshire has a higher proportion of employment in banking, finance, insurance, real estate and other business activities (31% compared to 23%) and transport and communication (8% compared to 6%). It has lower proportions in public administration, education and health (18% compared to 25%) and manufacturing (8% compared to 10%).

¹ Regional Economic Strategy, 2006

² Mid year population estimates, 2005

³ Sub-national population projections, 2004

⁴ Annual Business Inquiry

Employment forecasts suggest an overall increase in employment of 3.3% (17,000 jobs) by 2009, the third highest rate of all LLSC areas⁵. High increases are expected in distribution and transport (6,900 jobs), business and other services (7,100) and 'non marketed' services such as defence, education and health (4,300). At a more detailed sector level, distribution is forecast to grow by 5,300 jobs, 'other' business services (e.g. valuers, agents, franchisers) by 5,500 and health and social work by 3,600. The construction sector's share of the total sub-regional workforce is predicted to remain constant at around 30,000 jobs. Employment in both the primary and manufacturing sectors is predicted to continue to contract but at a lower rate than over the last decade.

At the occupational level, 51% of employees in Berkshire are engaged in management and professional occupations (above the South East total of 46%)⁶. In contrast the area has a lower proportion of employees in elementary and process/plant occupations (14% compared with the South East figure of 16%). Across Berkshire, the occupational mix of the workforce is predicted to shift over the course of the next five years towards even more professional and managerial occupations. Thus managers and senior officials are predicted to grow by 7,000 jobs (7%) and professional occupations by 4,500 (7%) jobs; in contrast, elementary occupations will decline by 2,000 jobs (4%) and clerical and administrative occupations by 4,000 (6%). Within this shift employers are increasingly demanding higher level skills, especially in knowledge based sectors - almost 30% of employees work in knowledge intensive service sector employment, compared with 21% in the region.

A recent report by Deloitte indicated that Berkshire could be near an economic 'tipping point' with declining levels of productivity growth, limited prospects for employment growth, high costs and an inadequate infrastructure⁷. This further emphasises the need to increase skill and employability levels across the area.

Partnership working remains central to the LSC's business. Regionally, the Regional Economic Strategy launched by SEEDA during 2006 outlines the challenges necessary for the region to be world class and achieve sustainable prosperity - of which skills plays a key part. It also defines a number of 'diamonds for investment and growth' including one in Berkshire along the M4 corridor centred on Reading. SEERA's South East Plan focuses around land-use planning and presents the 20 year vision for the region. It is due for a formal launch in spring 2008. If adopted it could mean growth of 28,000 homes in Berkshire by 2026 including that proposed for the Blackwater Valley and Western Corridor; final approval of this plan is expected in spring 2008.

The move to partnership and economic team working in the LSC during 2006-7 saw enhanced working with SEEDA, Jobcentre plus, Business Link, economic and learning partnerships and Connexions, amongst others, as well as providers, to better align priorities and resources. This will be developed further in 2007-8.

⁵ Working Futures 2, 2005

⁶ Annual Business Inquiry 2004

⁷ Economic Changes facing the Thames Valley, Thames Valley Economic Partnership, 2006

Investing in Young People

Young people's participation in education and training has risen in Berkshire at a faster rate than the national improvement. 19,500⁸ learners were learning in Berkshire in further education (FE), school sixth forms, work based learning (WBL) and Entry to Employment (E2E), in 2005/06 compared to a planned 19,200. This represents a growth of 2.5% between 2004/05 and 2005/06 with rising figures in FE (8.2%⁹) and school sixth forms (1.7%). Overall participation changes differ from the region because participation in WBL has declined by 9% across the area, compared with 3% regionally. The overall Berkshire figure is expected to grow by a further 7.7% between 2005/06 and 2006/07 compared to a 3% increase planned regionally. Despite a decreasing population of young people across Berkshire, increases in participation should be expected as retention in programmes is improved and curricula and access are broadened. Progression opportunities will improve as the 14-19 diplomas and Foundation Learning Tier are implemented.¹⁰

Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) are now embedded across Berkshire. The pan Berkshire network continues to support the process and to raise awareness. Providers report that the transition from training allowances has worked well. In early 2007 actual take-up of EMAs against the projected take-up was 100% for 16 year-olds and 102% for 17 year-olds.

NEET figures in Berkshire remain a concern; latest data shows the area to be at the same level as the regional average. The Berkshire figure for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is 5.2%¹¹. Hotspots remain in Bracknell (5.7%) and Reading (6.4%). In addition, it is recognised that recent migrants are now employed in jobs that previously low and unqualified school leavers may have taken. Detailed analysis across Berkshire in 2006 of the characteristics of the NEET group (e.g. qualifications levels, young carers, areas of deprivation) has been shared widely and is leading to new local discussions about priorities.

Achievement at level 2 by the age of 16 is above the regional average. 60% achieve a level 2 at 16 and by 19 the figure is 81%. Young people's achievements at key stage 4, though high overall, remain variable. Data for 2006 for GCSEs at A*-C including English and Maths ranges from 47% in Reading to 55% in Slough and 58% in Wokingham. The national level stands at 46%. Level 2 achievement at 16¹² is almost 60%, above the regional average of 56%. Berkshire also shows very good progress between 16 and 19 for the same cohort so that 81% have reached level 2 by age 19 compared with the regional figure of 75%.

⁸ LSC Scorecard

⁹ Significant growth reflecting merger of Reading College with TVU

¹⁰ Information about FE and WBL success rates is in the Quality section

¹¹ Connexions, 2006

¹² Learning and labour market area profile – supplementary local data report – Berkshire LSC 2007

Achievement of level 3 at 19 is 55% - above the regional figure of 53% although this hides great variations. The average A-level points score per student stands at 722 ranging from 633 in Bracknell to 805 in Reading¹³. Average points score per exam entry for the LSC area is 206, the same figure as for the region, with a range from 192 for Bracknell compared to 222 for Reading.

The progression rate for the Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes in Berkshire has increased, and it is still higher than the national and regional rates. In 2005/06 E2E positive progression rates increased by three percentage points, from 51% to 54%¹⁴. It remains above the national and regional rates of 48% and 50% respectively. Start volumes remained at 2004/05 levels (c. 350). Further work within the Thames Valley including the development of the Foundation Learning Tier, exploring pre and post E2E provision and encouraging flexibility of recruitment and delivery will help address areas of weaker E2E performance.

A Berkshire wide 14-19 strategy is being taken forward by the six unitary authorities working together with the LSC. Local areas now have 14-19 strategies which are in line with Berkshire-wide priorities. These priorities include improving achievement at level 3, developing a wider and more vocational 14-19 curriculum, further increasing participation, preparing for the 14-19 diplomas and establishing strong collaborative activity.

LLDD provision has benefited from improved partnership arrangements and transition planning. Protocols to support multi-agency transition planning are in place which have resulted in more effective transition and support arrangements for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Three Action for Inclusion networks are in place in the Berkshire area to address gaps in provision. These networks, at present led by three FE providers aim to develop residential provision and to support learners on the autistic spectrum, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with mental health difficulties.

Outstanding Issues and Challenges

- There has been much progress in 14-19 strategy development and implementation in Berkshire. More attention is needed in 2007-8 to engage with a wider range of partners, maximising consistency across all areas, increasing provider collaboration and developing vocational provision.
- Levels of participation in learning are high. There is a need to continue to broaden the curriculum, including at pre level 1, improve retention and widen access throughout Berkshire to increase rates further.
- Participation in WBL is relatively low in Berkshire. There are a number of gaps in provision, both geographical and sectoral (including in customer service and

¹³ DfES Performance Tables 2006 – revised scoring system introduced in 2006

¹⁴ LSC performance data

land based provision) and a need for improved promotion of progression pathways.

- NEET volumes remain significant, especially in Reading, Slough and Bracknell. There needs to be more individualised and flexible provision relevant to the needs to these young people.
- Attainment of level 2 at 16 and progress by 19 is good. There is a need to ensure continued good progress focusing on geographic areas and groups which have, historically, achieved less well.
- Level 3 attainment at 19 is also strong. A continued focus on improving value added, especially in specific geographic and sector areas is needed.

Action for Young People

Regional Priority: To improve substantially the range and accessibility of practical and vocational learning opportunities for all young people which inspire and engage them and lead to progression.

Locally, we will boost performance against national targets by:

- a 2% increase in participation with a focus on priority learners to reduce the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET)
- increasing volumes of learning below Level 2 in every local area with particular attention to those areas with high numbers who are NEET
- a 2.5% increase in participation in Entry to Employment programmes whilst seeking to at least maintain current progression in rates (47%)
- increasing the numbers of young people participating in apprenticeships by 4.5%
- further improving Success Rates for Further Education and Apprenticeships.

[The percentages quoted are regional; local figures will not be available until local volumes in the Summary Statement of Activity have been confirmed]

Our Local Actions

1. Work in partnership with the six Berkshire unitary authorities to develop a range of progression routes which improve access and lead to higher achievement rates, with a particular focus on disadvantaged or vulnerable young people. This is to be developed through work with Children's Trusts, and Local Area Agreements (LAAs).
2. Work with partners through the six local 14-19 strategic groups to deliver the 14-19 entitlement by continuing the development of the Berkshire Area Wide prospectus, implementing the September Guarantee, developing local

strategies to deliver specialist diplomas and at least maintaining participation in KS4 vocational programmes.

3. Increase participation in learning by 2% with a particular focus on reducing the number of NEET young people from 5.2% (Nov 2006) to 4.9%¹⁵ (Nov 2007), including through supporting the development of pre and post E2E provision and increasing positive outcomes from E2E programmes.
4. Develop and implement a Thames Valley wide WBL strategy by September 2007 to increase participation and achievement. This will include developing new provision to ensure all WBL success rates are above minimum performance levels.

Investing in Skills

Berkshire's workforce has proportionately higher skill levels than regionally. 53% of working age residents in Berkshire are qualified to NVQ level 3 (above the South East proportion of 51%)¹⁶. 33% are qualified to level 4. However, 9% of the working age population have no qualifications (compared to 10% regionally) and this still accounts for 47,300 people. The most qualified workforce is in Wokingham where 60% of the working age population are qualified to NVQ level 3 and above and only 6% have no qualifications. Slough is the least qualified where 46% (36,300) people do not have a level 2 or above qualification¹⁷ compared with Wokingham at 25% (25,000).

Large numbers of adults, particularly in the urban areas of Slough and Reading require Skills for Life provision. In Berkshire there were an estimated 7% of adults with low level (defined as below a low level GCSE) literacy skills ranging from 17% in Slough to Wokingham with 4%. For numeracy skills the figure averages 40% for Berkshire (Slough at 61% and Wokingham at 23%)¹⁸. Performance against the Skills for Life PSA target has been strong in Berkshire and the proportion of Skills for Life learning which contributes to the national target has increased by 12% compared with the regional figure of 5.5%. The proportion of learners enrolling on target bearing provision is now 43% (44% in the region). There has, however, been a fall in the total number of learners contributing to the target over the last year.

Adult participation has shown strong growth in full level 2 and 3 provision. Overall adult (19+) participation grew between 2004/5 and 2005/6 by 5.4%, compared with a regional decrease of almost 19%¹⁹. FE increased by 9.1%, WBL grew by 5.6% and Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) declined by 1.0%. Level 2 participation in FE grew by 97%²⁰ against a regional

¹⁵ Subject to agreement with local authorities working with Connexions

¹⁶ Learning and labour market area profile – supplementary local data report – Berkshire LSC 2007

¹⁷ Annual Population Survey Jan – Dec 05

¹⁸ Skills for Life Survey 2003 – note survey subject to wide error margin

¹⁹ Note following TVU merger London learners were counted in 05/06 data

²⁰ Ibid

growth of 15% and level 3 participation grew by 70% in 2005/06. This means that 17% of adult learners in FE were undertaking a full level 2 or 3.

There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of FE provision that is target bearing and in high priority sectors. There has been a shift in the LSC's 'mix and balance of provision' from low sector priority, low target bearing provision (33% in 2004/5 to 24% 2005/6) to high sector priority, high target bearing provision (13% to 17%). Both changes are in line with those at a regional level²¹. The LSC office has undertaken internal analysis to determine which providers need to make further progress.

Vacancy, skills shortage and skills gap data for Berkshire provides intelligence as to where skills needs are most urgent. Within Berkshire, approximately 19% of the organisations surveyed in the 2005 National Employer and Skills Survey had vacancies - broadly similar to the South East. This equates to approximately 11,900 vacancies²². Around 45% of companies in Berkshire recruiting stated that they were having difficulty filling their vacancies. Both skills shortages (where insufficient skills are available externally to help businesses) and skill gaps (where there are gaps in the current workforce) provide information about where skills needs should be focused. Overall, 6% of companies surveyed were suffering from skills shortage vacancies, amounting to approximately 3,600 vacancies, about the same proportion as the regional average. The greatest skills shortages were reported to be among associate professionals and in the manufacturing and distribution and hotels sectors. Skills gaps were highest among managers, sales and customer service staff and administration and clerical staff and in the construction, distribution and hotels sectors. The number of existing employees in this sub-region who are not fully proficient in their roles was approximately 28,400. The greatest cause of skills gaps reported by employers in Berkshire was a lack of experience because individuals had been recently recruited into their role (76%). The other significant cause for skills gaps was staff lacking motivation (28%).

Providers have made good progress in improving their responsiveness to employer demand and improving opportunities to meet future skills needs. There are seven CoVEs in Berkshire covering a range of sectors and two FE providers have achieved the Action for Business (A4B) standard in recognition of their responsiveness and employer focussed approach and activities. The Employer Training Programme (ETP), which ran from 2004 to 2007, supported training for over 10,000 employees with a success rate of close to 80%. The lessons learned from ETP, including brokerage arrangements and the importance of embedding adult advice and Skills for Life, have informed A4B and other demand led initiatives. Particular recognition is given to the relative importance of delivering level 3 skills in the workplace. April 2007 will see the launch of the New Standard which will build on A4B and CoVE activity.

Building on the success of the Employer Training Programme in Berkshire, Train to Gain was launched in 2006. The Train to Gain service provides impartial, free skills advice to employers to up-skill their workforce. In addition to

²¹ LSC Scorecard

²² National Employer Skills Survey 2005

brokering training solutions for employers, the service can include free training for employees without a first full NVQ level 2. Within the Berkshire area there are two key locally contracted delivery partners: a consortia of six local FE providers and one private provider - delivering employer demand led training in the areas of care, engineering, ICT, retail, hospitality and for school support staff. Planned first year enrolments are over 1,200 level 2 and 250 Skills for Life by July 2007.

Involvement in local partnerships continues to be important to ensure the achievement of the LSC's adult targets. The Local Skills for Productivity Alliance has been re-established with a stronger focus and closer links with the Regional Skills Alliance and is being developed with Thames Valley Economic Partnership and other partners, including SEEDA. It will implement a delivery framework based on local needs from April 2007 which will determine the collaborative action between employers and partners necessary to better meet employer skills needs and to drive up demand for skills.

Outstanding Issues and Challenges

- Further progress is required to shift FE provision towards high skill priority, target bearing provision. The LSC has identified those providers where the most progress is needed. In addition, the proportion of FE learners undertaking a first full level 2, which has increased recently, needs to increase further whilst meeting local learner and employer needs.
- The skills profile of Slough and Reading residents is, relative to the average for Berkshire, lower skilled, with higher proportions unqualified or not qualified to level 2 or equivalent. This impacts on their ability to take full advantage of local job opportunities.
- Providers have made progress in moving Skills for Life provision towards qualification bearing provision and this shift needs to continue. In addition attention is needed to focus on ongoing Skills for Life needs, particularly numeracy skills, which remains a priority and are often concentrated in areas of deprivation.
- Skills shortage and skills gap intelligence indicate on-going skills gaps and shortages, especially in sales and customer services, associate professional occupations and in management skills and manufacturing and distribution sectors. Employers are increasingly requiring skills at level 3 and above where improvements in provider responsiveness are essential.
- Performance on Train to Gain requires continued attention and focus given the importance of raising level 2 skills for both the local and regional economy. The challenge will be to raise the volume of starts and to ensure learners achieve their qualifications in line with employer demand.

Action for Skills

Regional Priority: To improve skills training and employer engagement through implementing the South East Action for Business Strategy and further developing the responsiveness of the FE and work based learning provider network.

Locally, we will boost performance against national targets by:

- 80% of Skills for Life provision to be accredited through nationally recognised qualifications
- a 4.5% increase in target bearing Skills for Life provision
- colleges delivering adult provision will move towards a minimum of 20% of their adult allocation to supporting full level 2 provision
- delivery of level 2 for adults having a greater focus on delivering first full level 2s with particular increases in participation of those claiming benefits
- increasing employers' engagement in supporting learning and skills through Train to Gain with a particular focus on those employers who have not previously been engaged
- continuing to increase the proportion of adult funding being spent on priority provision
- increasing the numbers of people over 19 participating in Apprenticeships by 5% (Apprenticeships by 3%; Advanced Apprenticeships by 8%)
- improving provision and success rates in priority sectors with a particular focus on construction and the built environment

[The percentages quoted are regional; local figures will not be available until local volumes in the Summary Statement of Activity have been confirmed]

Our Local Actions

5. Identify and work with identified Berkshire providers which still need to make significant movement in rebalancing their provision in line with the regional provision mix so that there is a further three percentage point increase in proportion of provision which is in target bearing and in priority skill areas especially full level 2s.
6. Continue to address basic skills needs, increasing the volume of target related qualifications and further embedding Skills for Life delivery, including agreeing provider development plans to reflect the progress needed to ensure that 80% of Skills for Life enrolments are on approved qualification courses and working with Jobcentre Plus clients.
7. Increase the collaboration and responsiveness of providers to meet employer needs and to address skills gaps and shortages, in Berkshire, building on the networks of the two A4B colleges and seven CoVEs in the area. Support all providers engaging with the New Standard with the intention of improving their business-to-business capabilities with a particular focus on small and medium sized enterprises.

8. Increase the number of adults with a first full level 2 by improving the number of starts and achievements in line with the regional commissioning plan. This will be achieved through Train to Gain, Adult Learning Grant and IAG activity with a focus on strengthening consortia working and improving the effectiveness of local brokerage arrangements.
9. Pilot Adult Learner Accounts in the Reading “diamond for growth and investment” area to respond to demand for adults for full level 3 qualifications in line with local employer demand including technical, management and construction. In parallel, support activities to promote skills developments in Slough.
10. Maximise partnership working with employers and employer representative bodies to establish a range of coordinated initiatives which support employee upskilling, employer engagement and sector priorities, including through Local Area Agreements and the Berkshire Local Skills for Productivity Alliance.

Investing in Quality

Inspection data shows that all currently contracted FE, WBL and PCDL providers in Berkshire are judged to be at least satisfactory overall.

Inspection data shows that all currently contracted FE, WBL and PCDL providers in Berkshire are judged to be at least satisfactory overall. Two colleges are currently dealing with one ‘unsatisfactory’ learning area and analysis of the latest inspection round conducted by OFSTED and ALI reveals some instances of lower quality in relation to WBL delivered in an FE setting. Much of the provision across Berkshire remains ‘satisfactory’ and there is a need to move providers from this level to ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. This will be supported by further developing the LSC’s relationship with the Inspectorates. Support for Success consultancy has also been taken up to support a range of quality improvement activities over the last year and there is a need to establish a coherent and effective working relationship between the local LSC and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA).

Overall 16-18 FE success rates improved in 2005/6 and are moving closer to the regional figure²³. 16-18 success rates stand at 68%, an improvement of six percentage points compared with 2004/5. This is nine percentage points below the regional position, though this has reduced from twelve percentage points a year ago. Level 2 rates are 65%, two percentage points below the regional level.

16-18 Apprenticeship framework completion rates improved from 46% to 58% and are four percentage points above the regional position. Advanced Apprenticeships completion rates have improved from 24% in 2004/05 to 48% in 2005/06, one percentage point below the regional position. Apprenticeships at level 2 continue to exceed regional averages.

²³ LSC Scorecard

Adult FE success rates increased slightly especially at level 2. FE adult success rate in 2005/06 were 71% compared with 70% in 2004/05²⁴ (regional rate in 2005/06 was 74%). Full level 2 FE rates increased from 60% to 65%; this slightly exceeds the regional rate of 63%.

Adult Apprenticeship framework completions are above the regional level. Level 2 adult Apprenticeships improved from 53% to 59% and Advanced Apprenticeships also improved, from 43% to 54%. Both remain above regional averages of 55% and 48% respectively.

Improvement of success rates will be a priority for providers across all the sectors and will be led by the Framework for Excellence. The Framework for Excellence due to be implemented in 2008 will provide broad challenges to providers in developing effective and high quality provision which ensures that the LSC funds only effective provision which gives learners the opportunities they need to succeed. Success rates are currently highly variable across Berkshire and priority will be given to sectors such as 16-18 construction and adult ICT which are relatively weak.

The Berkshire value added project has contributed to raising quality so that since 2003 two thirds of all students taking level 3 courses have improved their performance by one grade for the same average GCSE points scores on entry. This means that some students who were missing out previously on higher education places are now getting in and has raised achievement and life chances. The LSC has focused upon brokering partnerships to ensure that best practice in the high performing providers is shared effectively to raise standards.

All Berkshire FE providers have identified infrastructure needs to improve their estate for future learner and employer needs. Proposals for capital developments range from complete rebuilds of whole colleges to specific improvements to a single site. Many colleges are incorporating additional or specific facilities/resources for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities in their latest accommodation strategies. Bracknell and Wokingham College has approval for a total college rebuild on the existing site to address the issue of its poor estate. In other situations colleges need to accommodate planned increases in learner numbers, such as at TVU in Reading. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is rebuilding a major community facility with funding from a number of agencies including the LSC. A number of school sixth forms also have capital developments in the pipeline. These are usually required to accommodate increases in learner numbers and a broader and more vocational curricula; they involve LSC, local authority and other partner support.

The LSC continues to promote the use of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMS) as set by the LSC at regional and local levels. Analysis of participation data shows that steady progress has been made in Berkshire reflecting the ethnic diversity of the area. Progress needs to be made on success rates for ethnic minority groups especially for adults – for instance success rates

²⁴ LSC Scorecard

for short courses currently stand at 73% for BME groups compared with 83% for the white population.

Outstanding Issues and Challenges

- Much provision in Berkshire remains satisfactory. New approaches, building on initiatives such as the Value Added project, need to be adopted to support providers in moving towards good and excellent provision.
- Adult success rates in FE need to increase further. Overall the focus needs to be on improving retention rates for long courses and achievement rates on short courses and overall success rates at both level 1 and entry courses.
- There are a significant number of major capital projects in the pipeline across the area. These need to be effectively coordinated and supported as part of the local LSC's local capital strategy.

Action for Excellence

Regional Priority: To raise performance and improve the quality of provision, using the Framework for Excellence, to further develop a self-critical provider network with a focus on quality improvement.

We will assure quality in Berkshire with a particular focus on:

- investing in and growing excellent provision and encouraging increased specialisation
- all providers delivering at least minimum levels of performance over the next two years
- increasing the proportion of good and excellent provision
- eradicating unsatisfactory provision by 2008
- increasing young people's FE success rate for full level 2 and full level 3 qualifications
- a 3 percentage point increase in framework completion rates for all Apprenticeship programmes, particularly for Advanced Apprenticeships
- all FE and WBL providers working towards a 5 percentage point improvement in adult full level 2 success rates
- identifying high quality alternative providers through applying the principles of competition to secure new provision

[The percentages quoted are regional; local figures will not be available until local volumes in the Summary Statement of Activity have been confirmed]

Our Local Actions

11. Work in partnership with QIA to develop a Thames Valley strategy by March 2008 to increase the proportion of providers who are 'good' or 'excellent'
12. Work with FE providers and schools through the Berkshire Value Added project, provider review and the developing Framework for Excellence process to identify and address areas of weakness in level 2 and 3 success rates and attainment, especially adult success rates in FE.
13. Apply national minimum levels of performance by implementing notices to improve for FE and re-contracting arrangements for WBL to address under performance wherever appropriate across the Berkshire area from April 2007.
14. In partnership with the regional office, pilot the Framework for Excellence with a pre-selected sample of Berkshire providers to produce a step change in self-regulation by providers prior to its full launch in 2008/9.
15. Encourage and develop new vocational providers into the market place by means of contestability, responding to local gaps and addressing local and regional priorities where provision is below minimum performance levels or is not meeting the needs of local learners.
16. Invest in the infrastructure of four FE Berkshire providers to rebuild and renew FE estate, especially to improve facilities for vocational provision and schools to enable them to respond to local growth and to broaden the curriculum. In addition continue to work on developing 14-19 vocational centres, such as Reading's two centres.

Investing in Communities

Berkshire on average is less deprived than the South East but this masks significant pockets of urban deprivation. There are 13 (out of 442) Super Output Areas (SOAs) that are in the 20% most deprived in England – all within Slough or Reading²⁵. Looking only at deprivation in terms of education, skills and training, there are 39 SOAs in the 20% most deprived - 24 in Slough, eight in Reading, three each in Bracknell and West Berkshire and one in Wokingham. Together, these account for 15% of the local population. Slough is ranked 129th (where 1 is the most deprived) out of the 354 local authorities in England whilst the least deprived district is Wokingham, ranked at 352nd²⁶.

A number of indicators point to Slough and Reading having particular skills needs. It is characterised as having a socially and ethnically diverse population, high unemployment rates and a concentration of deprived areas. The Skills for Life

²⁵ Indices of multiple deprivation

²⁶ Internal LSC analyses

Survey²⁷ estimated that Slough has one of the highest concentration of population with English as a second language at 27% within England. Slough also had the highest concentration of adults with basic skills needs in Berkshire, with an estimated 17% of the population with poor literacy skills and 61% of the population with poor numeracy skills. Reading's figures are at 15% and 45% respectively where particular skills needs often associated with relative deprivation are apparent.

A number of economic indicators point to a need to work in specific local areas to address inequality. Only 17% of working age people are economically inactive which is below the inactivity rate for the South East - Slough has the highest economic inactivity rate at 21% whilst Bracknell Forest had the lowest at 13%. The economically inactive is a diverse group including the early retired, students and sick or disabled people that vary in their closeness to the labour market. Of this group only 26% wanted a job which is similar to the regional figure. Unemployment for Berkshire stands at 1.5% or around 8,000 individuals – by rate it is highest in Slough at 2.9% compared to Wokingham at 0.7%²⁸. By duration of claim Berkshire has a lower proportion of short term claims, up to six months, compared to the South East (60% compared to 65%). The claim rate is higher for durations of six to twelve months (23%) and also higher for claims lasting longer than twelve months (18%) compared to the South East (19% and 16% respectively) indicating a particular problem with the long-term unemployment group.

A range of LSC programmes support community learning including PCDL and adult information, advice and guidance. In 2004/05 there were just over 19,000 learners on PCDL programmes. This was a reduction of 2% since 2003/04. 14% of learners are from minority ethnic groups, the highest representation of such learners in the South East²⁹. During 2006/07 there will be over 5,000 advice and 41,000 information sessions, with a strong focus on supporting those without a level 2. Findings of a national IAG review will be made public in March 2007 and this will steer future activity.

The LSC has worked with the six Local Area Agreements (LAAs) to ensure the inclusion of targets to support the LSC's aims and targets. West Berkshire and Wokingham are in the 2005 second round and Bracknell Forest, Slough, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading are in the third round. The LSC has worked with all six agreements to ensure relevance and compatibility to its skills agenda – for example NEET and adult learning participation and achievement at level 2.

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) within Berkshire continues to make a significant contribution to the needs of the most marginalised and hard to reach learners – both those living in areas of high deprivation and learners living within wealthier communities, but facing individual problems of access and exclusion. The development of VCS consortia remains important so that the sector can engage with LSC programmes such as Action for Communities

²⁷ Skills for Life Survey 2003

²⁸ NOMIS, 2007

²⁹ ILR, A03, 03/04 and 04/05

and wider non-LSC initiatives, including Change Up and local government tendering. Consortia are proven to provide more and better learning opportunities for both the public and their own staff; improve social inclusion; better influence local, regional and national government and to be able to compete more effectively for public funding. As a first step towards full consortia working, the LSC wishes to further develop Voluntary Sector based Learning Networks in each of its Partnership areas. Whilst serving the sector as a whole, networking activity will be particularly encouraged in the areas of greatest social need, including Reading and Slough.

Outstanding Issues and Challenges

- Deprivation analysis, especially considering education, skills and training indicators highlights particular, usually urban areas in need of basic and level 1 skills provision. In many areas there are a number of groups with specific needs e.g. Skills for Life (including ESOL) in Slough, offenders and those in rural parts of West Berkshire need tailored and flexible provision.
- Greater partnership working is needed to support those who are workless and who may face significant barriers to take advantage of the learning and employment opportunities in the area. Mainstream providers should be integrated into arrangements.
- A responsive learning infrastructure with strong links across partners, including the VCS, needs to be further developed to address the needs of those in the most deprived communities, especially in Reading and Slough.
- Those participating on personal and community based learning need clearer progression pathways into qualification based learning and employment, supported with effective IAG services. IAG provision will need to be re-shaped across Berkshire in line with recommendations from the National IAG review.
- Stronger local partnerships, developed especially through Local Area Agreements, are needed to better align priorities and resources. Responding to the 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' White Paper will provide new challenges for such partnerships.

Action for Communities

Regional Priority: To increase economic activity and productivity, and support the regeneration and growth of communities by developing the South East Action for Communities model and align the LSC's investment with that of others

We will work towards the regional priorities with a particular focus on:

- Increasing the proportion of learners from vulnerable groups engaged in Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL)

- Engaging economically underactive people who wish to develop their careers through Adult Learning Accounts and the adult level 2 entitlement
- Increasing quality and opportunities for offenders in custody and in the community
- Increasing outcomes and progression for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Increasing the resource allocated to priority skills in specified growth areas
- Increasing opportunities and support for those without basis skills and first level 2

Our Local Actions

17. Develop and implement Skills for Jobs to enable workless individuals, especially those socially disadvantaged and those needing updated skills, to benefit from tailored support and learning and gain employment. Build on the Thames Valley Area Programme and provide support for x individuals enabling y to move into sustainable employment.
18. Work with all six unitary authorities to ensure targets linked to LSC priorities are incorporated in the refresh elements of the Local Authority Agreements.
19. Support the development of a pan Berkshire approach to implementing the A4C strategy through the Laying the Foundations and pathfinder projects, ensuring that arrangements recognise diverse local needs, fully involve the VCS and establish a strong learning brokerage.
20. Develop PCDL partnerships in all unitary authority areas, ensuring that whilst maintaining current levels of funding, additional fee income is increased and priority is given to economically inactive and disadvantaged learners.
21. Establish a Thames Valley OLASS strategic partnership by April 2007 to provide strategic direction for the provision of learning for offenders in the community, taking account of local learning and support networks, including advice and guidance.

Aggregate Volumes

Summary Statement of Activity [All volumes are indicative]	Year 1	
	16-18 (Learner Volumes)	Adult (Learner Volumes)
LSC Funded Participation		
Number of FE learners (total)	[7,980]	[24,990]
Number of FE learners undertaking Level 4 and above		[1,050]
Number of FE learners undertaking Level 3	[4,880]	[5,210]
of which: Full Level 3 Learners	[3,620]	[2,600]
of which: First Full Level 3 Learners		
Number of Train to Gain learners undertaking Level 3		
Number of learners undertaking an Advanced Apprenticeship (Average in Learning)	[740]	[1,320]
Number of FE learners undertaking Level 2	[1,990]	[8,070]
of which: Full Level 2 Learners	[1,570]	[2,700]
of which: First Full Level 2 Learners		[1,080]
Number of Train to Gain learners undertaking Level 2		
Number of learners undertaking an Apprenticeship at Level 2 (Average in Learning)	[1,900]	[1,290]
Number of FE learners undertaking Skills for Life qualifications that directly contribute to PSA target	[2,860]	[3,430]
Number of Advanced Apprenticeships and Apprenticeship learners undertaking Skills for Life qualifications that directly contribute to PSA target	[1,430]	[1,350]
Number of Train to Gain learners undertaking Skills for Life qualifications that directly contribute to PSA target		
Number of FE learners undertaking Level 1 and Entry	[1,110]	[8,890]
Number of learners undertaking Entry to Employment (starts)	[880]	
Number of learners undertaking Safeguarded Adult Learning (Total)		[18,050]
of which: Number of learners undertaking Family learning, literacy and numeracy		[1,160]
of which: Number of learners undertaking Neighbourhood learning in deprived communities		[330]
of which: Number of learners undertaking Wider Family Learning		[1,280]
of which: Number of learners undertaking Personal / Leisure Learning		[15,280]
ESF Funded Participation	16-18 (Learner Volumes)	Adult (Learner Volumes)
Number of ESF Learners undertaking any ESF Activity		
Number of ESF Learners not included in LSC Funded Participation table above		
Of which:		
Level 4 and above		
Full Level 3		
Full Level 2		
Skills for life that directly contributes towards the PSA target		
Level 1 and Entry		
Other ESF activity		

LSC Funded Outcomes	16-18 (Learner achievements)	Adult (Learner achievements)	16-18 Success Rate (%)	Adult Success Rate (%)
Number of FE Learners achieving a Full Level 3 qualification	[2,420]	[1,270]		
Number of FE Learners achieving a First Full Level 3 qualification				
Number of Train to Gain learners achieving a Full Level 3				
Number of Learners achieving an Advanced Apprenticeship Framework	[150]	[320]		
Number of FE Learners achieving a Full Level 2 qualification	[950]	[1,540]		
Number of FE Learners achieving a First Full Level 2 qualification		[620]		
Number of Train to Gain Learners achieving a Full Level 2 qualification				
Number of Learners achieving an Apprenticeship Framework (at Level 2)	[750]	[600]		
Number of FE learners achieving a Skills for Life qualification (s) that directly contribute to PSA target	[1,710]	[1,910]		
Number of Advanced Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship learners achieving a Skills for Life qualification(s) that directly contribute to PSA target	[930]	[1,350]		
Number of Train to Gain learners achieving a Skills for Life qualification(s) that directly contribute to PSA target				
Number of learners progressing to a positive destination from Entry to Employment				
ESF Funded Outcomes				
Number of ESF Learners not included in LSC Funded Outcomes table above achieving a qualification at:				
Full Level 3				
Full Level 2				
Skills for life qualification that directly contributes to the PSA target				

Funding summary	Funding (£)
FE 16 - 18	
FE Adult	
FE Additional Learning Support	
Train to Gain	
Advanced Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships 16-18	
Advanced Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships (Adult)	
Entry to Employment	
WBL additional learner / learning support	
Safeguarded Adult Learning	
ESF	
Total	

Fee Income and Other Activity Summary	Fee Income (£)	% of LSC funded activity Fee Income	Number of Learners
LSC Funded provision			
Not publicly subsidised / full cost			

Other Information

Equality and Diversity

In all provision that we fund we aim to:

- promote equality of opportunity across six equality strands: race, disability, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.
- reduce gaps in participation and attainment by individuals from disadvantaged groups and for those in the most deprived localities within the region.
- utilise the capacity and expertise of the voluntary sector wherever possible.

The overarching aim as stated in the LSC's Equality and Diversity Strategy is to ensure the provision responds to all customers of education and training, driven by need. The LSC continues to promote the use of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMS) as set by the LSC at regional and local levels.

Information Sources

Local indicators relating to population and society can also be examined using the Audit Commission area profiles website at www.area-profiles.audit-commission.gov.uk

The latest Office for National Statistics Region in Figures for the South East was published for 2004/05 at the end of 2005. It can be accessed at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

The Government Office for the South East regional plan sets out a vision for the region from 2006-2026, focusing on housing, transport, economy and the environment. The plan provides a framework in which strategies can be developed for the region and can be accessed at <http://www.go-se.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/>, where information on the latest response to the plan can also be found.

The Government Office also has a role, on behalf of central government, in leading the discussions on Local Area Agreements. Further information on these can be found at <http://www.go-se.gov.uk/gose/localGovt/>. In addition to the Government Office, the South East England intelligence network also provides additional research and data that provide further context to this report and can be accessed at www.see-in.co.uk.

Statistical First Release:

[Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom 2006 \(Internet only\)](#)

Regional Economic Strategy:

<http://www.seeda.co.uk/res/>