

Learning and Skills Council Area Statement of Need

West of England

2008/09

December 2007

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

Introduction

This document sets out the economic, educational and skills profile of the West of England and the priorities for developing 14-19 learning in the area and meeting the skill needs of adults and employers. It also explains the key actions that will be necessary to deliver on those priorities and how the LSC will work in close collaboration with key partners.

The West of England is relatively prosperous, but it is also an area of unfilled potential with some communities affected by social and economic deprivation. While it enjoys significant inward investment and economic growth, too many firms and organisations lack the skills needed to make the most of their business opportunities and to deliver first class services. While it has many highly qualified and skilled people, too many residents lack the qualifications and skills to benefit fully from the relative prosperity around them. Partly as a result there are significant pockets of unemployment and economic inactivity amongst the working age population. And, while participation and achievement have been rising, too many young people are still not achieving their full potential.

Economic, Educational and Skills Profile

Economy Average earnings are higher than many other areas of the country. The proportion of the working age population in employment is also higher than for the region and England as a whole. These averages, however, conceal significant differences within the area. Eleven wards (parts of inner Bristol, some of the City's outlying council estates, and Central and South wards in Weston-super-Mare) are amongst the country's 10% most deprived areas. Even though the average employment rate is high, there are still 116 thousand people of working age who do not have a job of whom 40 thousand are on benefit.

People The West of England has the highest concentration of population in the South West; just over one million people live in the area. As in other areas of the country, the age balance of the population is projected to change, with a declining youth population being more than offset by rising numbers of older adults. The area has the highest non white population in the region (5.2%). It has also attracted significant numbers of immigrants from EU accession and other countries and, while the numbers now resident in the area are uncertain, there is evidence of more children with English as a first language requirement in Bristol schools.

14-19 Learning Across the West of England as a whole the proportion of young people achieving 5 GCSEs A*-C (and equivalent) has been rising over several years. This year there has also been a significant rise in attainment in Bristol where there has been most need to improve standards though provisional results show a drop for South Gloucestershire and Bath and Northeast Somerset.. Nevertheless, there is much further work to do to raise attainment at 16 and to raise the numbers of young people continuing on in learning to age 17 and 18. While the percentage of 16 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) is below the national average, there were still 1,693 young people in that situation in West of England September 2007, many living in the more deprived wards of the area. In addition, the destinations of 1,341 of young people after reaching age 16 were 'not known'. Across the area 79% of young people are known to be still in learning at age 17, significantly short of the government's aspiration of 86%% by 2011.

The decline in the 16-18 population across the area over the period to 2013 is difficult to predict precisely, in part because of the unknown impact of new housing developments and immigration into the area. On the basis of central government projections the decline is expected to be most marked in Bristol and less so in the other local authorities within the area. The extent to which rising participation rates will offset the demographic trend is also uncertain, particularly in terms of the impact on numbers of learners in education and training in individual years. But, it seems reasonably clear that in many localities within the West of

England the total numbers in education and training will be at best only rising moderately and in some cases will be falling.

Employment and Skills A key distinguishing feature of employment in the West of England is the significantly larger share of jobs accounted for by finance and business services than in the rest of the South West and, even to a small extent, England as a whole. In total over a half of all jobs are in public services or finance and business services.

The industrial structure is reflected in the occupational mix of employment, with the West of England having proportionately more managerial, administrative and technical jobs than in the South West as a whole, and fewer skilled manual and low skilled jobs. However, this picture is to some extent misleading in terms of where new job opportunities arise each year in the West of England. As in other areas of the country, those industries and occupations in which there is higher than average labour turnover generate a disproportionate share of new job openings. Thus substantial job openings are generated in the retail sector, in personal services and in hotels and restaurants. Also, growth in the construction industry and the relatively high value added nature of the remaining manufacturing industry in the area, combined with an ageing workforce, mean that there is strategically important, if not always high volume, demand for engineering and construction skills.

The skills levels of the area's working population are polarised. Consistent with the relatively high proportion of jobs in administrative, managerial and professional occupations, a higher proportion of the working age population in the area is qualified to level 3 and above compared to the South West region as a whole. Much of this reflects a relatively high proportion of the population with graduate level qualifications, due in part to retention in the area of graduates from the four local universities. However, the area also has 174 thousand people who do not have a qualification at level 2 or above with a further 100 thousand whose highest qualification is at level 2. Also the area has a relatively high number of adults who lack basic skills; 178,000 adults have literacy skills that are below level 1. In addition it is estimated that the area has at least 17,000 resident adults for whom English is not a first language; recent immigration means this may now be a substantial under-estimate.

Challenges, key actions and measures of success

14-19

Key national targets for participation and achievement are:

- **86% of 17 year olds participating in education and work-based learning by 2011;**
- **82% of young people achieving Level 2 at 19 by 2011;**
- **54% of young people achieving Level 3 at 19 by 2011.**

In 2005/06, 79% of 17 year olds in the West of England were in education and training. For 2008/09 our aim is to raise participation to 84%. In 2005/06, 73% of 19 year olds had achieved a qualification at or above level 2 and 49% had achieved a qualification at level 3 or higher. For 2008/9 our aim is to have 78% of young people achieving level 2 or higher and 52% achieving level 3 or higher.

Key actions that we will undertake to ensure progress towards these targets are as follows:

- **Reduce the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are NEET to 4% from around 6%.** We aim to achieve this reduction by (i) working with the Connexions Service to be even more effective in delivering the guarantee that all 16 and 17 year olds are made a suitable offer of education and training, and (ii) by developing progression pathways in the Foundation Learning Tier – see below ;

- **Increase the proportion of young people completing an Apprenticeship.** We will continue to build on the success of Apprenticeships on line in improving the matching of young people to apprenticeship places. We will increase the quality and number of available apprenticeships by tendering for new provision and by increasing the number of Programme Led Apprenticeships. We will aim to increase the proportion of trainees completing their training successfully from 59% in 2005/06 to 62% in 2008/09;
- **Develop the new Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) in the area to improve participation and progression.** At present we are working with providers and partners to identify and fill gaps in provision at level 1 and below. Our aim is to have in place by 2008/09 a comprehensive Foundation Learning Tier offer for the area that meets the different needs of students, including learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, and which identifies clear pathways for progression. We also intend that the FLT offer will include provision presently described as pre E2E which helps young people to develop their social and self management skills prior to continuing with more formal learning;
- **Build capacity in schools and colleges to deliver high quality work related learning and the new Specialist Diplomas.** We have begun work with partners in Bristol on a new project to develop the capacity of schools to deliver high quality work-related learning. We will work with partners to extend this approach to other areas of the West of England. This, together with our work with local authorities to develop the capacity of 14-19 partnerships, will contribute to ensuring that schools and colleges in the area make good progress toward being able to deliver the full range of Specialist Diplomas.

Adult Skills

Key national targets are:

- **89% of adults to have achieved at least Level 1 literacy by 2011;**
- **81% to have achieved at least Entry Level 3 Numeracy by 2011;**
- **79% of working age adults to have at least level 2 qualifications by 2011;**
- **56% of working age adults to have at least Level 3 qualifications by 2011.**

In 2005/06 69% of adults in the West of England were qualified to at least level 2. The proportion qualified to at least level 3 was 52%. No up-to-date estimate is available of the proportions of adults without Level 1 literacy and Entry Level 3 Numeracy skills, but college enrolments suggest continuing strong demand from adults for entry level literacy and numeracy courses including ESOL. Our aims for 2008/9 are that (i) the proportion of adults qualified to at least level 2 will have risen further towards the national target, and (ii) that more adults needing to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills will have progressed to the higher levels of competence. Key actions we will undertake to ensure progress towards these targets are as follows:

- **Support colleges in focusing more of their adult provision on adults needing full level 2 and full level 3 programmes and those needing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.** There are significant challenges for colleges in continuing to shift the balance of their provision. We will continue to work with them to identify ways in which changes can be made most effectively including supporting new ways of working with other providers.
- **Maintain LSC spend on ESOL at 2007/8 projected levels and target ESOL provision at the most disadvantaged learners in settled and migrant immigrant**

communities. In 2006/07, 4,221 adults participated in ESOL provision; 2,109 contributed to the Skills for Life target. In 2008/09 we plan to maintain current levels of ESOL provision and spending, and work with providers to target disadvantaged communities. We will also support the use of ESOL for Work qualifications, including their use in Train to Gain.

- **Support the diversity of adult learning and progression routes for adult learners by developing the new Foundation Learning Tier for Adults and maintain the Personal Community Development Learning Safeguard.** In 2006/07 there were 4,236 learners undertaking PCDL and we plan to raise that number in 2008/09 through improved engagement services involving local authorities and colleges. We will work with colleges and other providers to develop a full Foundation Learning Tier offer that identifies clear pathways for progression. And we also plan to integrate First Steps learning into the Foundation Learning Tier;
- **Expand the take up of training under the Train to Gain Service including the number of apprenticeships available for adults.** In 2006/07 Train to Gain participation in the West of England was substantially below target. For 2008/09 we plan to recover performance and to increase Skills for Life provision within Train to Gain. We are bringing in additional resources to develop provider capacity, providing additional funding for providers who are performing well and are tendering for new providers.

In addition we will continue to work to strengthen the link between adult education and training and employment and ensure people from disadvantaged areas and communities benefit as fully as possible from local education and training services.

Key actions that we will undertake to achieve this aim are as follows:

- **Strengthening our engagement with local employers and developing joint investment strategies with key public sector employers.** 20 employers have taken the Skills Pledge so far in the West of England and we will work with employers to expand take up. We will take forward discussion with the local authorities in the area and with the NHS trusts as to how we can work together to expand opportunities for workforce development;
- **Support the development of the strand of the proposed multi area agreement for the West of England covering employment and skills.** We have supported work to achieve the skills and employment targets in the current local area agreements and look forward to the new Multi Area Agreement as a means for further strengthening collaborative working across the West of England;
- **Continue working with key partners to develop the West at Work Project and the West at Work Board.** We are working toward delivery of a 'recruit and train' offer for employers coming into the new Cabot Circus development in Bristol with the intention of helping them to widen recruitment to ensure all people in the local community are able to benefit from the new employment opportunities;
- **Work closely with partners to ensure the new IAG service for adults can be delivered effectively in the West of England.** We will build on our review of Community Learning Services and Adult Careers Service pilot work undertaken in 2007/8 to further embed IAG into our adult PCDL and FE provision, and work with Jobcentre Plus to target IAG services to those not in work.

Quality, Equality and Diversity

Key aims and targets for the further improvement in the quality of learning and for ensuring equality and diversity are:

- to improve overall FE success rate to a minimum of 80% by 2011;
- all provider Self Assessments submitted by December 2008 to reflect the requirements of the Framework for Excellence; and
- protect opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities/

Key actions that we will undertake are as follows:

- **Raising student success rates.** Our overall FE success rate for 2005/6 was 75% compared to 76% for the SW region. For 2008/09 we aim to achieve 78% and be in-line with the regional average and with the South West Quality Framework milestones for 2007/10. We are implementing an area quality improvement plan based on supporting and challenging providers, and we are not re-contracting for provision which falls below the Minimum Levels of Performance;
- **Supporting Framework for Excellence and the new Employer Standard.** At present, two West of England providers are piloting Framework for Excellence measures and processes. During 2008/09 we will work with all providers to ensure they are making full use of the Framework. We will also work with colleges and other providers to ensure as many as possible are able to make quick progress toward achieving the new Employer Standard;
- **Protecting LLDD provision.** In 2005/06, 3,422 adult learners declared themselves to have a learning difficulty or disability. For 2008/09 we plan to at least maintain provision at its current level.

Partnership Working

We are committed to continuing to working in partnership with local authorities other public service agencies, the third sector and with employers to ensure a joined-up approach across the West of England to the 14-19 phase of learning, adult skills and employment and to the broader economic development agenda. Key areas of collaboration are as follows:

- **14-19** We are working closely with the four local authorities and Connexions to implement 14-19 Reforms. We continue to be actively involved in Children's Trusts, 14-19 Strategic Groups and area partnerships. We are planning strategically with local authorities and Connexions and using pooled resources to build capacity in the local area partnerships;
- **Employment and Skills** We continue to play an active part in strengthening collaboration among public sector agencies (including Jobcentre Plus, SWRDA, Connexions, Business West, local authorities, the West of England Partnership), to achieve greater joining up of services for skills and employment. Most recently we have worked closely with partners to establish the West at Work Board with an independent chair from the local employer community. The overall objective of the Board is to support the development of the local economy by reducing worklessness and increasing competitiveness.
- **Local and Multi Area Agreements** We continue to work with the four local authorities to ensure that LAAs and the proposed MAA contain appropriate targets for post-16 education and training, including workforce development.