

# **Learning for Living and Work South West Regional Strategy for 2007- 2010**

Improving Education and Training Opportunities for  
People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

# The South West Regional Strategy for LSC funded provision: 2006/07 to 2009/10

## Background

In 2006, the LSC/DfES published a review of 'arrangements for and access to education and training for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in 'Through Inclusion to Excellence'. The LSC has published a response to the review in the form of a national strategy set out in Learning for Living and Work<sup>1</sup>. The ambition in the national strategy will be delivered through national and local partnerships of stakeholders and providers.

## The South West Regional LLDD Strategy

In 'Learning for Living and Work' the LSC set out to achieve the following key themes:

- increased access to high quality provision;
- improvements in the quality of teaching and learning;
- increased participation in learning;
- increased economic participation;
- increased social inclusion, and;
- increased levels of attainment, both in terms of progression and qualifications.

The LSC cannot deliver this strategy alone. As Children's Services develop<sup>2</sup>, there will be a need to increase local joint strategic commissioning, planning and aligning of resources. The needs of the young person will therefore be met, through multi-agency collaboration. The role of the LSC will be one of contributor to that 'package', that is, providing post 16-learning, whilst other agencies contribute other elements of the package, for example care and housing. In purchasing provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the LSC wishes to adopt a similar approach, working with amongst others local authority adult social services, Primary Care Trusts and Jobcentre Plus. Local Learning Disability Partnership Boards will play a valuable role in brokering a joint commissioning approach for adults.

The role of LSC Partnership Teams is key to the successful delivery of the Strategy. From 2007 onwards it is vital that in each local area there exist the appropriate strategic relationships with providers and partners in order to:

- align commissioning and funding priorities with Children's and Young Peoples Services to deliver collaborative plans for improvement.
- maximize opportunities for capital collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> Learning for Living and Work: Improving Education and Training Opportunities for People with Learning Difficulties and /or Disabilities. The LSC national strategy for learners with learning difficulties and /or disabilities across the FE system 2006/07 to 2009/10.

<sup>2</sup> The Children's Act 2004.

- secure effective delivery of Information, Advice and Guidance at entry and during progression in learning.
- require providers to ensure their Strategic Plans improve participation and progression.
- set Equality and Diversity Impact Measure targets.

The FE White Paper Further Education: '*Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*' (March 2006) set out the government's commitment to develop a new approach to funding for 14-19 year olds. The recently published consultation paper from DfES and LSC<sup>3</sup> seeks views on the proposals to reform the delivery of the adult skills, employer training and provision for young people.

These outcomes will be delivered across four headline themes. Each of these is set out below, describing the national and regional context, and the partner relationships critical to delivery.

### **The South West Regional Review of LLDD**

The LSC in the South West commissioned a study by the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) in autumn 2006 to inform a new strategy for the region. LSN reported on the study in November 2006. The main findings and recommendations were:

1. There has been a significant increase in demand for provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities across the South West region.
2. The proportion of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities is increasing when compared to all learners.
3. Research shows that people with learning difficulties and disabilities experience higher levels of disadvantage<sup>4</sup> in the South West than elsewhere in the country. The most over represented *Mosaic* Groups for these types of learners are those from the more deprived areas of Groups G *Municipal Dependency* and Group F *Welfare Borderline*. That is, where only 2.5% and 1.9% of the general population are in Groups G and F, the distribution for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is 6.0% and 3.5%. This is much higher than expected and raises questions as to why these learners tend to come from more socially deprived backgrounds.

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<sup>3</sup> Delivering World-class Skills in a Demand-led System. January 2007

<sup>4</sup> Using Mosaic profiling

**Table 1:** Profile of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in South West compared to the general population, 2005/06

Ranked Mosaic Lifestyle Group	SEN / LLDD population	%	15+ population	%	Pen. %	Index
G Municipal Dependency	4,113	5.97	104,840	2.51	3.92	238
F Welfare Borderline	2,420	3.51	80,722	1.93	3.00	182
H Blue Collar Enterprise	11,087	16.10	389,010	9.30	2.85	173
D Ties of Community	12,030	17.47	583,434	13.95	2.06	125
I Twilight Subsistence	1,715	2.49	105,229	2.52	1.63	99
B Happy Families	7,983	11.59	527,489	12.61	1.51	92
C Suburban Comfort	8,823	12.81	673,218	16.10	1.31	80
K Rural Isolation	6,961	10.11	552,663	13.22	1.26	77
J Grey Perspectives	7,843	11.39	634,506	15.17	1.24	75
E Urban Intelligence	2,650	3.85	220,110	5.26	1.20	73
A Symbols of Success	3,225	4.68	310,808	7.43	1.04	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,850</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4,182,029</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1.65</b>	<b>100</b>

4. The demand from learners with high support needs is also increasing and there are gaps in provision for learners with:
  - autistic spectrum disorders
  - profound and complex learning difficulties
  - complex emotional and behavioural difficulties, and
  - adult learners.
5. There appear to be many plans, but no clear regional strategy to meet the changing trends. It is not clear how, or if, regionally-based national specialist college provision is systematically taken into account in the planning of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities throughout the region.
6. The establishment of a regional strategy group is suggested as a way forward to inform regional planning and to articulate a shared vision for shaping future provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
7. There are potential benefits to be gained from looking closely at the increase in learners being funded at specialist colleges and examining whether there might be more effective and innovative ways of supporting these learners in day-time, local provision, utilising the specialist resource.
8. There are examples of excellent practice, although overall the quality of provision is variable in the region.

9. Stakeholders felt that far more professional development was required to ensure that specialist staff were able to cater for the increased number of learners with more complex needs.
10. Inter-agency working is seen as essential to supporting the holistic needs of this group of learners, particularly those with high support needs, and this requires active representation and involvement from LSC.
11. There are examples of effective progression and innovative supported employment schemes but these are the exception and generally, there is a lack of effective progression routes from post school learning and lack of support into employment.

These findings have been taken into account in setting up the key actions that will be achieved through the regional strategy.

More background to the findings in the LSN study are included in annex 1.

## 1. Planning

### National Priority

Demand is fundamental to our planning and commissioning activities. As part of each region's work, assessments will be carried out to identify regional gaps in provision.

### Regional context

Supporting Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities to develop skills which help them progress to further learning and employment remains key. In 2005/06 the participation for Learners with Learning Disabilities and/or Disabilities on Work Based Learning programmes was 7.4%<sup>5</sup>. 18.4% of the South West population of working age has a disability.<sup>6</sup>

### Key Partners

Working with Children's Trusts and Connexions to ensure regional and local priorities are embedded within Children and Young People's Plans, Local Area Agreements and other local strategies and plans will be critical.

It is vital that the LSC and its partners have a comprehensive understanding of the demand for post 16 learning, on which commissioning decisions regarding priorities can be based.

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<sup>5</sup> Annual Population Survey 2005-2006

<sup>6</sup> SW Equality and Diversity Impact Measures 2007/08

However, there exists fractured and limited information about the learning and skills needs of young people. Additionally, the volume of partner agencies that hold information regarding people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, coupled with the significant differences in data collection specifications/learner definitions all contribute to the complexity of the analysis task.

The commissioning of a fit for purpose Strategic Analysis of demand becomes an urgent priority area of work for the LSC to address with its partners early in 2007 in order to:

- identify the information and data requirements across the region in regard to young people and adults in order to provide an accurate description of the demand for learning across the 14 – 19, 19 – 25, and 25+ age groups;
- create and integrate data from Jobcentre Plus, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP);
- agree at a regional and local area level the scope and timing of the data/information exchange process with partners;
- led by LSC local area teams; establish processes in each area to exchange data between the LSC and partners in Children’s and Young People’s Services/Connexions and Adult Social Services;
- embed the information and data outcomes within the LSC and partner strategic commissioning and business cycles.

**Key action:** The LSC will commission a regional review of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the South West Region. This will give a detailed analysis of the demand for Post 16 Learning and Skills provision by *September 2007*.

## 2. Quality of provision

### National Priority

Raise the quality and improve the choice of learning opportunities for all adults to equip them with the skills for employment, further or higher learning, and for wider social and community engagement.

### Regional context

The LSC study indicates that over the past few years there has been a significant increase in demand for provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities across the South West region. There have been large increases in the numbers of these learners, although there are variations between sectors and local LSC areas.

- there were 71,679 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the South West in 2004/05<sup>7</sup>;
- this is an overall increase from 66,800 to 71,679 learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (2002/03 to 2004/05);
- the biggest increase was in FE colleges of 15.6% (from 42,522 to 49,173);
- at the same time there was a drop in Work Based Learning from 4,393 to 2,756.

### Key Partners

The LSC will work with Children's Trusts and Connexions to ensure regional and local priorities are embedded within Children and Young People's Plans, Local Area Agreements and other local strategies and plans. It is important to recognise that the majority of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can, and should have their education and training needs met within the general post 16 further education system.

The LSC will invest in high quality and innovative provision that supports individuals entering education and training to improve their lives, strengthen their career opportunities, and develop their self confidence and/or the ability to live independently. Gaps in local/regional provision will be addressed. The LSC will commission a range of high quality education and training opportunities which secures successful progression for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable with other groups of people, and will:

- secure learning and progression for learners aged 16 – 24 years of age which recognises that learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may take longer to achieve qualifications, skills and adult status than their peers;
- enable learners aged 25 years and over to return to learning progression opportunities at key points in their lives;
- build upon and expand existing high quality provision;
- support the development of new provision that responds to learner demand, and gaps in provision.

Sharing effective practice across the FE system and partners (from schools to adult and third sector services) is an important enabler in the development of innovative collaborative provision. Specialist College membership in the Regional Quality Improvement Partnership has been secured as an important step forward in ensuring that the quality improvement strategies are inclusive<sup>8</sup>.

In 2007/08 the LSC will further develop the Peer Referencing Network with partners to include specialist and mainstream providers of LLDD to:

- use the huge expertise within specialist colleges across all provision;
- benchmark provision and identify appropriate performance indicators;

<sup>7</sup> Recorded in ILR and PLASC data

<sup>8</sup> South West Regional Quality Strategy 2007/08

- inform the development of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs) for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities<sup>9</sup>;
- improve quality assurance of provision including self assessment and action planning;
- using Provider self assessment and inspection reports to identify the professional development needs of staff, and work with agencies to deliver that training.

### Key action:

1. By September 2008 refocus 'work preparation' and 'Independent Living Skills' Programmes into models of supported employment/social enterprise with clear exit times linked to progression opportunities.
2. Work is being undertaken to develop criteria under which providers can be formally awarded Centre of Excellence status for provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The first provider will be awarded this Centre of Excellence status by December 2008.
3. By September 2009 ensure that clear, flexible, learner centred learning pathways are embedded within all Level 2 and Level 3 provision, in individual providers and/or in collaboration, in order to increase inclusive participation, achievement and progression into employment.
4. Make available a range of Continuous Professional Development opportunities/resources in the region to support the national objective of developing a fully qualified workforce by 2010.
5. Eliminate poor, unnecessary and duplicated provision by September 2008.

## 3. Employment and partnership working

### National Priority

Raise the skills of the nation, giving employers and individuals the skills they need to improve productivity, employability and social cohesion.

### Regional context

The Government wishes to reduce the number of incapacity benefits claimants by one million and to increase by one million the number of workers aged 50+

<sup>9</sup> South West Equality and Diversity Strategy 2007/08

within ten years<sup>10</sup>. With 40% of Incapacity Benefit claimants lacking any qualifications, training is likely to be needed to enable many of these claimants and older workers to find and maintain employment.

Twenty nine per cent of all incapacity benefits claimants in the South West are males aged 50 years or older, compared with 17% that are females aged 50 or older. These are very similar to the national proportions. Females account for 41% of all incapacity benefit claimants in the region and, of these, 45% are aged 30-49 years, again, in line with national proportions.

Partnerships of specialist and mainstream providers are needed to improve access and choice for young people and adults with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities. There should be a greater focus on developing skills for independence and employability, in partnership with other agencies and in response to the recommendations in the South West Regional Review.

Stakeholders need to work with partners to link employability training to the workplace. Learning should focus on priority sectors at the appropriate occupational level. It will also enable progression towards Level 2 vocational awards and Skills for Life qualifications at or above entry Level 3, where this meets the individual's needs and abilities<sup>11</sup>

The LSC will encourage the development of personalised provision which is appropriate to the particular strengths of the learner and adheres to the principles of "Access for All"<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work, Department of Work and Pensions, January 2006

<sup>11</sup> Links to LSC Regional Skills Strategy

<sup>12</sup> Valuing People: a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st century: implementation guidance Department of Health, 2001

## Key actions

1. In 2007 the South West LSC will establish a wider Stakeholder group to monitor and evaluate progress in delivering the strategy and to help shape future development within scope of this group will be specialisms which have been identified as gaps in local provision these include:
  - learners with Profound and/or Complex Physical and Sensory needs;
  - learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, including Asperger Syndrome;
  - learners with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties;
  - mental Health needs;
  - adult learners.
2. Continue to work with colleges to use Additional Learning Support (ALS) to improve provision for LLDD learners who do not choose residential colleges. Changes expected to ALS process after consultation carried out.

## Key Partners

Establishing learner orientated partnerships to implement these priorities is key; especially through strong links with the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and Action for Communities regional networks. These partnerships will include colleges, other providers, Jobcentre Plus, the third sector and local authorities.

## 4. Investing in the learning environment

### National Priority

Raise our contribution to economic development locally and regionally through partnership working.

### National context

In order to align curriculum and capital strategy, providers will be required to revisit and review their accommodation plans. Research<sup>13</sup> revealed concerns about the availability and fitness-for-purpose of the physical infrastructure available to some providers in meeting learners' requirements. Some providers indicated their limited capacity to extend or develop new facilities because of the unsuitable nature of existing buildings. Provider sites need to have had full access audits carried out

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<sup>13</sup> LSN South West regional review of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or Disabilities

and plans in place to improve accessibility. This is necessary to ensure that learners with physical or sensory disabilities are not denied access when alternative arrangements and adaptations could be made. Similarly capital development plans for providers need close scrutiny to ensure they meet the needs of learners with the range of learning difficulties and disabilities that the provider may be expected to support. LSC Partnership Managers will also need to be alert to all these quality issues when reviewing provider development plans.

### **Regional context**

To transform the provider infrastructure through review, collaboration, improved organisation and capital investment and to implement the LSC Regional Capital Strategy to deliver:

- the right facilities in the right place through coordinated planning of capital and curriculum;
- a balanced economic, social and environmental sustainability;
- to ensure that provision is developed, through collaboration or structural changes, so that all young people can access a broad and varied curriculum, delivered in a range of settings; that offers dynamic, flexible and high quality learning and pathways to progression.

*For the LSC to realise its vision to becoming an international exemplar in Post 16 provision it is committed to ensure that all learners learn in modern fit for purpose facilities. The LSC's Regional Capital Strategy and Local Area Capital Plans are to include proposals between the FE system (inclusive of specialist mainstream education and training providers) and Local Authorities.*

### **Key Partners**

LSC providers, Partnership Teams, Local Authorities, Connexions, Children's Trusts.

### **In 2007/2008**

The LSC has identified funding, 'Investment for Change' to support the implementation of the regional strategy. Stakeholder partnerships will use the funding to develop and test new models of provision, which will be maintained by programme funding.

## Key actions

All new capital proposals should:

- consider the delivery of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities not only in terms of access but also in the design of the learning environment and the provision of specialist learning resources;
- consider the co-location of providers/provision including opportunities for joint capital developments with partners;
- identify any opportunities with partners for the provision of semi independent living accommodation which would also operate as a teaching/learning facility, as part of a regional response to improve the successful transition of learners into their communities;
- the LSC in the South West will identify opportunities to build on existing high quality provision which could become Centres of Excellence for 16 – 24 year old learners and that link specialist provision and expertise with mainstream vocational and academic learning in order to:
  - promote innovation and cross sector/partner working;
  - improve progression in learning, into work and local communities;
  - build expert capacity in learning support across the FE system;
  - provide a focus and facilities for professional development;
  - share and transfer effective practice;
  - provide expert support to employers.

## Implementing the South West Strategy

The implementation will be informed and steered through the Provider networks convened in the North and South of the region and include a mix of specialist and general further education providers. Through increasingly close links with local authorities and children's Trusts in these networks, implementation will closely align with the agenda of local 14-19 partnerships and through Local Area Agreements.

## Annex 1

### Current and future demand

The main demand features observed from students with SEN or learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in FE or WBL across the South West are (Figure 1):

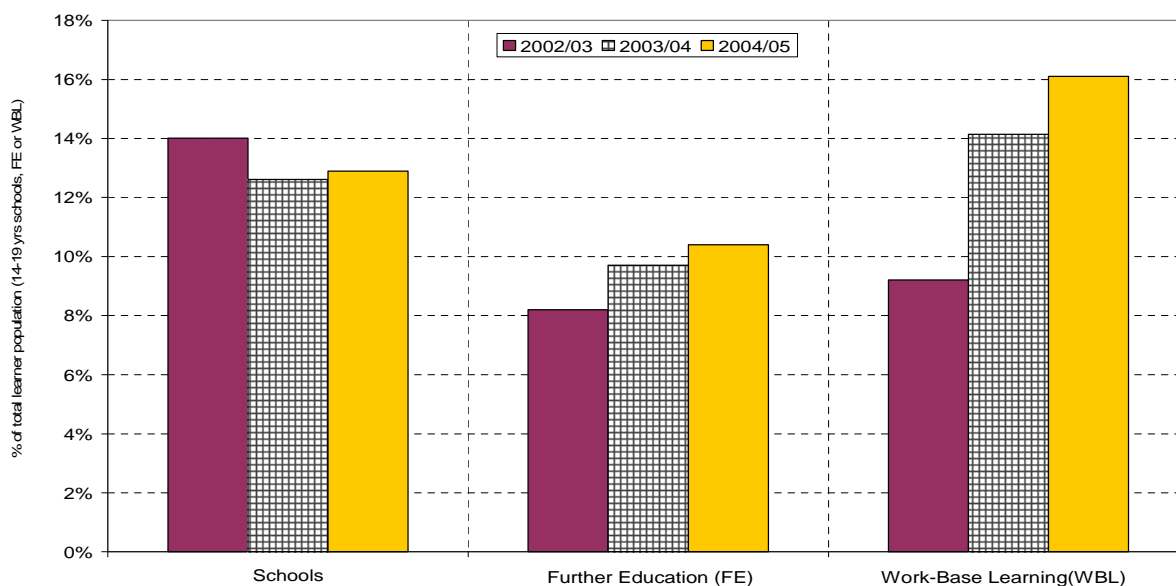
- in 2004/05, the South West hosted 19,750 14–19 year olds with SEN.<sup>14</sup> This is equivalent to 12.9% of the total 14–19 year old student population in the region;

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<sup>14</sup> PLASC and ILR analysis, LSN South West regional review of provision for learners with learning difficulties and /or disabilities

- overall, the South West region has a lower proportion of 14–19 year olds with SEN (12.9% in 2004/05) than the national average (14.7% for the same year);
- the regional trend shows a fall in the number of students with SEN in the South West between 2002/03 and 2004/05 of 0.8%, compared with a rise in the national figure of 7.1% over the same period;
- the overall percentage of FE learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the South West is 10.4% for 2004/05 (49,173 learners). This is slightly higher than the national average of 9.1% for the same year;
- between 2002/03 and 2004/05 the number of FE learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the South West increased by 15.64%, while the national increase was only 7.9%;
- it appears that the South West region as a whole is experiencing significant increases in demand by these learners which could raise significant issues for future provision and adequately meeting the growing needs of learners;
- there has been an increase in the proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities compared to the mainstream WBL population over the three years and by 2004/05, 16.1% of WBL learners had learning difficulties and/or disabilities compared to a national average of 11.9%.

**Table 2:** Percentage of 14–19 year old students with SEN and learners of all ages with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in FE or WBL - South West Region. <sup>15</sup>



### National Data on Learning Difficulty/Learning Disability

In 2001 the Government set out its plans and vision for those with learning disabilities in the White Paper *Valuing People*<sup>16</sup>. This defined learning disability as including the presence of:

- a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with;
- a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning);
- which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.

In terms of expected changes, the number of people with severe learning disabilities is expected to increase by 1% per annum over the next 10 years. This increase is due to:

1. Increased life expectancy, especially among people with Down's syndrome;
2. Growing numbers of children and young people with complex and multiple disabilities who now survive into adulthood;

<sup>15</sup> South West regional review of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

<sup>16</sup> Government White Paper Valuing People.

3. A sharp rise in the reported numbers of school age children with autistic spectrum disorders, some of whom will have learning disabilities;
4. Greater prevalence among some minority ethnic populations of South Asian origin.

## Appendix 2

LSC regional Partnership Networks for the implementation of South West LLDD Strategy.

These two college networks represent initial meetings and it is expected that the membership will change as the strategy is developed.

### Northern Hub

Chaired by Principal of the National Star College

#### College

City of Bath College

Cirencester College

City of Bristol College

Fairfield Opportunity Farm

Farleigh College, Frome

Filton College

Orchard Trust

#### College

New College

Norton Radstock College

Royal Forest of Dean College

Ruskin Mill College

Hartpury College

Gloscat

#### College

Salisbury College

St Brendan's Sixth Form College

Stroud College

Swindon College

Weston College

William Morris Camphill Community

Wiltshire College

### Southern Hub

Chaired by Principal of the West of England College

#### College

The West of England College

Oakwood Court College

Royal West of England College

Lufton Manor College

East Devon College

Dame Hannah Rogers

#### College

National Star College

Foxes Academy

Somerset College of Art and Technology

Yeovil College

Bicton College

St Loye's Foundation

South Devon College  
St Loye's Foundation

Action for Blind People  
Exeter College

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