

SW Regional Skills Action Plan 2007-2010

Learning and Skills Council

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Leading learning and skills

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Foreword

I am delighted to present our first Regional Skills Action Plan which scopes skills activity across the SW region to 2010. The challenge of addressing the UK's long standing skills deficit is currently receiving much attention. This Action Plan will help us to focus on our own SW regional skills priorities.

Since we started to write this plan, the long-awaited Leitch Report has been published. I am pleased that it builds on our achievements and the direction that we have mapped out for the skills agenda. We are already moving towards a more demand led approach; this will give individuals and employers the power to chose, and empower the best of providers to engage more learners and employers.

We can now begin to think about and discuss the Leitch recommendations and engage with partners and stakeholders on the way forward. 2007 promises to be a busy year as we and our partners consider how to tackle these long term skills challenges.

In the meanwhile we have some detailed plans for 2007/08, which support our Public Service Agreement targets (PSA) and prioritise the delivery of full level 2 qualifications, Train to Gain and Apprenticeships.

I look forward to working closely with partners and stakeholders across the region to continue to improve our skills base and to make a difference to the opportunities available to our people and the productivity of our businesses.

Malcolm Gillespie
Regional Director South West

Executive Summary

This South West Regional Skills Action Plan aims to influence the mix and balance of skills provision across the region from 2007. It informs the LSC's Regional Commissioning Plan, which will define our funding allocation in 2007/08. The impact of this Skills Action Plan will be reviewed regularly and it will be revised as the skills agenda develops.

This Action Plan sits alongside key national policy documents such as the National Skills Strategy and the LSC Annual Statement of Priorities 2007/08; at a regional level it sets out the LSC's contribution to the Regional Skills Strategy which supports the South West Regional Development Agency's (RDA) Regional Economic Strategy.

We have made considerable progress since 2001 but there is more to do. The LSC needs to gear up its contribution to the Adult level 2 Public Service Agreement (PSA) target and ensure that partner agendas can support this, so that the South West workforce possesses the basic platform for employability and competitiveness that a level 2 qualification represents.

Our Strategic Analysis in 2006 has raised a number of challenges, particularly for our work with employers and on behalf of individuals. In order to tackle these challenges we need to develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West. In this Skills Action Plan, we are committing resources to:

- Increasing our capacity to work with employers by more than doubling the size of the Train to Gain service
- Engaging new, hard-to-reach small to medium size employers through brokerage, including the self-employed that have been identified as a regional priority
- Working much more effectively with sectors and prioritising our resources to ensure a better fit of our investment with identified need
- Developing vocational excellence
- Implementing a 'New Standard' to signify responsive and excellent provision and enabling employers to see where they should place their training and education business.

We also need to develop the skills of the South West workforce to enable them to contribute to the economy by:

- Engaging new learners whose current attainment is below level 2
- Retaining the momentum of achievements within Skills for Life and increasing the achievement of employability skills through improved participation and success rates
- Targeting funding on individuals with the greatest need and supporting achievement
- Improving progression routes throughout all levels of provision.

We need to create a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led and:

- Encourages providers to engage in regular dialogue with employers
- Provides an improved Information, Advice and Guidance service that is accessible and offers information linked to jobs, qualifications and training

- Encourages investment in high quality premises, including Skills Academies and Specialist Networks that attract new employer business

We also need to maximise the benefits of partnership working to:

- Align skills within all elements of Local Area Agreements and prepare for multi-area planning and greater local accountability
- Tackle the 'worklessness' agenda

This first Regional Skills Action Plan in the South West sets out how we intend to tackle these critical challenges in both the coming year (2007-08) and in the medium term to 2010. We have put together a demanding and broad ranging set of objectives and measures and anticipate that the plan will equip partners and stakeholders with the information needed to maximise the effect of their contribution to the skills agenda in the South West, alongside that of the South West LSC.

1. Introduction

“We are ambitious on behalf of learners and employers. While we must pay strong heed to other partners and stakeholders, above all we must speak up boldly for employers and learners, as it is our job to commit public investment on their behalf.”
Mark Haysom, Our Annual Statement of Priorities 2007/08

This South West Regional Skills Action Plan is the first of its type from the new South West LSC. It is an early attempt to focus on skills needs and to start to shape the mix and balance of demand led skills provision across the region.

We will continue to refine our understanding of skills demands. This plan has drawn heavily on the LSC South West Strategic Analysis 2006 which has been based on published labour market information, LSC management information and survey work. From 2007, we intend to make greater use of demand information from sources “on the ground” such as Brokers and Sector Skills Councils.

This Regional Skills Action Plan underpins the South West Regional Skills Strategy shared by all partners. We have consulted with key partner organisations on the content of the plan and expect it to be used by Partners and Providers as a guide to relevant skills activity.

We will use this Action Plan to inform the LSC Regional Commissioning Plan for 2007/08, which will influence the LSC allocations process. As we move forward, the content of the Action Plan will be subject to review and it will be used by the LSC to review South West performance.

The Skills Agenda is dynamic and needs to take into account new developments. The final Report of the Leitch Review of Skills, December 2006 is likely to have a significant impact on our work over the next few years. Lord Leitch has set us the challenge of achieving world class skills. His vision includes a system that is simplified, empowered and responsive to learner and employer demands for the skills they need to succeed in life and in business. His Report also advocates the closer alignment of employers with the skills agenda.

We are also awaiting the outcomes of the National review of Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) report, expected at the end of January 2007, which is likely to prompt changes across the region.

This Action Plan is clearly focused on both improving productivity and social inclusion through skills acquisition. As such, our skills activity will be underpinned throughout by equality and diversity principles so that we ensure that disadvantaged groups benefit from our work.

In the following sections of the document, we have set out our priorities, key actions, success measures for 2007/08 and key points are summarised for the Regional Commissioning Plan. This is supported by an overview of context, national and regional drivers, progress to date and regional targets, key challenges and how we intend to respond. We have decided to place the Action Plan, as the business input to the plan, at the front of the document, so that it is given early consideration.

2. SW Regional Skills Action Plan 2007/08

Note: all numbers in the plan need to be confirmed

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West		
Train to Gain		
Responsive provision	<p>Develop and deliver responsive provision for first full level 2 and level 3 (as appropriate)</p> <p>Ensure that 'embedded' support is provided and is effective for the 70% of participants with poor Skills for Life not funded for discrete support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of level 2 learner starts – 27,472 (financial year) 28,260 (academic year) • First full level 2 achievements - 19,810 (financial year) 20,857 (academic year) • Flexible provision which meets the needs of LSC priority sectors and priority qualifications • Support is provided to all undertaking their first level 2, whose literacy level is below level1
Brokerage – Employer Engagement	<p>Engage with hard-to-reach employers, including the self-employed that have been identified as a regional priority, and encourage access for employees/self-employed to a range of learning and development</p> <p>Improve awareness of employers on the benefits of investing in skills development through the Skills Brokers networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the absolute number of employers formally engaged in the brokerage service • Of which 57% are hard-to-reach employers • Flexible and responsive provision available to meet employer needs • Leadership and Management and Investors in People offered as part of the flexible solutions to employers

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West		
Brokerage development	<p>Continue to develop in Business Link and other Brokers an awareness of understanding of the individual, company and training issues associated with Skills for Life (SfL)</p> <p>Continue to develop the overall continuous professional development of skills brokers to enable them to have the wide understanding and skills to offer quality delivery in Train to Gain</p> <p>Continue support for the integrated brokerage model in the South West region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brokers aware of issues and funding routes • Support mechanism identified for all employees guided to training where they present literacy, numeracy or ESOL needs • 90% customer satisfaction rating for brokerage service • 100% achievement of Broker Standard for all Skills Brokers • Delivery of specialist training modules to support brokers in specialist areas such as SfL, HE, IAG etc • Integration of LSC funded skills brokerage with South West RDA funded business brokerage
Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	Support the development of IAG services to meet the needs of employers engaged in Train to Gain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an absolute increase in providers achieving Matrix Standard • There is an absolute increase in learners who successfully complete first full level 2 qualifications
Investors in People (IiP)	Engage in marketing/promotion and engagement of employers in IiP (through Train to Gain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure formal employer commitments to work towards the National Standard • Increase the number of organisations achieving Investor in People recognition status
Skills for Life (SfL)	Continue to raise awareness in employers through wider brokerage development and activities such as 'Test the Company'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 employers in priority sectors agree to development

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West		
Embedded Functional Skills	Ensure that all workplace skills development is sensitive to the need to develop those literacy or numeracy skills essential to effective learning at an appropriate level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major employers embrace a holistic approach embedding SfL in their training policies
Sectors		
Self-Employed and Sole Traders	Test full level 2 delivery/assessment for self-employed taxi drivers and self-employed and sole traders in Construction sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 125 level 2 qualifications
Social Care	<p>Jointly fund Care Development Worker posts in Dorset and West of England</p> <p>Progress the alignment of funding to the emerging preferred qualifications for this sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Ambassadors project in place Recruitment initiatives in place National Minimum data set available Provider and employer conferences held Local projects in place to support Skills for Care Shift of provision and funding
ICT, Telecoms and contact centres (e-skills)	<p>Progress the alignment of funding to agreed priority qualifications for IT users and Telecoms professionals</p> <p>Fund Information Technology Qualifications (ITQ) as the preferred IT users qualification including planned contributing units from other qualifications</p> <p>Promote and support the establishment of computer clubs for girls, particularly in relation to 14-19 developments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63,000 ITQ achieved by 2008 overall including LSC contribution Funding for IT users qualifications – move towards contributory qualifications i.e. ITQ 483 Computer Clubs for Girls by 2008
Audio Visual and Media (Skillset)	Continue to provide funding for qualifications accredited by agreed awarding bodies and agreed new qualifications that fill gaps in current provision and prepare entrants to the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift of provision and funding to qualifications by agreed awarding bodies and provider capacity to deliver new National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ)

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West		
Construction (ConstructionSkills)	<p>Divert funding from level 1 programmes to support preferred qualifications at level 2 and 3 to meet licensing requirement for the sector</p> <p>Increase recruitment of adult workers 19+</p> <p>Increase provision to contribute to projected 10% growth in workforce, in identified sub sectors where there is the greatest need, to meet local requirements</p> <p>Increase delivery using the On Site Assessment and Training (OSAT) model</p> <p>Support the ongoing establishment of the National Skills Academy for Construction and delivery of project based training centres on major construction sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On target towards 3,500 additional level 2 qualifications by 2010 to achieve 100% qualified workforce • 798 employed Apprentices recruited • 120 programme led Apprenticeships • Improving Apprenticeship Framework completion rates • Increasing the number of females from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME) apprentices recruited • Increasing numbers of female BME adults recruited • Stimulate 15% growth in qualifications through OSAT method of delivery to respond to industry demand
Science, Manufacturing and Engineering (SEMTA)	<p>Redirecting of funding from NVQs in Performing Manufacturing Operations (PMO) to Business Improvement Techniques (BIT)</p> <p>Progress the re-alignment of provision and funding to agreed preferred qualifications</p> <p>Subsume the National Automotive Academy in Swindon with a National Skills Academy – manufacturing possibly in Taunton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% shift from 2005 baseline in level 2 and 3 BIT qualifications in 2007/08 • Increased productivity arising from significant numbers upskilled • Increasing provider capacity to deliver NVQ in BIT • Spoke of the National Skills Academy – Manufacturing established in the region by April 2007

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West		
Logistics (Skills for Logistics)	<p>Support the development and implementation of a regional delivery framework to build capacity and capability and improve the standard and accessibility of training provision</p> <p>Progress the alignment of funding to the emerging preferred qualifications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established entry and accredited progression routes for young people to counter ageing workforce profile • More diverse workforce • Preferred qualifications established – NVQ 2 in Driving Goods Vehicles and SfL • Shift of provision and funding
Health (Skills for Health)	<p>Collaborative working with the emerging Regional Strategic Health Authority to identify and prioritise skills requirements leading to a planned response including arrangements for joint funding and fit for purpose, efficient delivery models</p> <p>Prioritise funding and development capacity to support skills for new role linked to reform and modernisation of the NHS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexible delivery arrangements – increasing levels of workplace place delivery • Delivery of contextualised Skills for Health provision linked to NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework • Partnership commissioning arrangements and direct contracts/funding to NHS organisations and new multi-professional deaneries
Land-based (LANTRA)	<p>Progress the alignment of funding with preferred level 2 qualifications pending development and accreditation of more flexible competency based qualifications framework</p> <p>Work with LANTRA to develop and agree regional implementation of the Sector Skills Agreement, in particular, arrangements for the delivery of low volume, highly specialised provision</p> <p>Joint working to improve the relevance and use of regional supply and demand data to support planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognised and agreed competency framework linked to specialist and effective delivery arrangements • Increasing numbers of Apprenticeships for adults • Plans to penetrate the market take into account the large number of migrant workers, volunteers and micro/sole traders

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West		
Textiles and Footwear (Skillfast-UK)	<p>Progress the alignment of provision and funding with agreed preferred qualifications to support technical skills at craft and technician level to meet local employer needs</p> <p>Work with Skillfast-UK to develop and agree regional implementation of the Sector Skills Agreement, in particular, arrangements for the delivery of provision to support recruitment demand in textiles and leather goods industries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved capacity to flexibly deliver relevant unitised level 2 qualifications e.g. Business Improvement Techniques and ICT • Establishment of 'Skills HQ' (academy) model based on a group of employers working in partnership with FE college(s)
Sport & Recreation, Health & Fitness (SkillsActive)	<p>Progress the alignment of provision and funding with preferred NQF qualifications to support staff training at levels 2 and 3</p> <p>Work with SkillsActive to develop and agree regional implementation of the Sector Skills Agreement, in particular, arrangements for building assessor capacity, improving the quality and range of work-based provision, supporting improved recruitment/retention, professionalising the workforce and better matching supply to demand including unit based qualifications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional recognition for Playwork sub sector underpinned by appropriate qualifications and training capacity • Full advantage taken of opportunities Olympics sailing events in Weymouth present for sustainable upskilling • Improved capacity to flexibly deliver relevant unitised qualifications
Nuclear, Oil, Gas, Petroleum and Polymers (COGENT)	<p>Work with COGENT to develop and agree regional implementation of Sector Skills Agreement, in particular, provision to support nuclear decommissioning activities including a Bridgwater based 'CoVE/Academy'</p> <p>Joint working to improve understanding of the demand side including specific skills requirements linked to nuclear decommissioning and scoping the chemical manufacturing sector within the region and likely skills requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academy/CoVE established to support nuclear decommissioning
All Sectors	<p>Progress the alignment of funding to emerging preferred qualifications for the sectors e.g. Skills for Care and GoSkills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift of provision and funding

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West		
Further Education (FE) Success Rates	<p>Improve FE success rates for Retail sector, through the introduction of minimum performance levels</p> <p>Improve 'long course' success rates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matches national average • Matches national average
14-19 Specialised Diplomas	<p>Provide demand information so that diplomas can be aligned to economic need</p> <p>Develop effective collaboration between organisations involved in introducing Specialised Diplomas</p> <p>Engage CoVES and developing Specialist Networks in development</p> <p>Ensure there are pathways to Higher Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All elements included in 14-19 Strategies including relevant vocational opportunities in line with skills priorities
Apprenticeships	<p>Develop the new entitlement and ensure that sectoral need is reflected in plans</p> <p>Introduce Apprenticeships for Adults aged 25+</p> <p>Improve Apprenticeship Frameworks completion rates and, in particular, Engineering, Construction and ICT at level 3 and improve Framework completions for some ethnic groups</p> <p>Address gender stereotyping in Apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3</p> <p>Agree how 'minimum level of performance' policy will apply to priority sectors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23,400 (15,500 16-18, and 7,900 [AiL] 19+) Young People in learning in Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships • 700 Starts • Apprenticeships linked to skills priorities and new learners • Improvement to a minimum 59% overall completion rate • Use EDIMS to ensure gender balance • Policy produced by April 2007
Level 3	<p>Introduce the level 3 entitlement for 19-25 year olds</p> <p>Introduce level 3 Learning Accounts when a budget is available</p> <p>Consider the outcomes of SLIM's level 3 Learning Theme Report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 provision aligned to skills priorities • Inform planning for 2007/08 (SLIM report due December 2006) • Inform planning for 2007/08

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting individual learner needs: develop the skills of the South West workforce to enable them to contribute to the economy		
Skills for Life (SfL)	<p>Provide 'survival skills' programme for ESOL for migrant workers, through ESF</p> <p>Ensure the growth is maintained in SfL in order to 'claw back' current regional shortfalls</p> <p>Ensure that the Balance of Provision: Literacy (50%) / Numeracy (45%) / ESOL (5%) is maintained for the settled population of the region. The percentage splits have been agreed as appropriate by the Regional Skills Partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,000 migrant workers supported in survival skills ESOL (subject to budget approval from 2008) • 225,000 individuals improve their SfL by 2010 • Current balance of literacy and numeracy levels are maintained, despite any growth in ESOL
First full level 2 achievement	<p>Deliver the assess train assess model for employees in Train to Gain</p> <p>FE sector to target resources and individuals by age, location sector/industry</p> <p>Produce a Regional Level 2 Action Plan for use within the LSC and with Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20,857 first full level 2 achievements (academic year) • Minimum of 10% of FE budget spent on first full level 2 learning in each FE funded college/provider • Plan available by June 2007
PCDL	Review of planning partnerships and the provision that currently exists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By March 2007, sufficient partnerships should have been identified within the South West to form the foundation of PCDL planning. These partnerships will help shape 07/08 plans.
First Steps	<p>Increase signposting of First Steps learners to further accredited or vocational learning</p> <p>Improve the quality of First Steps provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider feedback confirms increased referrals • Reflected in improved OFSTED grades and improved Provider self assessment grades
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)	Evaluate NLDC for the fit of its provision, contribution and sustainability in the context of the local skills strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By October 2007, LSC Area teams to provide a clear statement of how such provision adds sustainable long term value to local strategies and partnership activities
Access through e-learning	Support e-learning initiatives in rural areas including use of ESF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New learners on SfL and first level 2 courses • Improved success rates
Skills Coaching Pilots	Review the operational progress of the pilots with Jobcentre Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement agreed actions

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting individual learner needs: develop the skills of the South West workforce to enable them to contribute to the economy		
Migrant Workers	<p>Provide in-house 'survival skills' programmes of ESOL for migrant workers</p> <p>Identify implications for skills of policy on admission arrangements for EU workers</p> <p>Identify implication of national review of IAG</p> <p>Identify impact of migrant labour on skills shortages by sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major employers begin to provide in-house support • Able to inform regional sector review • Able to inform new regional IAG delivery • Able to inform regional sector review
Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)	<p>Improve MI on provision to ex-offenders through core provision</p> <p>Extend the base of existing OLASS community providers</p> <p>Raise the profile of IAG provision for ex-offenders within local and regional IAG strategies</p> <p>Evaluate effectiveness of SW OLASS delivery model</p> <p>Improve Management Information on provision of learning and skills activity within prisons</p> <p>Ensure 14-19 and Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) strategies reflect offender needs</p> <p>Deliver and monitor progress against ESF project '@offenders in the community'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in recording of this activity on Individual Learning Records • Increase in numbers of providers delivering to offenders in the community and an expansion of courses offered beyond the existing range of solely SfL to address employability needs • All IAG contracts in the region contain an allocation for work with offenders in the community • Review agreed by the SW OLASS Advisory Board • All data from Providers is verified by LSC Area Teams • Improvements in the progress towards the Youth Justice Board Education, Training and Employment target set with the Youth Offending teams • Target outcomes achieved

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Meeting individual learner needs: develop the skills of the South West workforce to enable them to contribute to the economy		
Young people not engaged in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)	<p>Review the outcomes of the Treasury pilots in the region for the NEET groups and young people in jobs without training</p> <p>Encourage the take up of other initiatives such as Care to Learn</p> <p>With partners, introduce the September Guarantee to Year 11 completers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practice identified and applied • Reduction in numbers of NEET and young people in jobs without training • Offer of a learning place made to young people by the end of September thereby reducing potential NEET group
Further Education (FE) Success Rates	<p>Improve success rates for male learners, ethnic groups and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality of outcomes are improvement for each group
Creating a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led		
Standard for Responsive provision	<p>Introduce the 'New Standard' to Providers and employers</p> <p>Support Partnership Teams and Providers to prepare for assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Plan in place by early 2007 • Providers aware of the Standard Readiness Checks • Some Providers achieve the Standard

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Creating a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led		
Skills for Life (SfL)	<p>Provide training for all vocational tutors/trainers who will be expected to support SfL in a vocational context</p> <p>Continue to press for, and provide support for all staff delivering or supporting SfL, to meet the level 3 and level 4 standards required by the National Qualifications Framework</p> <p>Ensure that SfL awareness is raised for all staff delivering the 14-19 Vocational Framework</p> <p>Continue to develop the 'Whole Organisation Approach' in providers, employers and partners</p> <p>Continue to maintain SfL strategic and planning infrastructure developed across the region</p> <p>Develop awareness raising and support programme for LSC staff, prioritising Partnership Teams in the first instance</p> <p>Maintain and support the network of SfL staff development centres in the region, in order to fulfil the range of development objectives. As a priority, develop funding routes for their activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of tutors developed as all LSC funded vocational provision specifies SfL to be supported by appropriately developed vocational tutors • All delivery staff appropriately qualified by 2010 • All 14-19 plans are sensitive to this need • 100 organisations 'signed up' to this approach by 2010 • Current structures continue to operate and be effective • Programme ready for delivery by Spring 2007 • Funding mechanism agreed across the Region

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Creating a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led		
	<p>Work with and expand the range of Sector Skills Councils who take on board the SfL issues and needs of their sectors</p> <p>Develop strong links with 14-19 partnerships in order to raise awareness of and find effective ways of supporting the needs of the vocational stream</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current group of 5 Sector Skills Councils doubled by 2010 • Literacy and numeracy improvement become key aims of 14-19 partnerships
Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	Develop a regional IAG strategy in conjunction with partners for adults and particular priority groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional strategy in place to influence provision from August 2007
The Olympic and Paralympic Games	<p>Prioritise funding of sports coaching courses for volunteers</p> <p>Negotiate a pilot pre-volunteering programme in conjunction with SkillsActive</p> <p>Support the delivery of a new Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence for potentially elite young sports people aged 16-18 (aquatics, cricket, rugby and tennis)</p> <p>Introduce new sports and use ESF programme underspend to inspire learners to engage with the Olympics during 2007</p> <p>Extend on-line assessment system for Olympic volunteers and other workers and adapt to test foreign languages</p> <p>Establish and fund broad based sailing curriculum at Weymouth College linked to the Royal Yachting Association and Weymouth and Portland SNA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision in place from 2007/08; appropriate qualifications on National Qualifications Framework • Pilot secured for 2007 • Opportunities for hard-to-reach learners • Raise skill levels of volunteers • Budget c£670,000 • 97+ starts 2006/07 • 100 starts 2007/08 • 30 starts for 2007/08 • Specialist IAG for Olympic related employment available • SfL provision in an Olympic related context • Improved assessment of levels of language competence and identification of development needs • Learning opportunities available at levels 1 - 4 2007/08 • Beneficial impact on tourism

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Creating a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led		
Train to Gain	<p>Support Provider development through Train to Gain to increase over time the flexibility and responsiveness of LSC funded provision</p> <p>Support development of the Employer Guide to Training as the tool for employers and Skills Brokers to find appropriate flexible provision to meet employer needs</p> <p>Support Leadership South West to deliver key strategic messages on leadership and management to Brokers, Sector Skills Councils and Providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers engaged in Quality Improvement Agency development programme • Providers ready to be accredited through the 'New Standard' • All LSC provision listed in the Guide and employer feedback captured • Leadership and management qualifications in appropriate sectors
Employer Engagement	Review arrangements for engaging employers regionally and locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice in employer engagement is identified from Train to Gain
European Social Funds (ESF)	<p>Manage the delivery of the 200 remaining 'live' contracts in the current ESF co-financing programme</p> <p>Ensure effective closure of the existing ESF co-financing programme by October 2008</p> <p>Engage with partners to influence the development of the new national ESF Competitiveness and Employment Programme in the context of the SW Skills priorities. Programme ready to start in the SW region, excluding Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, January 2008</p> <p>Engage with partners to influence the development of the ESF Convergence Programme (Cornwall and Isles of Scilly) in the context of skills priorities identified in that sub region. Programme ready to start in January 2008</p> <p>Engage with partners in the comprehensive planning of a joint co-financing plan for the new programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver outputs in line with the Measure Level Applications to the value of £82m (Sept 2006-July 2008) • Acceptable Final Project Closure Reports with no risk to LSC funds • National priorities agreed in the new programme reflect the skills needs of the SW region • National priorities agreed in the new programme reflect the skills needs of the local Convergence area • Co-financing plan ready for issue in Autumn 2007

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Creating a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led		
Children and Young People	<p>Produce a strategic framework document for Children and Young People's Workforce Development including school support staff.</p> <p>Work with each Local Authority to develop a Children's Workforce Plan linked to the Children's Plan</p> <p>Provision is made available to deliver level 2 qualifications in line with national requirements and regional/local plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency plans produced that drive up investment in the workforce by 2008 • Plan identifies the first full level 2 qualifications needed • Appropriate resources available within funding allocations and/or discretionary spend
Quality	Review provision to ensure is it relevant to the SW needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance reports show progress against skills agenda • Provider development plans meet the requirements of the Regional Commissioning Plan
Equality Schemes	Provider Self Assessments and Annual Review process to address the requirements of Equality Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of our Providers who are legally required to put Equality Schemes in place, meet their statutory duties • EDIMS agreed by August 2007
Capital investment	<p>Implement Regional Capital Strategy for the South West and use annual capital planning process to identify local requirements</p> <p>Develop joint LSC/RDA capital investment strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that meet national and regional priorities, such as Skills Academies • Projects are future proofed • Projects address the specialist skills agenda • Strategy agreed that complements existing plans

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Creating a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led		
Sustainability	Continue to work with providers to embed sustainability skills in education and training programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity in provider development plans
Working in partnership towards economic development: maximise the benefits of partnership working		
South West Regional Development Agency (RDA)	Ensure Regional Skills Action Plan is aligned to the Regional Economic Strategy and joint LSC/RDA capital strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective joint activity to support sectors and economic development
Regional Skills Partnership (RSP)	<p>Contribute to the formation of new objectives through the gap analysis process</p> <p>Continue to work closely with the RSP in delivering the agreed regional strategy for SfL and the sub strategies for workplace, numeracy and ESOL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New objectives are in place from March 2007 • RSP maintains SfL as key priority
Jobcentre Plus	<p>Evaluate current regional plan 2006/07</p> <p>Produce joint regional plan by September 2007, subject to national timetables</p> <p>Develop a joint regional response to the outcomes of the Leitch review</p> <p>Pilot a new national SfL programme for long term unemployed clients with poor SfL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practice identified • Plan sets framework for local activity • Plan addresses skills challenges such as SfL and employability • Plan responds to national initiatives/reports, such as Leitch • Contracts in place for a September 2007 start
City Regions	Further development of City Region proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept and implement
Voluntary and Community sector	<p>Identify the most effective regional approach to communication with the sector</p> <p>Agree an agenda for enabling better sector engagement in the skills agenda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate contacts established early 2007 • Identification of workforce priorities • Closer working arrangements • Skills contribution identified

Priority	Actions	Measure of Success
Working in partnership towards economic development: maximise the benefits of partnership working		
Union Learning	<p>Hold quarterly meetings to explore potential for strategic partnership work between Union Learning and the LSC</p> <p>Explore potential for LSC support for Union Learning funding from 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper to SW LSC Area Directors group in Spring 2007 which considers the potential for strategic links and support
Higher Education (HE)	<p>Establish how regional arrangements can support progression to Higher Education and how the LSC can add value to the South West Higher Level Skills Pathfinder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working arrangements in place for 2007/08 academic year
Local Area Agreements (LAAs)	<p>Consider the implications of the Local Government White Paper on learning and skills activity within LAA</p> <p>Ensure LSC contribution supports our priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision to activity and working arrangements • Increased numbers of SfL qualifications and first full level 2s

3. Key Points for the Regional Commissioning Plan 2007/08

The Regional Commissioning Plan will determine the learning and skills investment to be made in the region in 2007/08. This section summarises the key points from the Regional Skills Action Plan which will inform the Commissioning Plan. We expect these key points to be embedded in discussions with Providers and to be reflected in local area Delivery Plans for 2007/08.

Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West

- Encourage providers to consider the 'New Standard' in their development plans
- Ensure there is sufficient Provider capacity to deliver increased volumes of learners in Train to Gain
- Prioritise and support the development of flexible provision that delivers at a time and place to suit the employer
- Support hard-to-reach businesses, including the self-employed that have been identified as a regional priority, through Train to Gain funding and flexible delivery

Provide support for first full level 3 provision

- Introduce the level 3 entitlement to 19-25 year olds in Further Education
- Address craft level skills shortages in the Built Environment, Engineering and Hospitality sectors
- Encourage the uptake of level 3 qualifications in Financial Services, e-skills, Creative and Cultural and Health sectors
- Grow the contribution that employers make to some provision at level 3
- Introduce vocationally relevant Specialised Diplomas for ICT, Health and Social Care, Engineering, Creative and Media, and the Built Environment
- To help embed delivery of the new Specialised Diplomas, encourage links between local employers and Centres of Vocational Excellence, local sectors and economic development priorities

Expand the Apprenticeship offer

- Apprenticeship volume growth is anticipated with the development of a new entitlement in 2007/08
- Improve Framework completions by at least 4 percentage points between 2006 and 2008
- Improve Framework completion rates in Engineering, Construction and ICT at level 3 and the success rates of minority ethnic groups where needed

Improve Further Education (FE) success rates

- Improve FE success rates for particular groups including males, some ethnic minority groups, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, long courses and for certain sectors, including retail

Meeting individual learner needs: develop the skills of the South West workforce to enable them to contribute to the South West economy

- Skills for Life and first full level 2 learners are priority groups, and they should have access to good quality Information, Advice and Guidance
- Respond to the new national Information, Advice and Guidance strategy due early 2007. Develop the strategy locally, through partnership working during 2007

Integrate Skills for Life across learning at all levels and maintain achievement levels

- Prioritise Skills for Life delivery across all provision, not just for low skilled individuals below level 1. This will include, through partnerships, providing Skills for Life to individuals below level 2, embedding Skills for Life into level 2 and 3 programmes, into the 14-19 vocational curriculum, and for Train to Gain participants whose literacy skills are below 1
- Maintain momentum on volumes, especially for entry level 1 and 2 in numeracy
- Only grow 'qualification bearing' English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, and maintain entry level 1 and 2 ESOL provision where progression is evident
- Current balance of literacy and numeracy provision to be maintained,
- Free tuition for ESOL should only be available for those at risk of disadvantage

- All Skills for Life delivery staff should be appropriately developed by 2010

Gear up first full level 2 provision

- Encourage Providers, especially in Devon and Cornwall, and Swindon and Wiltshire, to target hard-to-reach learners
- A minimum of 10% of the adult Further Education budget should be spent by colleges and providers on first full level 2 learning in each institution

Strengthen the range and quality of Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL)

- By March 07, identify suitable partnerships to form the basis of local PCDL planning
- First Steps providers should increasingly signpost learners onto further accredited or vocational learning. Providers should also focus on raising the standard of their provision

Support learners to access learning

- Support e-learning initiatives, especially in rural areas

Support the progression of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- Respond to the new South West regional LSC strategy due December 2006. This will encourage partners to link employability training to the workplace and economic need. It should 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
- Enrolment of learners on Skills for Life qualifications should be at the most appropriate level in order for individuals to achieve the qualification

Further develop offender learning

- Increase in the numbers of providers delivering to offenders in the community and expand courses offered beyond the existing range of solely Skills for Life. All Information, Advice and Guidance contracts in the region should contain an allocation for work with offenders in the community

Creating a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led

Improved access to Information, Advice and Guidance

- Respond to the new national strategy due January 2007. Develop the strategy locally, through working with partners, during 2007

Maximise Olympic Opportunities

- Prioritise funding for sports coaching courses for volunteers
- Support the delivery of a new Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence – 100 starts aged 16-18

Support capacity building of the Children and Young People's workforce

- Provision is made available to deliver level 2 qualifications in line with national requirements and regional/local plans

Allocate funding to key priorities

- Increase the employer contribution for adult learning in Further Education and Apprenticeships, and aim to reach 50% contribution by 2010/11
- Asylum seekers aged 19+ should no longer be automatically eligible for publicly funded Further Education provision from 2007/08. Only those who are granted refugee status, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave by the Government will be eligible

Sustainability

- Embed sustainability skills in education and training programmes, and demonstrate this activity in development plans

Purchase provision which meets sector need

Priority	Actions
ICT, Telecoms and contact centres	Align funding to priority qualifications for IT users and Telecoms professionals
Audio, Visual and Media	Direct funding for qualifications (including new qualifications) accredited by agreed awarding bodies
Construction	<p>Divert funding from Level 1 programmes to support preferred qualifications at level 2 and 3</p> <p>Increase the number of 19+ apprentices</p> <p>Increase provision to contribute to projected 10% growth in workforce, in identified sub sectors where there is greatest need, to meet local requirements</p> <p>Increase delivery using the On Site Assessment and Training (OSAT) model</p>
Priority	Actions
Science, Manufacturing and Engineering (SEMTEA)	Redirecting of funding from National Vocational Qualifications in Performing Manufacturing Operations (PMO) to Business Improvement Techniques (BIT)
Land based (LANTRA)	Progress the alignment of funding with preferred level 2 qualifications.
Textile and Footwear (Skillfast)	Progress the alignment of provision and funding with agreed preferred qualifications to support technical skills at craft and technician level to meet local employer needs.
Sport & Recreation, Health and Fitness (SkillsActive)	Progress the alignment of provision with preferred National Qualifications Framework qualifications to support staff training at levels 2 and 3.
Financial Services, Care, Children's Workforce, Passenger Transport (Go-Skills) and Skills for Logistics	Progress the alignment of funding to the emerging preferred qualifications of these sectors.

The impact of these requirements will be assessed through:

- Ongoing discussions with providers

- Annual and bi-annual performance provider reviews at Area office level
- Longitudinal data analysis of specific provision through the Individual Learner Records (ILR) route

4. Context

4.1 National drivers

Our skills work is driven by a number of key policy documents:

- In July 2003, the Government launched the national Skills Strategy, ‘21st Century Skills (*Realising our Potential*)’ which set the challenge for 2010:

“To ensure that employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses, and individuals the skills they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled”.

- This was followed in 2005 by the White Paper: ‘*Getting on in business, getting on at work*’, which focused on reforming the supply of publicly funded training to raise performance, build capacity and better articulate the needs of employers and individuals
- *The Interim Report of the ‘Leitch Review of Skills in the UK’: The long term challenge* (December 2005), revealed that over 70% of our 2020 workforce had already completed compulsory education. Despite reform plans and substantial investment in skills, by 2020, the country will only have managed to “run to stand still”
- The White Paper *Further Education: ‘Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances’* 2006, established a new economic mission for Further Education; its central purpose is to equip young people and adults with the skills needed for productive and rewarding employment in a modern economy. Over time providers will be expected to develop distinctive specialist excellence
- ‘*Raising our game Our Annual Statement of Priorities*’ published by the LSC in October 2006, confirms that our overriding concern is the impact of learning on productivity, employability and social cohesion.

We will target priority groups more explicitly in order to tackle disadvantage more effectively. Also, we will aim to provide choice to employers and individuals in line with identified need and high quality provision

We have 3 main areas of activity:

- Fixing low level skills through pre-employability learning and Skills for Life
- Strengthening level 2, the platform for employability
- Delivering higher level skills to support productivity and individual progression

We will put employers centre stage through Train to Gain and prioritise individuals in greatest need of learning.

Funding for adult learning will prioritise Skills for Life, first full level 2, the new entitlement to free tuition for a full first level 3 for 19-25 years olds, Train to Gain and learning for disadvantaged groups.

We will take full advantage of opportunities presented by the Olympic and Paralympic Games in bringing together these priorities.

4.2 South West region

This Action Plan is the LSC's response to the skills agenda that is articulated in two key regional documents:

- The South West Regional Development Agency's Regional Economic Strategy (RES) provides a vision for the South West and the overall framework for improving the economy and for ensuring that more people can participate in that economy. Skills development has a key role to play in the development of "Successful and Competitive Businesses" and "Strong and Inclusive Communities" which are at the heart of the RES
- The Skills Strategy of the South West Regional Skills Partnership supports the implementation of the RES through the identification of a clear set of priorities:
 - Develop a simple business brokerage system to better meet the needs of employers for skills advice and guidance
 - Raise demand for, and develop management and leadership skills
 - Improve levels of literacy and numeracy skills
 - Develop joint planning that will help make the supply of training more appropriate, timely and flexible

These priorities are being reviewed and will be updated in April 2007.

In addition, the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 are high profile events which have the potential to transform the region's skill base. The LSC is seen as one of the key agencies not only to provide the skills needed for the Games but also, the skills required for businesses supplying goods and services to the Games. It is also expected that there will be significant investment in skills for volunteering both for and beyond the Games. Therefore, the impact of the Games will stretch far beyond just the sailing events in Dorset and there are real opportunities to not only stimulate demand for learning but to achieve lasting "legacy" benefits across the South West region.

We will also respond to the WorldSkills Competition (Skills Olympics) to be held in London in 2011 and take advantage of the opportunities that this presents across the region.

4.3 Progress in the South West Region

We have made good progress and supported many learners and employers:

- The number of young people in learning has increased and at the end of 2005 was the highest ever since the start of the LSC
- We enabled nearly 13,750 new entrants aged 16-21 to start Apprenticeships during 2004/05
- Two successful Employer Training Pilots (Devon and Cornwall and Wiltshire and Swindon) meant that our colleges and other providers have worked with more than 2,400 employers and helped 17,000 employees to gain workplace training over the past three years
- Between 2003 and 2005 our Further Education colleges and training providers have increased the number of young people and adults achieving qualifications:
 - Skills for Life: over 52,000 learners achieved transferable qualifications
 - Level 2: over 36,000 learners achieved a full level 2 qualification
 - Level 3: over 38,000 learners achieved a full level 3 qualification

We have also supported many changes:

- Since 2001 approximately £370 million has been invested by providers and the LSC in Further Education estate and capital investment
- Since 2002, learners in the region have benefited from over £100 million of European Social Fund monies through Co-financing
- 45 Centre of Vocational Excellence have been developed as part of a national network of 403 (11%)

At a local level some further examples include:

- **Devon and Cornwall** – a successful Employer Training Pilot, significant capital investment in its Further Education estate and improved capacity for collaboration across provider networks and post 16 sectors
- **Dorset** – a Finance ‘Academy’ at a local high school allowing young people to benefit from business mentoring and work experience whilst studying for business/finance qualifications and information, advice and guidance for adults which reaches low skilled clients
- **Somerset** – in partnership with the Somerset Skills Alliance, the effective engagement of employers in skills development and training and 7 Centres of Vocational Excellence to address sectoral priorities
- **Gloucestershire** – Centre of Vocational Excellence provision that is integrated with Information, Advice and Guidance, Leadership and Management and Train to Gain and a co-ordinated offer to employers in key

business parks including inward investment, skills, employment and business support

- **Wiltshire and Swindon** – an Employer Training Pilot successfully delivered, employers engaged with training at higher level skills part funded by the South West Regional Development Agency and European Social Funds, employer led partnerships for the Automotive Manufacturing, Adult Care and Childcare Sectors
- **West of England** – embedded Information, Advice and Guidance within Community Learning activities and through West at Work a focus on the supply and demand of the development of key sites across the sub-region. West at Work is a consortia that is jointly funded by the LSC and South West Regional Development Agency.

4.4 Regional Targets

During the life of this plan, we have a number of challenging targets to deliver both directly and by working with partners. This plan will contribute towards the achievement of these targets which focus on young people, apprentices and adults.

Target area	National measure	Regional measure
Tackle the adult skills gap	<p>Improving the basic skills levels of 2.25 million adults between the launch of Skills for Life in 2001 and 2010, with a milestone of 1.5 million in 2007</p> <p>Reducing by at least 40% the number of adults in the workforce who lack National Vocational Qualifications at level 2 or equivalent qualifications by 2010. Working towards this, one million adults in the workforce to achieve level 2 between 2003 and 2006*</p>	<p>Ensure 80,000 individuals achieve a Skills for Life qualification between 2004/05 and 2006/07</p> <p>20,857 first full level 2 qualifications in Train to Gain 2007/08</p>
All young people to reach age 19 ready for skilled employment or Higher Education	<p>Increase the proportion of 19 year olds who achieve at least level 2 by 3 percentage points between 2004 and 2006, and a further 2 percentage points between 2006 and 2008, and increasing the proportion of young people who achieve level 3.</p>	<p>Minimum increase of 2% by 2008 in line with national measure</p>

* Adult level 2 Public Service Agreement (PSA) target - the 40% is equivalent to 3.6 million more adults qualified at level 2 or above. Current national projections to 2010 indicate that there is much to be done if the target is to be realised. The LSC contribution to the target is 1.3 million by 2010.

The LSC also supports partners with two targets which broadly support the skills agenda:

- Reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) by 2 percentage points by 2010
- Support the Higher Education (HE) sector to achieve the HE PSA participation target by encouraging many more young people from all backgrounds to gain the qualifications and aspiration for Higher Education

Finally, we have key indicators that we need to achieve:

Target area	Measure	Regional outcomes
Skills for skilled employment	Apprenticeship Framework completion rate for 2007/08 of 59%	55% at the end of 2005/06 based on 8,436 completions. National average 53%
Achievement of qualifications	Further Education learner success rate for 2007/08 of 76% (subject to review)	Increased from 68% in 2002/03 to 75% in 2004/05

5. Regional strategic analysis – key challenges

Whilst we have many achievements, we still have much more to do and we need to be more aspirational as we plan ahead.

The LSC has been undertaking a Strategic Analysis of the region, which has examined economic, demographic and social drivers; an assessment of current and future skill needs and a review of existing supply. A number of challenges have emerged and these are summarised below.

For employers we need to:

- Stimulate demand for learning amongst employees in small to medium size enterprises and the self-employed; these groups need a differentiated approach
- Work with employers to increase the take up of Apprenticeships
- Work with partners to re-structure the economy so that higher level skills are in demand
- Support level 3 and higher level skills training such as leadership and management

- Improve employer perceptions of Further Education; institutions need to provide more information about what is available and ensure their provision meets employer need
- Develop a new approach to sector working that is informed and relevant to the region and sub-regions
- Target priority sectors where enrolments are reducing, such as Construction, and skills sectors with low levels of engagement in training
- Promote learning in skills shortage sectors such as Construction, Hospitality/Tourism and Retail to young people and employers
- Develop a diverse workforce and recruit from non traditional groups
- Improve Apprenticeship Framework completion rates in key sectors – Engineering, Construction and ICT
- Improve success rates in Further Education particularly for male learners, ethnic groups, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, learners in some sectors, such as Retail and on courses over 24 weeks in length
- Improve employability skills across all provision and at all levels from elementary workers to graduates, and in particular in Retail and Tourism/Hospitality

For individuals we need to:

- Continue to provide Skills for Life provision for those who need it
- Improve access and choice, particularly through collaboration, in rural areas and target first time learners
- Develop new approaches to encourage individuals with low level skills into learning
- Address the skills needs of the older working population aged 50+
- Deal with barriers to participation for women, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the group aged 16-18 not in education, employment or training
- Identify learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities more consistently
- Target participation of first full level 2 learners whether in work or out of work by age, location, sector and industry
- Encourage young people into learning, such as Apprenticeships, rather than jobs without training
- Develop approaches to deal with the learning needs of increasing numbers of migrant workers and increasing displacement issues

For the infrastructure we need to:

- Work with partners to stimulate demand for higher level skills
- Develop improved progression pathways - at age 16, from Entry to Employment and into higher level skills and education

See Annex 1 for further information on the emerging key issues from the Strategic Analysis

6. Responding to Skills Challenges

6.1 Meeting employer needs: develop a highly skilled workforce which meets the needs of employers in the South West

Our Strategic Analysis has identified a number of key challenges including the need to stimulate demand amongst small to medium size employers and the self-employed; improve employer satisfaction rates in Further Education provision and ensure that our approach to sectors is informed and relevant and enables us to start to tackle low and reduced levels of training in some sectors.

We are keen to create demand led provision for employers. We will work through brokers and Sector Skills Councils, to ensure that the sectors' and employees' needs are identified and we will work with employers to help them understand their workforces' needs. Equipped with this understanding, the supply side will engage in regular dialogue with employers and ensure that their provision meets identified need.

We need to encourage employers to invest more in training their workforce and also continue to support the Investors in People standard as a means of increasing employer engagement in training and development.

The impact will be measured by examining employer participation in skills training, reviewing both the leverage of funding and employer contributions and the improvement of success rates for both units of learning and full qualifications. This will contribute to developing the right conditions to achieve improvements in business productivity and business bottom line.

The LSC has introduced Train to Gain in 2006, as its flagship service to assist employers get the training they need to help their business grow and prosper.

We have identified a number of strategic responses to address these challenges:

Identify responsive quality provision for employers

The Skills White Paper set out a direction for the development of provision that meets employer need. It has prompted the development of:

- A single '**New Standard**' that will recognise employer responsiveness and vocational excellence. 'New Standard' is a working title and will change in 2007
- **Train to Gain**, as the service for employers that will enable the development of flexible and responsive provision and better identify employer needs
- **Specialist networks** will be developed from across a range of publicly supported and private providers including Higher Education. The networks will develop sectoral approaches to meet the demands contained in Sector Skills Agreements and will drive vocational excellence

A national working group considering employer responsiveness has defined it as 'the capability of a provider to build and manage customer relationships with employers, to whom they successfully deliver training solutions'. Employer feedback is a key element of the 'New Standard'; providers will gather the views of employers, who have used their service, to assess its flexibility and the responsiveness of the delivery and course content.

Increase employer engagement through Train to Gain

We will continue to invest in **Train to Gain** as the service through which the LSC will increase employer engagement in training. LSC funding will focus on supporting employees to gain their first full level 2 qualifications. The emphasis will be on employers without a track record of training or Investor in People status, to encourage them to train their workforce for the benefit of their organisation. The self-employed that have been identified as a regional priority, will also be included,

Through the brokerage service we will be encouraging employers to identify and address all the training needs within their business, whatever the level of training. This will be funded through a combination of LSC funds for the first full level 2 and Skills for Life improvements needed to study at level 2 and brokers will help to identify other funding routes, with employers investing in other learning as appropriate.

Train to Gain is expected to more than double in size between 2007 and 2010. The overall success of Train to Gain will be measured through a number of indicators, including employer satisfaction with the brokerage service; increasing the overall engagement of employers in training; engagement of hard-to-reach employers; increased numbers of employees qualified to level 2; a network of responsive providers able to meet the needs of employers; referrals of employers to a wide range of support services such as Investor in People, Jobcentre Plus, business brokerage etc.

The LSC is also working with partners to stimulate progression to Higher Education. The South West Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Project will run from 2007 to 2009 and is one of three nationally. This has been designed to pilot innovative employer interventions from the Higher Education sector to stimulate progression to Higher Education for staff in three main 'sectors' – Creative Media, Engineering and business improvement. It will be linked to Train to Gain through a common customer journey.

Offer an accredited skills brokerage service for business

It is important that employers increasingly understand the important part training plays in the overall health of their organisation as well as the overall health of the UK economy.

We will continue to develop a **skills brokerage service** that can diagnose skills needs for employers as well as find suitable training solutions to meet those needs.

For all employers, brokers will also be able to signpost to a wider set of solutions including leadership and management, Investors in People and business brokerage funded through the South West Regional Development Agency. Skills brokers will be working towards the national broker standards in their first year of operation and the service will have customer satisfaction measures in place, based on employer satisfaction of the impartiality and independence of the service.

The skills brokerage service is fully integrated with the business brokerage service funded by the South West Regional Development Agency and can offer a complete business service across the South West region.

Purchase provision which meets sector need

We will continue to prioritise **sectors** at a regional level during 2007/08 so that we focus our resources and support the delivery of our targets. We recognise that at a sub regional level, there may be other priorities which may attract funding but this will not be at the expense of our identified regional priorities.

The LSC's regional priority sectors are Construction, Retail, Health and Social Care and Engineering and these will be in the Regional Commissioning Plan for 2007/08. These continue to be selected on the basis that they are important to the economy, have a high percentage of employment, have a high replacement demand at level 2 or below, are in line with the Regional Economic Strategy and need support to raise skills levels.

During 2007/08 we will review our approach to sectors and the appropriateness of identifying a small number of priority sectors. We will take into account the increasingly detailed information gathered by Sector Skills Councils and our other research to determine the way forward from 2008.

Within a two year timeframe, we will undertake the following key actions:

- Work with key partners, to build summaries for all 25 Sector Skills Council footprints to help colleagues and partners to understand the mix and balance of provision and the employer demand for skills in each sector
- Produce a more detailed South West Sector Plan for each of the Sector Skills Councils that has published its Sector Skills Agreement; this will include recommendations to inform the Regional Commissioning Plan
- Review progress against these Sector Plans to ensure that the mix and balance of provision is being adjusted to meet sector need
- Consider early messages from Sector Skills Agreements in Tranches 3 and 4 which include Retail and Financial Services

We will work with regional and national partners and employers to develop South West elements of National Skills Academies, offering innovative and collaborative solutions to achieve the set up within proposed timescales.

In addition, we will work with regional partners and lead on the development of regional Specialist Networks, linking Centres of Vocational Excellence and other providers in developing sectoral approaches to meet the demands articulated in the Sector Skills Agreements; this work will involve supporting local partnership colleagues and providers, especially Centres of Vocational Excellence, to prepare for assessment against the 'New Standard'.

Support first, full level 3 provision in line with economic and regional needs

Level 3 qualifications can improve employer competitiveness and productivity.

A number of significant new policy issues are under development at national level, to enhance our existing significant level 3 delivery. These include a level 3 Entitlement for 19-25 year olds in Further Education, level 3 Learning Accounts, Apprenticeships for Adults, 14-19 Specialised Diplomas, level 3 in Train to Gain and Information, Advice and Guidance for learners needing level 3. As and when these become available in our region, we will ensure that delivery is focused on economic and regional needs.

We will ensure due recognition is given to the Built Environment, Engineering and Hospitality sectors where data suggests there may be significant skills shortages at craft level. We will also seek to encourage the uptake of level 3 in Financial Services, e-skills, Creative and Cultural and Health sectors.

As our funds are directed towards priority groups we expect to grow the contribution that employers make to learning that falls outside of our priority groups and this will include some provision at level 3.

Introduce vocationally relevant Specialised Diplomas

The phased introduction of 14 **Specialised Diplomas** into 14-19 learning between 2008 and 2010, presents fresh challenges in linking learning with the vocational demands of the workplace. Some of these challenges include achieving full coverage in rural areas, delivering an integrated academic/vocational offer and securing effective collaboration across providers, employers and Sector Skills Councils to shape new provision. Delivery needs to be integrated within the broader skills agenda, and in particular be sensitive to the likely improvements needed to the levels of English and Maths in this cohort.

The Diplomas that will be launched in 2008 include ICT, Health and Social Care, Engineering, Creative Media and the Built Environment.

We will work regionally to embed delivery in the evolving Specialist Networks. At a local level, this will mean linking with Centres of Vocational Excellence, local sector and economic development priorities. Coherent links to local employers will be vital in providing the real-life work experience which will help transform 14-19 learning.

The diplomas will be provided at levels 1, 2 and 3. At levels 1 and 2 the diplomas need to be sufficiently practical so as to engage learners and prepare them for work. Diplomas at level 3 will support progression to Higher Education; we will work with Sector Skills Councils and Higher Education to achieve appropriate progression from specialised diplomas and learning in the workplace into degree courses, some of which could be at Foundation level.

Expand the Apprenticeship offer

We expect to see an increase in the volume of **Apprenticeships** with the development of a new entitlement during 2007/08. Young Apprenticeships will continue in 2007/08 for 14-16 year olds. Much of this provision will be absorbed into the Specialised Diplomas from 2008.

A Pre- Apprenticeship route will be introduced in 2008/09 as part of the Foundation Learning tier which focuses below level 2.

Although the South West Apprenticeship Framework completion rate is above the national average, 55% compared with 53%, we expect to see an improvement in Framework completions of at least 4 percentage points between 2006 and 2008. Financial contributions from employers for Apprentices aged 19+ will be required to reach 50% by 2010/11. The level of employer contribution will be used as a measure of quality by OfSTED.

We will be exploring how we can expand the Apprenticeships for Adults (aged 25+) offer during 2007/08 and beyond, thereby increasing the portfolio of provision at levels 2 and 3. Priority learner groups for adults will be identified early in 2007.

As we refine our sectoral needs across the region, Apprenticeship provision will need to be adjusted and provider plans will need to reflect identified need. We will give further consideration to the impact of applying a 'minimum level of performance' policy to priority sectors from 2007/08.

Improve success rates in Further Education

Generally, Further Education **success rates** are at or above the national average for our priority sectors with the exception of Retail. Although the gap is small, this is a large and growing sector in the South West region and therefore improvement is needed.

If we are to support the development of a more diverse workforce, we also need to improve the success rates for some ethnic groups and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition, success rates for male learners and long courses over 24 weeks need improvement.

Encourage providers to trial credit based qualifications

Many employers have expressed an interest in purchasing parts of a qualification rather than a full qualification. The **Qualification and Credit Framework** enables credits to be accumulated and transferred. Qualification trials are continuing after 2006/07 and we will encourage providers to take part. One sector actively involved is Lifelong Learning UK which is trialling an Initial Award for Teachers in Further Education; 3 providers are currently involved in this region.

6.2 Meeting individual learner needs: develop the skills of the South West workforce to enable them to contribute to the economy

Our Strategic Analysis has identified a number of key challenges including the need to improve access and choice, particularly in rural areas, reaching first time learners below level 2 attainment and deal with the barriers to participation that such potential learners face.

Our primary aim is to address the low skills of many individuals who are either employed or seeking employment. This includes prioritising Skills for Life and first full level 2 provision and ensuring that such learners access good quality Information, Advice and Guidance.

We have identified a number of strategic responses to address these challenges:

Underpin skills provision with effective Information, Advice and Guidance

During 2007 we will be working with partners to develop an appropriate offer of **Information, Advice and Guidance** and to ensure that learners lacking basic employability skills continue to access a quality service. The nature of the provision will be influenced by the national LSC strategy for Information, Advice and guidance which we expect to be published early in 2007.

Our aim will be to ensure that individuals undertake the right learning and development activities, with the right levels of support and so achieve the right outcomes.

Integrate Skills for Life across learning at all levels and maintain achievement levels

We have made good progress towards our **Skills for Life** targets but we need to maintain the momentum. The volume of learners in Entry level 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy provision is reducing. This is the subject of a specific regional strategy to both encourage growth to meet employer need and maintain the literacy/numeracy balance of provision.

We will continue the process of only growing 'qualification bearing' English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision and maintaining Entry level 1 and 2 ESOL provision where the progression of learners is evident.

The uptake of ESOL learning has risen much faster than expected. Given the pressure on resources, we must focus public investment on provision for the disadvantaged rather than support large-scale demand from those who can pay for their language learning. Therefore, from 2007/08 free tuition for ESOL will only be available to those at risk of disadvantage.

In the meanwhile, we intend to use European Social Funds to support provision that will not lead to targets and we need to develop a network of employers and national groups to feed into European Social Funds provision for migrant workers.

Within offender learning we need to achieve a coherent allocation of funded places within community provision across a number of partners.

We will also need to work with Sector Skills Councils to ensure that literacy and numeracy is properly recognised within the Sector Skills Agreements.

Finally, through partnership working, we will continue to support Skills for Life provision across a whole range of provision and not just for low skilled individuals below level 1. This will include embedding Skills for Life into level 2 and 3 programmes, into the 14-19 vocational curriculum, and working with partners on the Graduate Support Programme which provides Skills for Life to the 30% of graduates below Level 2.

Gear up first full Level 2 participation and achievement

The attainment of **first full level 2 qualifications** represents the critical threshold of employability and progression for many individuals. Given that there is a risk of a national shortfall, much needs to be done to achieve the Adult PSA target in 2010. We need to increase our regional contribution through targeted participation and improved success rates.

Train to Gain will deliver approximately half of the region's first full level 2 achievements and will focus on employers without a track record of training.

First level 2 learning attracts fee remission in Further Education colleges; we should do more to attract hard-to-reach learners using the level 2 Entitlement and the Adult Learning Grant, the latter will be available across the region from 2007/08.

We need to target our efforts particularly in areas such as Swindon and Wiltshire and Devon and Cornwall (especially Torbay), where we have the highest proportions of economically active people qualified below level 2; activities within funding allocations will need to be prioritised accordingly. Research shows that people aged 35-44 should be targeted and our sector reviews will identify relevant workforce sectors.

Research also shows that around 22% of level 3 learners do not already have a level 2 qualification. These achievements will also contribute to the Adult level 2 PSA target.

Other LSC activities that support first full level 2 achievements are Offender Learning, co-financing of European Social Funds, University for Industry (Ufi)/Learndirect, learning in the public sector through Local Area Agreements and learning under the auspices of the Olympics.

Partnership activity with the Voluntary and Community Sector, Unionlearn and Jobcentre Plus should also help to stimulate demand for learning from hard-to-reach individuals.

Strengthen the range and quality of Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL)

As set out in "Priorities for Success", we will manage a major change to the way we plan and fund PCDL. Our principles for this reform are that those who have benefited least from the education system, or who are in the most financial need, should have the greatest access to public funding for PCDL, and that there should be a wide range of high quality, challenging PCDL programmes. We will develop partnerships to plan and review delivery of such learning, and their aim will be ensure

a coordinated approach to maximise the effective use of all public funding, through, for example, the health, sports and recreation and cultural sectors.

We will use **First Steps** provision to attract more individuals into learning particularly those who have not been engaged in learning for some time and are below the level 2 employability threshold.

Providers should increasingly be signposting learners from First Step provision onto further accredited or vocational learning. For example, Further Education colleges should be working with local authorities and voluntary and community groups to encourage such progression.

The quality of First Steps provision across the South West is generally 'satisfactory'. Progress should focus on improving the standard of such provision to 'good'.

Another route into learning is through **Neighbourhood Learning**; this aims to help local people tackle literacy and numeracy needs, and to encourage them to progress into further learning to improve their employability prospects. Continued revenue funding is not guaranteed and providers are expected to have a self-sustaining strategy. However, several centres are now struggling to replace outdated IT systems, and to secure further revenue funding. Their 'fit' within local skills development strategies may also be unclear; it is important that local partnership teams define their role, assess their sustainability and identify indicators to reflect progression opportunities realised by users of the centres, while encouraging the role that these centres play in the community.

Support learners to access learning

We will continue to provide **e-learning** to attract more people into learning, particularly in rural areas.

University for Industry provision is aimed at equipping unemployed people with skills for employment and those in work with skills to progress through its Learndirect centres. This is supplemented by Information, Advice and Guidance and a dedicated support team.

In the South West there are currently 60 Learndirect centres with a further 16 centres planned which will provide an improved geographical network and delivery offer across the region. University for Industry objectives and performance indicators align to the LSC's strategies and plans encompassing: Skills for Life qualifications, National Vocational Qualifications at level 2, Information Advice and Guidance, and a curriculum shaped to meet the needs of employer and individuals.

University for Industry plans for 2007-2010 are to increase the number of achievements for first Skills for Life qualifications, increase the volumes and improve the success rates for level 2 qualifications and demonstrate year-on-year improvements in quality. University for Industry holds a Train to Gain contract and works with Jobcentre Plus to engage unemployed people.

Support the progression of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

As the learning we fund focuses ever more clearly on economic need and job opportunities it is vital that **learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities** are able to benefit.

More appropriate local provision is needed to meet a wide range of learning disabilities and we will focus on delivering this.

The LSC reviewed its provision for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in "Through Inclusion to Excellence" (published November 2005). Consultations on this work and our own regional research have both underlined that people with learning difficulties want to be enabled to progress further. This will mean progressing further up the "qualification ladder" towards level 2 and progressing from learning into employment, where they are able.

In October 2006, the LSC published "Learning for Living and Work", a national strategy for developing its delivery for people with learning difficulties, which has a strong emphasis on opening employment opportunities. The South West regional LSC will publish a South West regional strategy to take forward this agenda, by 31st December 2006.

We need to work with partners to link employability training to the workplace. Learning will 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. We will discourage providers from enrolling learners with learning difficulties on Skills for Life programmes when it is clear that they would not be able to achieve the qualification, as this would not be in the interests of the learner. Rather, we 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".

Address the needs of migrant workers in priority groups

The numbers of **migrants** in the South West is likely to increase. For many English language skills are a problem and this presents a challenge in terms of capacity and funding of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Migrants may also create potential issues with displacement of low skilled indigenous workers.

We will need to assess the impact of migration on Information, Advice and Guidance provision and general skills supply in the region.

Support skills coaching pilots

We need to build on our work with Jobcentre Plus in relation to the **New Deal for Skills** to ensure there is proper integration between the work of both partners, as well as other agencies, such as local authorities. Two key elements include:

- **Skills coaching** which was piloted in Devon in 2005/06, and has now been extended to include Gloucestershire and Wiltshire

This joint initiative, with Jobcentre Plus and Next Steps, provides one-to-one support to clients to help them understand their skills needs, access learning, and find jobs. It is targeted mainly at people on incapacity benefit who want to return to the labour market in the mid to longer term, and also at jobseekers for whom lack of skills is a barrier to employment.

It is expected that the forthcoming Leitch report and the Information, Advice and Guidance review may impact on this provision. Funding at the moment is

available until spring 2007, with an additional £5 million available nationally for the following year. The 07/08 delivery is expected to focus on lower skilled women and women returners in response to the *Women and Work Commission Report "Shaping a Fairer Future"* 2006.

- **Learning Options** will be piloted for three years, from September 2006, in the Gloucester and Swindon areas. In this scheme participants are exempt from normal benefit restrictions on studying for over 16 hours to work for a level 2 qualification

Further develop offender learning

The Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) is managed by the LSC and offers learning and skills provision for prisoners in custody, and those who have been released into the community. Such provision is widely recognised as contributing to a reduction in re-offending rates, and, in recognition of this, we will continue our membership of the South West Reducing Re-offender Rates Partnership.

Greater focus will also be given, in the next 12 months, to ensure that ex-offenders are identified and supported by local and regional Information, Advice and Guidance strategies.

As the prison population is expected to increase there will be a need to respond to this by increasing access to learning and to skills including employability skills.

We will use the findings from a review of models within OLASS development areas by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, due in December 2006, to review regional governance arrangements. In addition, we will review strategies for 14-19 and the not in education, employment or training (NEET) group to ensure sufficient coverage and understanding of youth offender issues.

As part of the longer term strategy, continued support will be given to the development of an Individual Learner Plan to record the offender journey. This will allow access to individual learning histories, as ex-offenders move to prison or into the community.

Encourage young people to engage in learning

Although 80% of **young people aged 16 and 17** are engaged in learning in the region, we need to work with partners to engage the 8,300 who in March 2006 were not engaged in either education, employment or training and the 5,400 young people whose status was 'unknown'. In addition, we have too many young people in jobs without training.

We will work with partners to identify innovative engagement solutions. We will use European Social Funds, review the outcomes of the Treasury pilots in Devon and Cornwall and agree appropriate activity in Local Area Agreements.

6.3 Create a skills infrastructure which is responsive and demand led

Our Strategic Analysis has identified a number of key challenges including developing improved progression pathways across a range of provision, improving employer perception of Further Education provision and working with partners to stimulate the demand for higher level skills and thereby improve productivity.

To develop an infrastructure that is responsive, provides choice and excellent quality we have identified a number of strategic responses:

Improved access to Information, Advice and Guidance Service

The establishment of a wide-ranging cross government review of **Information, Advice and Guidance** for adults was announced in the Skills White Paper in 2005. Its goal is to have universally available service offering information linked to jobs, qualifications, training and related services such as childcare. This is likely to make use of web-based self-assessment and diagnostic tools, with on-line, phone and face-to-face guidance, plus offer paid-for supplementary guidance services, alongside core free services.

In response to this, the national LSC strategy for the evolved Information, Advice and Guidance infrastructure is expected in early 2007. Developing a regional approach will be key during 2007, and its implementation and review will drive activity till 2010. An additional challenge will be to ensure that effective Information, Advice and Guidance is available within the Train to Gain service.

Support extensive capacity building for Skills for Life

We will continue to embed basic employability skills and Skills for Life into vocational education and training. This means that we need to support skills development in the vocational tutor and trainer workforce, so that they can effectively deliver functional skills embedded within the vocational curriculum. The LSC does not underestimate the scale of this challenge in the region's workforce of over 4,000 tutors and trainers.

Our **capacity building** programme will continue to support specialist Skills for Life staff; brokers, Train to Gain staff, 14-19 school and Further Education staff in 'embedded' delivery; vocational staff in 'contextualised' delivery; and Jobcentre Plus providers.

Tailor our resources to maximise Olympic opportunities

We are working with partners such as the South West Regional Development Agency, Jobcentre Plus and key colleges to produce a South West **Olympic** Strategy. We recognise that our plans need to build in "legacy" benefits from the Olympic Games, and that these plans need to be co-ordinated and effected through the various organisations represented in the regional structure. As there are no new resources at this stage, we need to think laterally to "Olympify" current and planned activity such as in Train to Gain and Skills for Life to gain extra leverage out of the resources at our disposal.

Support skills using new European Social Fund programme funds

The LSC Co-finances all three of the current European Social Fund Objective Measures in the South West and currently has over £82 million worth of activity contracted with Government Office South West. This translates into over 200 live contracts with our providers to deliver learning to over 55,000 beneficiaries across the South West in the period September 2006 to July 2008.

In January 2008 new **European Social Fund Programmes** will begin in the South West. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will be supported under the Convergence Programme and the rest of the region will be supported under the Competitiveness and Employment Programme. However, the funding and methodology has yet to be fully determined. It is highly likely that the LSC will continue to be fully involved as a Co-financer and that activity will fall into two main areas:

- Worklessness – supporting the Welfare to Work agenda
- Workforce Development – supporting the skills needs of employees

Activities supporting additionality around Entry to Employment and Train to Gain are likely to be supported, with embedded Skills for Life work built into any specifications that we issue. We would hope to be able to support qualifications from pre-entry level to level 3 and above with identified progression routes both into and out of LSC mainstream activity and to facilitate onward progression to Higher Education.

The new Programme is out for consultation at the end of October 2006 and will go to the European Commission for approval around March 2007. Once approval has been obtained we will start to develop our Co-financing Plan with a view to contracting with Providers in January 2008. We will work with the Regional Skills Partnership, to focus the priorities for spend in the South West. Comprehensive joint planning will be required between the proposed co-financers (presently LSC and Jobcentre Plus) and other interested parties (South West Regional Development Agency, Higher Education Regional Development Agency (HERDA), Regional Skills Partnership etc.) in the drawing up of a joint co-financing plan that will define our European Social Fund funded activity for the Programme period to 2013.

Support capacity building of the Children and Young People's Workforce

The LSC has been involved in supporting the skills and qualifications of school support staff. The level 2 qualifications in this sector are Vocational Qualifications, not full level qualifications at present, never the less they are a priority for us.

With the development of the 14-19 agenda, we need to think more broadly about how we can support the capability of **Children and Young People's Workforce** through continued development and lifelong learning. There will be a need to train people in the so-called 'Common Core Skills and Knowledge' which sets out the basic skills and knowledge needed by frontline staff.

We plan to produce a strategic framework document which will build on the work of the Sector Skills Council "Skills for Care & Development" and seek to develop multi agency training provision. This will involve working closely with partners to align purchasing strategies and maximising sectoral investment.

Use relevance of provision as a measure of quality

As part of Agenda for Change, the LSC set out a new approach to **quality** in “*Planning for Success*” (December 2005). One key principle is that “we can no longer define quality on the basis of success rates and inspection grades alone”.

“Relevance” is now a defining feature of high quality provision that should be “characterised by its relevance to local, regional and national learning and skills needs and priorities, and the contribution to the achievement of Government targets”.

As part of the shift to relevance, we will define how learning should be made relevant to skills needs and the appropriate Government targets in our strategies and plans.

This clearly links to the sector review work that is being undertaken regionally. Local Partnership teams will ensure that provider development plans meet the requirements of the Regional Commissioning Plan.

In addition, the Framework for Excellence will be introduced in 2007/08. This provides an holistic performance assessment framework for all colleges and providers and will give greater significance to provider responsiveness to local and employer needs.

To move towards excellent provision, we will publish minimum levels of performance and issue notices where provision is unsatisfactory.

In 2007/08, minimum levels of performance will apply to Apprenticeships and Further Education provision.

We will seek to identify poor provision by sector, level or mode of course, particularly where this is hidden by overall satisfactory performance.

Ensure alignment with Equality Schemes

To ensure equality is appropriately embedded in skills delivery all colleges and providers in scope must be Race, Disability and Gender (April 07) **Equality Scheme** compliant. The LSC will produce a single Equality Scheme and each region will have action plans for race, disability and gender.

The Disability Equality Duty which comes into effect in December 2006 aims to promote disability equality across the whole of the public sector. All of the public sector organisations covered will have to produce a Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan showing how they ensure and promote equality for people with disabilities. This will include services to all learners, who come within scope of disability legislation.

As set out in the LSC’s publication “*Improving services for people with mental health difficulties*” (August 2006), one of the areas the LSC has made a commitment to is supporting people with mental health difficulties. The proposals are to:

- Build the capacity of the Further Education system
- Boost demand for learning

- Ensure quality of provision
- Raise the achievement levels of learners with mental health difficulties

Allocate funding to key priorities

Increasingly our **adult funds** are being realigned towards our priority activities. This means that less money will be spent on other types of provision which should be paid for by employers and individuals.

We are gradually increasing the employer contribution for adult learning in Further Education and Apprenticeships, aiming to reach 50% by 2010/11.

From 2007/08, free tuition for English for Speakers of Other Languages will only be available to priority groups, primarily people who are unemployed or receiving income based benefits.

Asylum seekers aged 19+ will no longer automatically be eligible for publicly funded Further Education provision from 2007/08. Only those who are granted refugee status, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave by the Government will be eligible.

Invest in the capital infrastructure to meet the skills challenge

Our Regional **Capital Strategy for the South West** Plan 2006 – 2011 states that we will develop proposals that:

- Ensure maximum flexibility is being built in for the location type and delivery method of provision
- Ensure collaborative and innovative partnerships that benefit the learner and remove wasteful institutional competition
- Raise the quality of the estate to the highest value for money standards
- Establish flexible space that responds to developing learning technologies and the demands of the consumer
- Demonstrate linkages with relevant aspects of the 14-19 agenda and responsiveness to employer and individual need

The LSC is committed to building well-designed new campuses and re-developing existing sites in a sustainable way that balances environmental, social and economic needs.

Local capital planning priorities have taken account of the following points arising from an analysis of the Further Education estate:

- In all LSC areas there remains work to do to complete the modernisation and rationalisation process. The estate in all but one of the LSC areas is within acceptable space standards. However, all are close to the theoretical maximum, indicating that there is potential for further efficiencies

- Wiltshire and Swindon is over provided in terms of space. To address this within a reasonable timescale will involve giving significant support to particular colleges; in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole and Devon and Cornwall it will have a major impact on both space utilisation and, more importantly, quality of facilities

Further Education Skills Academies and provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will also be a high priority.

Between 2006 and 2011 it is estimated that £426 million will be needed, including the LSC contribution, and that the LSC will need to provide further funds for Skills Academies and to support the next generation of Centres of Vocational Excellence/Specialist networks. Investment will peak between 2008 and 2010.

We are also committed to developing with the South West Regional Development Agency, a joint approach to capital investment during 2007/08.

Apply sustainability principles across our work

Our commitment to **sustainable development** means that we will seek social inclusion, protect the environment, look after natural resources and maintain economic growth.

Social inclusion and economic development are embedded in all that we do. More specifically, we will play our part in developing the skills base for the renewable energy industry. This makes sense ecologically, but also contributes to a wide range of economic and skills priorities. In particular, it can stimulate high-value added business growth, particularly in Advanced Engineering and associated industries, which is in line with both South West Regional Development Agency and LSC sectoral priorities.

Alongside this we will work to meet the commitment in the Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Framework (2006-09), that the LSC will “Develop and deliver appropriate sustainable development modules within vocational and academic courses”.

6.4 Working in partnership towards economic development: maximise the benefits of partnership working

The region is benefiting from significant economic development and regeneration, particularly in its cities. Rural areas continue to present challenges in terms of accessibility and choice of provision.

An overview of activities in the sub regions shows a diverse picture; see *Annex 2*.

Our economic development activity focuses on the challenges we face in delivering improved access and choice to individuals and improving levels of skills attainment in local communities. We have identified a number of strategic responses in respect of our economic development and partnership work.

Alignment of learning and skills agendas

Agenda alignment across partners is key to the way that we work and to achieving the step change that is needed.

- **South West Regional Development Agency (RDA)**

The LSC is fully committed to working closely with partner organisations such as the RDA. The RDA is a **key strategic partner** and their economic development agenda is very important to us. It is therefore, our intention to continue to develop our joint working arrangements to help ensure that the skills requirements identified within documents such as the Regional Economic Strategy are fully considered within our own, and our partners, plans. As well as working with RDA to support our capital investment strategy, we will also work together on a variety of other specific projects such as; developing skills within the Aerospace Industry, National Skills Academies and emerging sectors.

- **Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) and identification of gaps in provision**

The LSC is working closely with the RSP and we will continue to be represented at all levels of activity from the Board and Alliance to the Task and Finish groups.

We will continue to support the development of a revised South West Strategy by helping to **identify gaps in supply**; this work will consider all partner agendas across the region and compare the combined effort with identified demand. Once the gaps are identified we will work with partners to find ways to address these. We will also continue to deliver regional strategies such as Skills for Life.

- **Joint sector review**

The LSC will continue to work jointly with the South West Regional Development Agency, Regional Skills Partnership and Sector Skills Councils on **sectoral review work**. On behalf of partners the Regional Skills Partnership co-ordinates a regional response to the Sector Skills Councils' consultations prior to the production of Sector Skills Agreements. This joint approach is valued by all partners and sets a precedent for further activity such as the planning of future European Social Fund programmes.

We have a large number of other partners, all of whom play key roles in developing skills across the region. We also work closely with a large network of providers of learning and skills who shape direct delivery to employers and individuals.

Joint planning and working with Jobcentre Plus

- A **regional joint delivery plan** with Jobcentre Plus that links the agendas of both organisations was signed in 2006. This aims to provide unemployed people with a seamless service so that their learning needs are addressed before, during and after obtaining employment. We have agreed to develop the current regional focus on Skills for Life, demand-led routeways (enabling employers to define their training needs and recruit unemployed people into priority sectors) and ensure that those newly placed in jobs and their employers receive support from Train to Gain

We have agreed arrangements with Jobcentre Plus to evaluate the impact of the plan and update it as required.

We will also be contracting with providers for new provision aimed at those long term unemployed with poor Skills for Life. This will involve piloting a new national programme in the region during 2007 and involves working closely with Jobcentre Plus.

Joint working towards a City Region

- We will engage in partnership work with the four Unitary Authorities within the West of England area to become a pathfinder for the **City Region** initiative. The intention behind this initiative is that local stakeholders can deliver more by combining and aligning their efforts behind shared priorities, with greater freedom to innovate and tailor services in response to local needs

Supporting progression routes to Higher Education

- We will work with the South West region's Lifelong Learning Network, which was launched in September 2006. This will link with the existing Western Vocational Learning Network, led by the University of Bath and aims to become a "vocationally focussed Lifelong Learning Network that develops progression for learners in rural and coastal communities in the South West of England". (*Lifelong Learning Network's Business Plan*)
- Support the Aimhigher Partnerships across the region, that focus on groups that are currently under-represented in Higher Education, so that all young people consider Higher Education as a realistic option
- Capitalise on the opportunities for **progression to Higher Education** from our learning programmes and promoting employers' take-up of Higher Education (whether through colleges or universities) through Train to Gain
- Work with the South West Regional Development Agency, Higher Education and Further Education sectors on Local Area Agreements, to ensure that the appropriate higher skills are available to businesses and local communities

Identifying workforce upskilling opportunities through Unionlearn

- We will agree joint working protocols aimed at **upskilling employees** and enable them to progress through, for example, Train to Gain that strongly encourages Skills Brokers to work with Unions to co-ordinate employer engagement activity
- We will meet quarterly to explore the potential of the shared agenda around Information, Advice and Guidance, the Skills for Life agenda and addressing specific sectoral needs

Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector to stimulate demand for learning

- The **Voluntary and Community Sector in the South West** has already identified priorities for its own workforce development. We recognise that the unusual characteristics of the sector (such as the preponderance of small organisations and the use of volunteers) will require extra flexibility in provision if the sector's workforce is to participate fully in learning
- We will consult with the Voluntary Sector's South West Infrastructure Development Partnership to identify where existing provision needs to be more flexible to meet their needs
- We also value the expertise of the Voluntary Sector in promoting economic inclusion, through the services it delivers its clients. Within the skills agenda this will be particularly relevant to activity around Welfare to Workforce, Skills for Life and level 2
- We want to ensure an effective Voluntary Sector contribution across these areas of work, both regionally and locally. We will agree with the South West Infrastructure Development Partnership how to involve this sector in the emerging regional arrangements supporting this work

Our other key partnership activity includes:

- **Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)** – we will work closely with these Councils to understand sector needs and shape the supply of skills
- **Local Authorities** – we will work together to bring about improvements in the skills and capacity of the local government workforce and contribute to the skills agenda within Local Area Agreements
- **Government Office South West (GOSW)** – we will work together on the development of Local Area Agreements, and the implementation of our European Social Fund programmes and the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI)
- **Connexions/Next Step** – we will continue to shape the Information, Advice and Guidance agenda to meet regional priorities

Contribute to the development of sustainable communities

The LSC is committed to playing a leading role in employment and skills, and in economic development more broadly.

We are committed to working with local authorities and partners within local Strategic Partnerships to deliver **Local Area Agreements**. These three year agreements are designed to ensure that local services are delivered flexibly and coherently to meet the needs of local communities and Local Area Agreement targets. We are able to bring expertise on learning and skills issues and help align partner agendas accordingly. Such joint working can also help us to achieve our LSC targets.

By 2007 all local authorities in the region will have a Local Area Agreement. Although the LSC contribution has tended to focus on two blocks - Children and Young People and Economic Development and Enterprise, we clearly have a key role to play in the remaining two blocks – Safer and Stronger Communities and Healthier Communities and Older People where offender learning work (OLASS), Entry to Employment, Apprenticeships and Personal and Community Development Learning can make significant contributions.

The Local Government White Paper (October 2006) promotes multi-area agreements and gives greater local empowerment and accountability. This will bring fresh challenges to us as a “key public body”, and our Economic Development and 14-19 Partnership teams need to be involved early and in all stages of the Local Area Agreements, so that they are embedded in local planning and delivery. At a regional level, we need to support local planning and data management and work closely with Government Office South West.

7. Evaluating the plan

The impact of the Regional Skills Action Plan, and the extent to which it better matches regional supply to demand, will be evaluated through:

- Monitoring at the annual and bi-annual performance review at Area office level
- Ongoing assessment by the Skills Directorate of key Management Information
- Longitudinal data analysis of specific provision through the Individual Learning Record (ILR) route
- Reviews within subsequent Regional Skills Action plans
- Ongoing discussions and consultations held with partners and providers

Annex 1

Strategic Analysis (*source Strategic Analysis draft 2*)

Emerging Key Issues

1. South West region overview

- Of the 9 English regions the South West is the largest and has the greatest proportion of rural land, with the south westerly part being most sparsely populated. Although rurality presents a problem of access to all learning, it has a particular impact on the 14-19 Diplomas
- Productivity is an issue for this region. It currently ranks lower than the England average and the need to drive the demand for higher level qualifications, especially leadership and management skills, becomes even more significant in the south westerly part of the region as few of the businesses providing higher level jobs are located there
- A differentiated approach to training needs to be developed for small businesses, 97% of South West businesses employ fewer than 50 people, and most are located in the south westerly part of the region
- With the different geographies and diversity of industry across the region a fresh approach to 'priority' sectors is needed so that we can better respond to local demand
- Earnings in the region are below the UK average and are also affected by the geography of the region with higher wages being paid in the north easterly part where the knowledge based economy is better established. Working with partners we need to drive the demand for higher level, better paid jobs, and in particular in the south westerly part of the region where earnings are significantly less
- Many economically inactive people have significant skills needs and with the high overall rate of employment this becomes more pressing in urban areas where unemployment tends to be more of an issue
- Although unemployment rates are low, there are still areas where this is a major concern and with Jobcentre Plus we need to investigate how unemployed people can be helped to acquire skills, particularly those that are an alternative to formal qualifications
- Engaging in training becomes more difficult for self-employed people and in a region where they make up 14% of those in employment we need to address this barrier to learning
- Population projections suggest that there will be less growth in the 16-18 year old groups and this will have implications for participation rates. As this is a

shrinking group, growth in 16-18 participation in learning will need to come from engaging more people

- The South West's population is expected to grow, overall. This growth is projected to come from older people coming into the region, especially those between 50 and retirement age which may have implications on the type and method of learning and service delivery best suited to this age group
- Increasing demands for labour will put pressure on the working age population of the South West that is forecast to have only limited growth. Employers will need to be encouraged to increase their investment in training existing employees to meet skills shortages and those who are currently economically inactive will need to be enticed back into the labour market
- Although the population of the South West is less diverse in terms of ethnicity than other regions, consideration needs to be given to removing any barriers to learning that affect 'Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME)' and 'White Other' (especially those from Eastern European) communities and those who are incapacity benefits claimants
- With increasing volumes of migrant workers, currently predominantly from Poland, but with other accession countries joining the European Union, the funding for and capacity to deliver English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) will become increasingly challenging. A further challenge will be the upskilling of locally employed low skilled workers who may be displaced by these migrant workers
- Whilst the South West overall does not rank highly on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, there are pockets of deprivation across the region and economic development activity should be focused on these 'hot spots'

2. Assessment of current and future skills requirements

- The rate for 17 year olds participating in learning is better in the South West than nationally (South West 76% in 2004, England 74%). Both the national and the South West rates, however, have changed little between 2002 and 2004. The Government's target of achieving 90% of 17 year olds in education is therefore challenging
- The population of the South West is well qualified when compared to national norms, but we still have 890,000 adults of working age qualified below level 2. Older workers are most likely to be without level 2 qualifications, so might benefit from being prioritised
- Participation rates for learning are usually lower in rural than urban areas. We will be encouraging targeted interventions to increase participation in learning in the more deprived rural areas
- Agriculture, Fishing, Mining and Manufacture have seen continual decline over the last 5 years, whereas there has been growth in Construction, Retail, Hotels and Restaurants, Business Services and Health and Social Care sectors. Subject to broader priorities, we need to support sectors in decline and ensure availability of skills at the right level to those which are growing

- Sectors with highest numbers of skill shortage vacancies are Construction, Hospitality/Leisure/Tourism and Retail. All of these are important within the South West economy and these skill shortages are often tied to lack of level 2/3 qualifications. We need to continue our work with these sectors to improve their supply of skilled labour
- Employers also report a significant lack of employability or generic skills. Employability skills need to be incorporated into programmes for re-engaging the economically inactive group, the unemployed; as well as young people on work experience and graduates
- The South West workforce has a lower proportion of higher level occupations than is the case nationally. We need to work with partners to increase the demand for higher level skills and so boost economic productivity
- We have a slightly higher than national average proportion of people engaged in elementary occupations, many of whom are low skilled and who are at risk in view of the forecast demise of new jobs in these occupations. Upskilling the workforce, especially to level 2 would be of particular benefit to these people
- Part time employment is growing at the expense of full time employment, yet some research suggests that businesses tend to provide less training for part-timers. We may need to stimulate demand for learning among part time workers and their employers
- Small businesses employ over four fifths of all employees in the region, but tend to offer less staff training than larger employers. Our approach to stimulating employer demand for training needs to be sensitive to the needs of small businesses

3. Review of existing skills supply and capability to meet identified needs

- In contrast to the national picture, there has been a slight decrease in the South West proportion of Further Education enrolments in Construction, which is identified as a priority sector in the 2006/07 Regional Statement of Priorities. We need to increase, or at least maintain, activity levels in this sector
- Demand from the Health sector may rise, as NHS organisations increase their involvement with Further Education Colleges and bid for direct supplier contracts with the LSC
- Retail is our only priority sector (as in the 2006/07 Regional Statement of Priorities) where South West Further Education success rates are below national average. The gap between us and the national benchmark is small, but the Retail sector is important to our economy, so we will need to bring regional performance in line with the national norm
- In Work Based Learning, out of the priority sectors identified in the 2006/07 Regional Statement of Priorities, overall South West completion rates for Construction (49%) are 7 percentage points below the national average.

Construction is a key sector for the South West economy, we will need to redress this gap

- As the prison population is expected to increase so we will need to increase capacity and access to effective Information, Advice and Guidance and to learning and skills.
- Employers in the South West are more critical of the relevance and quality of Further Education provision than is the case nationally. Overall, employers are most critical of provision for construction, building services, engineering and motor vehicle repair and maintenance. We need to use the 'New Standard' and the increasing emphasis on demand-led provision to address this
- All ethnic minority groups have below average Further Education success rates, although only three ethnic minority groups are below average in Work Based Learning. People with a learning difficulty/disability also have below average success rates in Further Education. These groups may therefore, be at a disadvantage in obtaining the employment skills that they need

Economic Development

Devon and Cornwall

Plymouth, its major city, is undergoing significant regeneration, especially in the city centre and around the waterfront. This has led to a very clear focus on upskilling the population across the whole skills spectrum, this includes the needs of both traditional sectors (such as Construction and Engineering) and emerging ones (like Marine Engineering, Creative Industries and E-commerce).

The other major urban area, around Exeter, is experiencing substantial economic growth, which has led to skills shortages at higher levels and in Construction. We are addressing these through active partnerships with the Higher Education sector and local employers.

In contrast, Cornwall suffers from some of the extremes of rural deprivation, but is attracting significant European Social Fund investment, leading to fast economic growth. We will be continuing our work to raise aspirations in Cornwall, upskilling the population and attracting higher value-added businesses to the area - for example, we are building clusters of high-tech industries around such diverse sectors as renewable energy and marine engineering.

Dorset

There are marked differences in productivity between the urban centres of Bournemouth and Poole and rural Dorset, with the latter slightly below the South West average for productivity. We have particularly high employment in tourism and, in the Bournemouth and Poole area, in financial services. We are looking to continue working with employers to provide innovative learning in both these sectors.

Effective Information, Advice and Guidance is one key to economic development, as it gives workers the support they need to make themselves more productive through upskilling. We will build on last year's successful delivery to adults, where all targets were met or exceeded.

We will continue our innovation within local priority sectors, by developing a hotel school in Bournemouth where students will learn both hospitality and management skills. We are also investigating the feasibility of setting up a specialist training centre for aeronautical engineering and a finance academy, with especially strong links to the workplace.

"Learning Champions" will continue its successful engagement of people from deprived communities in relevant learning.

We are working with partners to exploit the economic development opportunities offered by the Olympic sailing event, especially looking for sustainable benefits to our

tourism industry and maximum local participation in the associated major building projects.

Somerset

Somerset's economy has a preponderance of small, low value added businesses leading to productivity which is 12% lower than the regional average. We aim to grow the knowledge economy - in terms of both high-calibre jobs and attracting and retaining skilled people.

This will be challenging as growth of this section of the economy in Somerset has previously been relatively slow – from 1991-2001 it grew locally by 19%, compared to a regional average of 29%. In conjunction with partners, we aim to increase the proportion of our workforce in knowledge intense industries from 12% in 2001 to 20% by 2010.

The current knowledge economy in Somerset is dominated by the public and advanced engineering sectors, although environmental technologies and creative industries have strong growth prospects.

We are also seeking to promote economic inclusion, more generally. We need to increase the impact of our existing initiatives to encourage more of our Black and Minority Ethnic population to progress to level 3 programmes. We will also have specific activities for upskilling women in rural areas and promoting skills training among those with disabilities who are unemployed.

We will also continue to work closely with partners such as the South West Regional Development Agency, on regeneration projects, with an increasing emphasis on the Taunton Vision (for regeneration in the town centre and along the waterway) and a new "leisure and learn" centre in Minehead.

Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire's economy performs slightly better than average, but is slowing, due to a decline in manufacturing.

Gloucestershire is looking to ease congestion and boost tourism by regenerating the major waterways such as Gloucester Docks, the Cotswolds canals and Water Park. The Forest of Dean is the most sparsely populated area and many of the industries, such as mining and engineering, traditionally based in this area are going through significant transition. Therefore, geographically, our focuses will be on Gloucester Docks, Stroud and Forest of Dean.

We will concentrate on prioritising resources on the regeneration projects in Gloucester and Cheltenham and key sectors, namely Manufacturing, Construction, Retail, Care, Tourism/Hospitality, Financial and Business Services, Food and Drink and ICT / New Media.

Significant actions include setting up a management development programme for chefs and establishing progression paths in Advanced Engineering from 14+ to Foundation degree.

West of England

The West of England economy is performing strongly and expected to continue to do so, so long as supply of land and labour can be maintained.

Much of this activity is within the Bristol city-region area, which is characterised by high levels of entrepreneurship, clustering in growth sectors and good workforce skills levels. Alongside this, however, there are also relatively high levels of deprivation in parts of Bristol.

The local economy is dominated by the Public Sector, Financial Services, Retail and Hospitality. The area also has significant activity in the ICT Industry, Tobacco, Aerospace and Printing & Packaging.

The structure of the economy means that demand for higher level skills is greater than usual, with less demand for intermediate and low level skills.

This vibrant economy demands significant construction activity, so we will pay particular attention to working with developers and their contractors to better align our provision with their needs.

Wiltshire and Swindon

In general Wiltshire and Swindon has a stable and successful economy. The sub-region enjoys high employment, high economic activity and low unemployment. However, within this overall picture, there are 'pockets' where economic performance has not been so positive.

There has been a significant change in employment structure in the sub-region in the last five years which has been largely positive, set within the overall trend of 4.6% job growth. Reflecting the national trend, there has been a decline in Manufacturing locally and growth in the Service Sector. There has been an above average increase in the total stock of VAT registered businesses in the last ten years.

Swindon had the highest Gross Value Added (GVA) per head in 2002, well above the England average. However, Wiltshire GVA was lower than the South West and England averages.

The very positive picture in Swindon is set against significant job losses, whilst Wiltshire, despite its slower growth, has gained several thousand jobs during the same period. Swindon is particularly dependent on inward investment and has suffered in employment terms as a consequence of large, multinational employers being forced to cut jobs as a result of global market forces. As a result, in the next few years there may be a move towards small and medium sized firms in Swindon.

The contradictory position of high economic growth and job losses in Swindon and lower levels of economic growth but significant employment gains in Wiltshire may be explained by the fact that high technology and knowledge intensive sectors are significant sources of employment in Swindon. These sectors generate high value added activity that can contribute disproportionately to economic growth, particularly in terms of the GVA measure.