

Learning and Skills Council Local Area Statement of Need

Gloucestershire & Wiltshire

2008/09

December 2007

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities
across the South West region.

Introduction

The South West Regional Commissioning Plan describes the key challenges we face across the South West region and sets out the actions we will take forward to address these. This local area statement of need should be considered alongside the Regional Commissioning Plan, as it outlines the local priorities for Gloucestershire and Wiltshire in relation to the challenges and issues identified for the region. The Plan and underpinning strategic analysis may be found on the LSC website at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/SouthWest/Aboutus/regionalannualplans/>.

In 2008/09 we will continue to build previous years' successes to deliver a responsive learning and skills sector which will deliver training that meets learner and employer needs, enabling local people to realise their full potential. We recognise the important leadership role of the LSC in delivering high quality learning opportunities that make a real difference locally.

We are fortunate to work in a part of the country that – as a whole – is economically prosperous with high levels of employment and inward investment although we cannot be complacent in tackling underlying and persistent issues. We will ensure that we have appropriate interventions in place that address local needs. We will do more to integrate employability skills with sustainable employment within overall workforce and economic development strategies. We will continue to implement the national programme of 14-19 reforms in the local context, with our partners, and in particular support local strategies to reduce the number of those not in education, employment or training. Our priorities are set out in more detail in the national Statement of Priorities, *Better skills, Better jobs, Better lives*.

Local Context

Strategic analysis has highlighted a number of key issues and challenges that persist in the combined area of Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire. In summary, key aspects are:

- The area's youth population is projected to decline in the medium-term future, with Swindon experiencing relatively fast decline whilst the adult working age population is expected to grow over the same period for most of the area.
- Gloucestershire & Wiltshire's economic activity rate is above the national and regional averages, with 83% of the working age population being active.
- An economic profile dominated by employment in: Manufacturing, Distribution (including retail), hotels & restaurants; Public Services and Financial Services. The proportion of reported skills gaps in the area is larger than the national average.
- A quarter of a million adults people not qualified to level 2¹, with concentrations of unqualified adults in particular areas
- 67,000 adults (approx 9% of the adult population) have literacy skills below level 1, and 123,000 adults (approx 17% of the adult population) have numeracy skills below entry level 3.

¹ Source: Annual Population Survey Dec. 2006, ONS © Crown Copyright

Challenges, key actions and measures of success for Gloucestershire and Wiltshire

Priority 1: Creating Demand for Skills

Challenges

- *Increase number of young people undertaking apprenticeships across the sub-area*
- *Increase participation of 17 year olds in education and training in all parts of the sub-region where participation at 17 is below national average*
- *Increase achievement at levels 2 and 3 at 19, particularly in Swindon where the achievement rate is below national average*
- *Work with LAs and other partners to build capacity and plan provision that will inform future commissioning and deliver the 2013 entitlement for 14-19 year olds*
- *Support partners in reducing the number of young people who are NEET*
- *Address the underlying deficit in functional literacy and numeracy*
- *Increase take up and delivery of adult full level 2 and level 3 qualifications*
- *Engage more employers in supporting development of their workforces and tackle the underlying skills deficit*

Key Actions

- Encourage employers to offer more apprenticeship places and work with LAA Partners to promote apprenticeships and other training within the public sector; introduce new providers into the market using OCT
- With Connexions, strengthen IAG for all learners, and encourage more participation post-17
- Review the 16-18 curriculum and promote learning from level1 to level
- Challenge the provider base, across all programme areas, to improve success rates
- Continue to implement the 14-19 reforms with partners
- Challenge the provider base to align delivery with the new Skills for Life measures of first level 1 (or above) literacy and first Entry level 3 (or above numeracy)
- Promote the integrated Train to Gain offer, including flexibilities, working closely with the brokerage service

Measures

- Increased numbers of young people participating in the apprenticeship programme
- Increasing proportion of the cohort remaining in learning at 17 and higher 16-18 participation overall
- Improvement in achievement rates
- Greater levels of partnership planning and delivery leading to improving assessment in the GOSW progress check
- Increasing levels of Skills for Life achievement
- Increasing take-up of learning opportunities by employers at all levels

Priority 2: Transforming FE

Challenges

- *Further build the capacity of FE colleges sector to generate fees*
- *Build the reputation of both colleges and training providers to meet the needs of employers*
- *Continue to replace and refurbish the FE estate*
- *Consolidate reorganisation of the Further Education sector in Wiltshire*

Key Actions

- Challenge FE colleges to diversify funding sources and maximise ability to generate income from existing and new demand for learning
- Encourage take-up of the New standard and prepare providers for introduction of the Framework for Excellence
- Support the merged college in Wiltshire and strengthen FE capacity in that area

Measures

- Increase in provider financial independence
- Growing number of providers undertaking assessment against the New Standard
- Planned capital project applications approved by the regional board and long term provision plans and contingent accommodation and funding strategies
- Growing participation in FE in Wiltshire

Priority 3: Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives

Challenges

- *Inclusion in learning of those at most disadvantage and support progress into employment*
- *Integrate skills training with job opportunities for the target group*
- *Secure sufficient and appropriate provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities*

Key actions

- Target those groups at most disadvantaged in the local labour market – Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and disadvantaged wards/communities in the sub-area as defined in the LAAs and promote the targeted learning offer, such as Skills for Jobs, for this group
- Align priority actions with strategic partners and plan future requirements the sub-area; safeguard ESOL provision and learning within the Foundation Learning Tier
- Maintain levels of provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities

Measures

- Increased up take of the individual and employer offer
- Sufficient provision to meet the needs of the most vulnerable learners.

Partnership Working

The Area and Partnership Teams have strong and effective relationships with the three Local Authorities (LAs) in the Area. We participate at a strategic, executive and operational level, to ensure that young people and adults have access to a wide range of education and training opportunities that meet their personal learning needs and the economic needs of the community.

The LSC works closely with the Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire LAs in the context of 14-19 development and reforms, taking a leadership role in the **Children and Young People Strategic Partnerships** and the **14-19 Strategy Groups**. We work collaboratively with the Connexions service to fulfil the requirements of the September Guarantee.

Local partnerships also support our drive to increase the skills of local people, to help them secure sustainable employment in both Wiltshire and Gloucestershire and benefit from significant economic development activity being planned across the area. Working closely with partners we will seek to develop new markets for LSC programmes, particularly Train to Gain, the Skills Pledge and localised initiatives such as successful Park LIFE Business Parks service and the 'Swindon Exchange' group.

In Gloucestershire, we will work through key partnership structures including the **Community Strategy Executive Board**: the coordinating body of the County LAA. We will also explore the potential of creating a Public Service Employment Partnership, which can tackle the long-standing skills and employment challenges faced in what is the largest economic sector within Gloucestershire. **Gloucestershire First** is recognised by the RDA as the County's Strategic Economic Partnership and has a key role in co-ordinating the County's approach to working with private sector employers in Gloucestershire.

In Wiltshire we will work with the **Wiltshire Strategic Board** and its Executive Group and also support the agenda of the **Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership**. These provide the forums for agreeing the LAA priorities and therefore aligning LSC priorities. The Employment and skills group focuses specifically on fulfilling the combined needs of employers in the county.

The **Swindon Partnership Board** leads on the overall strategy for Swindon and the final determination of the LAA targets. The **Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership** and the **Employment and Skills Board** support the work of this overarching group. We will work with partners to establish a public sector compact that will drive up skills levels across the public sector and provide an exemplar of employer engagement.

Across the sub-area we will work with **Jobcentre Plus**. We will build on our joint planning arrangements to co-ordinate our approach to tackle worklessness and low skills issues across the area. In particular, we will align ESF, Deprived Area Funds, Pathways and Neighbourhood Learning Funds to support the implementation of sub-area initiatives such as the Gloucester City Employment Plan, which focuses on linking local people in inner Gloucester to the new employment opportunities being brought forward by the Urban Regeneration Company.