



Leading learning and skills

Regional Strategy for the Older Workforce

ACTION PLAN

(Draft : 8th January 2007)

Regional Strategy for the Older Workforce (*individual strand*)

ACTION PLAN

Introduction

1. The Regional Skills for Productivity Alliance (RSPA) has endorsed a proposal to develop a Regional Strategy for the Older Workforce based on four strands of activity:

1. An **awareness raising/promotional** strand, to promote the value of older workers and of strategies for encouraging extending working life, especially by coordinating publicity activity among partners.
2. An **employer** strand, concerned with encouraging employers throughout the region to adopt better age management approaches, to disseminate good practice, and make better management of an ageing workforce something which employers seek to celebrate as part of their brand.
3. An **individual** strand, concerned with stimulating positive attitudes to work among older people (aged 45+), and securing appropriate training and guidance provision to support them.
4. An **organisational** strand of the major agencies, concerned to review and coordinate their policies and strategies, to feedback lessons to the relevant national agencies, to pool public resources where possible and to identify and facilitate public funding.

2. The LSC, as a key member of the Regional Skills for Productivity Alliance, has committed itself to support and contribute to the development of this strategy. It has agreed to **lead the individual strand of the strategy**, focusing on tailored information, advice and guidance, and on personalised training and development designed to enable older workers to remain in or to return to the workforce. **This document sets out the LSC's initial proposals for an Action Plan to implement this strand of the strategy.**

3. The LSC will also wish to **contribute to the other three strands of the strategy** and sees all four strands as mutually reinforcing.

Scale of challenge

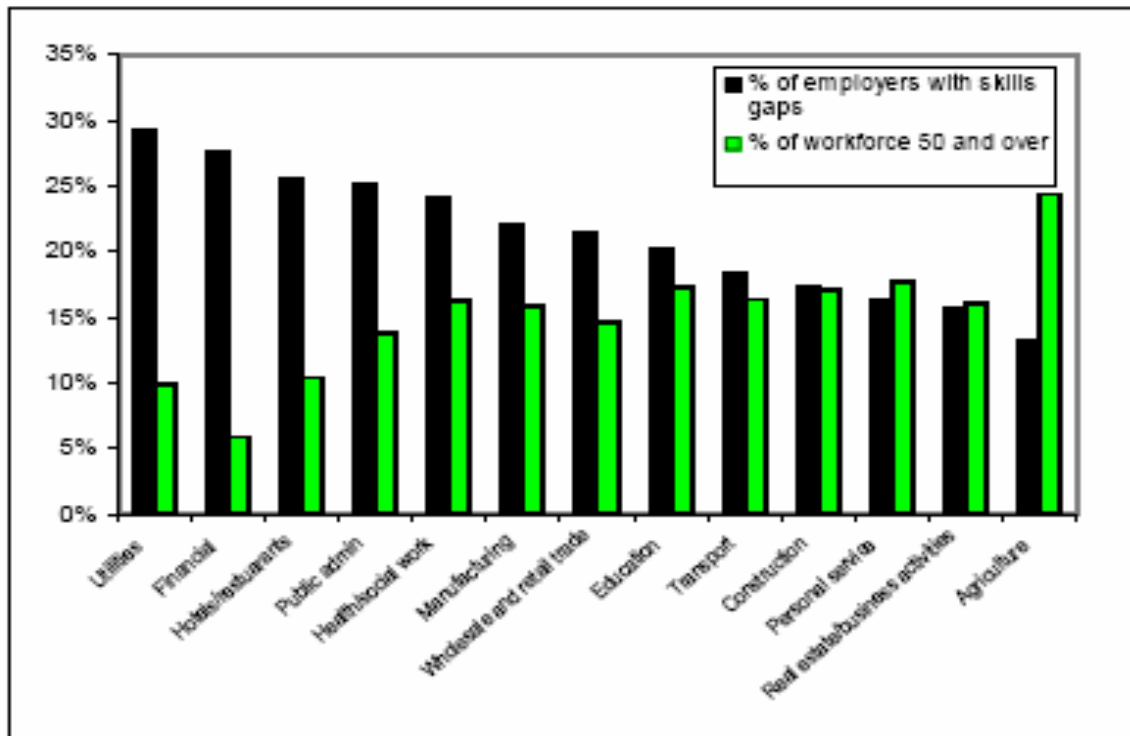
4. The Regional Economic Strategy notes that in 2007, for the first time, **more people will retire than enter the labour market from school and university**, and that from 2014 the gap will widen rapidly. It goes on to state that flexible opportunities will be necessary to retain the experience and expertise of older people in the workforce and that economic and demographic changes mean that we cannot afford to be complacent because, by 2007, the South East will have more adults of retirement age than children. It identifies the need to recognise and release the potential of older workers, for example through retraining and opportunities for more flexible working.

5. The South East Region's submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review said the following about demographic change: "If the region is to achieve its ambitious targets for employment and economic growth, and avoid problems of older-aged worklessness,

it will be essential that actions are taken now in order to **equip our middle-aged workforce to become an effective older-aged workforce**. This will require effective investment in work-based learning, as well as measures to change current attitudes amongst employees and employers alike to facilitate new ways of working”.

6. A report to SEEDA by the Centre for Research on the Older Workforce (CROW) estimates that **100,000 economically inactive older people in the region could be in work**, increasing the regional workforce by 2.5%. It suggests that this could be achieved if steps are taken to promote later working, to improve the management of older workers, to improve training, and to provide specific support with health, disability or caring problems.

7. The report also draws attention to the **relationship between current skills gaps and the age of the workforce in different sectors**, illustrating the potential for a sector based approach to making better use of older workers (see following graph):



IES 2003

Scope of Action Plan

8. The scale of the challenge means that this will need to be a long term strategy. Given current competing demands on LSC resources, it is likely to be largely dependent, at least initially, on tailoring existing provision. This might be supplemented through support from the European Social Fund but there are also substantial competing demands for ESF funding. The actions proposed in this document include the **tailoring**

of both mainstream and ESF-funded provision, as well as priorities for ESF funding for provision specifically for the older workforce if this becomes available.

Year 1 priorities

9. Although this will need to be a long-term strategy, the LSC has identified **four key areas in which it will want to make progress in 2007-08**. These relate to:

- age-proofed provision;
- ICT capability;
- information, advice and guidance; and
- skills development.

Actions to be taken forward in these areas are set out in **Table A** attached.

Areas for further exploration

10. The LSC has also identified a number of **other areas for further exploration** during year 1 which may have potential to support the **individual** strand and to be incorporated in the Action Plan in the longer term. These include establishing links with other strategies and programmes, particularly those for which Jobcentre Plus is responsible, and investigating the scope for adopting a sector-based approach as proposed by RSPA members. These areas for further exploration are set out in **Table B** attached.

Priorities for European funding (if available)

11. The RSPA, which will advise on the regional priorities for the 2007-13 European Social Fund programme, saw support for older workers as a “huge opportunity”, though clearly the needs of older workers will need to be balanced against other requirements. Priorities for ESF funding to support the **individual** strand of the strategy might be:

- **ICT skills** provision to increase the employability of those who need it and are least able to pay for it;
- sustaining current levels of **guidance provision** for older workers but on a more consistent basis across the region;
- a **joint development programme** for Next Steps and Voluntary & Community Sector staff;
- **skills development** to increase the employability of older workers least able to self-fund.

Risk management

12. There is a significant risk of raising excessive expectations about the scope of the strategy (against which there would have been a considerable reputational risk and lost opportunities from standing aside from it). This risk needs to be managed through **clear communication about the scope and funding context of the strategy** and by forming strategic funding alliances with other partners.

Regional Strategy for the Older Workforce (individual strand)

TABLE A PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR 2007

Goals & expected outcomes	Current actions & progress notes	LSC leads (and other contributors)	Options for possible future action
<p><u>Age-proofed provision</u> To achieve 45+ participation proportionate to demographic profile.</p>	<p>-Commission analysis of 45+ participation in LSC-funded programmes. -Check adequacy of E & D requirements for 2007-13 ESF programme. <u>Progress:</u></p>	<p>Sue Ormiston (Madeleine Watters)</p>	<p>-Consider need for age-proofing toolkit for LSC-funded programmes. -Consider including older workers as a priority group in planning different 2007-13 ESF programmes (eg for Learner Accounts).</p>
<p><u>ICT capability</u> To ensure accessibility for the potentially excluded with public funding for those least able to pay.</p>	<p>-Review availability, appropriateness and resourcing of existing ICT provision (eg via NCDL). <u>Progress:</u></p>	<p>David Wylie (Tish Mason)</p>	<p>-Consider need for additional 45+ ICT provision and potential funding sources.</p>
<p><u>Information, advice and guidance</u> To meet the needs of different 45+ client groups from a combination of statutory and voluntary sources.</p>	<p>-Provide briefing for IAG strategic boards and Next Step/VCS staff. -Review potential for strengthening Next Step/VCS joint working including possible sources of funding for joint staff development programme. -Investigate potential for 45+ element in Learner Account pilots. <u>Progress:</u></p>	<p>Tish Mason (Madeleine Watters Kevin Rennie, KPMG)</p>	<p>-Consider inclusion of specific requirements in 07/08 IAG contracts. -Consider scope to sustain current levels of European (Equal & ESF) funding for 45+ guidance. -Consider scope to fund Next Step/VCS joint staff development programme. -Consider inclusion of 45+ control group (non-Level 3?) in Learner Account pilots.</p>
<p><u>Skills development</u> To tailor provision to increase 45+ employability as cost-effectively as possible.</p>	<p>-Ensure strong focus on tailored provision in ReGROW project in both initial evaluation of existing provision and contracted-for activity. <u>Progress:</u></p>	<p>Sue Ormiston</p>	<p>-Review lessons from ReGROW project. -Consider potential for ESF funding support to increase employability of older workers least able to self-fund.</p>

Regional Strategy for the Older Workforce (individual strand)

TABLE B AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

Areas for exploration	Aspects to be explored and progress notes	Leads (and other contributors)	Options for possible future action
45+ opportunities in Skills for Life, Train to Gain and Level 2 programmes	Investigate need/potential to age-proof Skills for Life. Review effectiveness of Train to Gain provision for 45+ clients. Consider 45+ needs in developing Sussex Framework Trial. <u>Progress</u> Registered interest in Sussex trial.	Nick Wilson (David Wylie Jackie Parry/Penny Askew Aidan Pettitt)	Float at the Windsor Consultation the possibility of lifting the first level 2 eligibility requirement for Train to Gain 45+ clients.
Links with other strategies and programmes	Establish links with: -Jobcentre Plus programmes for IB and JSA clients. -Local Area Agreement older people strategies. -Union Learning Representatives. -Offenders Learning and Skills Service (OLASS). <u>Progress</u> Interest in developing links with JC+ programmes registered with Mandy Clements.	Nick Wilson (Sue Ormiston Matthew Croker Penny Askew Bryony Kingsland)	
Potential for sector-based approaches	Follow up on RSPA interest in sector-based approaches. <u>Progress</u> Agreement reached to: -Age-proof agreements with SSCs on sector specific Level 2s (ie aiming to achieve each sector's proportion of 45+ employees amongst trainees). -Have exploratory discussions as and when opportunities arise with eSkills UK, SkillsSmart, Financial Services, Summit Skills, and Skills for Logistics about the scope for retaining/recruiting older people through reskilling (with particular reference to tutors/trainers for the last two).	Jill Farrell (David Wylie (for eSkills UK)	
Teacher/trainer qualifications	Explore the scope flexing the requirements for 45+ people studying for teaching qualifications. <u>Progress</u> Possible contexts identified: -AoSEC work with Lifelong Learning UK on teacher qualifications. -Highbury College Initial Teaching Adult Learning and Skills (ITALS) pilot. -Training Pools proposal by <i>learnirect</i> for training of older construction tutors.	Nick Wilson (David Wylie)	

