

South West
Regional
Commissioning
Statement for
Young People's
Learning
2010/11

February 2010

Of interest to Local Authorities, providers
and partner/stakeholders

South West Regional Commissioning Statement

1 Introduction

The South West is England's largest region by area and has over 5 million residents and a working age population of just over 3 million. The region has the highest percentage of population living in rural districts of any English region. Home to some of the country's leading edge companies such as Orange, Honda, Cobham, GKN and HP Laboratories, the South West has performed well relative to most English regions in terms of productivity, economic activity, employment, business formation and workforce skills.

The overall positive regional picture disguises considerable intra-regional diversity. Thus, the northern parts of the region have been the main drivers of growth, with urban areas – such as Cheltenham and Swindon falling within the top 100 most competitive local economies in the UK¹ contrasting with the more peripheral parts of the rural south and west, such as Torbay and Kerrier, which feature amongst the 25 least competitive authority areas out of 434 in the country. Such intra-regional imbalances, and the stark differences between local areas, translate to the requirement for a differentiated response to learning and skills challenges across the region.

The national economy moved out of recession in the last quarter of 2009 but many economists expect 2010 to remain a challenging period with the possibility of further shocks ahead. While some positive growth indicators have been reported recently, unemployment is unlikely to fall significantly, if at all, during 2010. Increased competition will make it more difficult for people with low skills to find or maintain employment leading to increased demand for some forms of work-related learning provision. We may also see continuing increased demand for 16-18 full-time education, as opportunities for young people's entry to the labour market continue to be limited.

The SW Regional Commissioning Statement provides an overview of challenges and actions required in the commissioning process for 16-18 learning in the region. It is written in response to priorities contained in the national 16-19 Statement of Priorities and Investment Strategy 2010-11, as well as the strategic analysis undertaken in the region and shared with regional and local partners.

2 National Context

National Priorities for Young People

2.1.1 New Arrangements

New arrangements for the planning and funding of education and training for young people will come into effect from April 2010. From this time, the priorities for young people and the responsibility for the outcomes achieved by them will be shared by local authorities, the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the schools, colleges and training organisations that work directly with all those aged 16-19 and those aged 19-25 who are subject to a learning difficulty assessment². The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will be responsible for increasing the number of Apprenticeships for all ages. Local

¹ Huggins R. Day J. (2006) *The UK Competitiveness Index 2006*, London, The Work Foundation

² Financial year is written as, for example, 2010-11, and the academic year as 2010/11. References to young people aged 16-19 means those who had reached the age of 16 by 31 August 2010, but who had not reached the age of 19 by that date, but includes those whose 19th birthday falls within the academic year 2010/11; references to those aged 25 means up to their 25th birthday.

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authorities and the YPLA will work with NAS to make sure young people realise their Apprenticeship ambitions. The priorities for investment in adult skills in 2010-11 were published in *Skills Investment Strategy* by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in November 2009.

The *16-19 Statement of Priorities and Investment Strategy* was published on 12 January 2010 jointly by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Learning and Skills Council. The national priorities have been summarised here. Further details of these priorities and the Investment and Allocations Strategy are in the national statement.

A full copy of the document is available at:

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-statementofpriorities-jan10.pdf>

In planning for 2010/11, the LSC will make allocations direct to providers on behalf of the YPLA. In this transition year the LSC's Young People's Learning Division will work closely with local authorities, Sub-Regional Groupings and the Regional Planning Group to trial key elements of the National Commissioning Framework which will come into effect for 2011/12. The process will be based on the national formula and criteria described in the National Commissioning Framework (NCF). From April 2010, local authorities will actually deliver the allocations to providers.

2.1.2 Increasing Investment in Young People

The 2009 Budget and the Pre-Budget Report of December 2009 signalled record levels of investment in the education and training of young people in England. The Government is investing nearly £8.5 billion in 2010-11 to fund learning for over 1.6 million young people – the highest level ever.

Public Service Agreement targets (NI 79, NI 80, NI 117)³

The Public Service Agreements (PSA) with targets specifically in respect of the young people covered by this statement of priorities are:

PSA 10 Increase the proportion of young people achieving:

- Level 2 at age 19 to 82 per cent in 2011 (from 73.9 per cent in 2007);
- Level 3 at age 19 to 54 per cent in 2011 (from 48.0 per cent in 2007).

PSA 14 Reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training by 2 percentage points by 2010 (from 9.7 per cent in 2004).

2.1.3 Guaranteeing Places and Increasing Participation

Raising the Participation Age

The age of compulsory participation in education or training will be raised to 17 in 2013 and to 18 in 2015. *Raising the Participation Age: supporting local areas to deliver*, published in December 2009, sets out what local authorities and other partners need to do by 2013, and the support available to start their preparations.

³ For the benefit of local authorities any relevant indicators from the National Indicator (NI) Set are identified in brackets.

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September Guarantee

Local authorities have overall responsibility for delivery of the Guarantee at the local level, working in partnership with schools, colleges, training providers, Connexions services and, currently, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), to ensure that they prepare, support and enable all 16- and 17-year-olds to secure a suitable place in learning

Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training

In December 2009 the Government published *Investing in Potential*, a joint Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) strategy to increase the proportion of 16- to 24-year-olds in education, employment or training.

2.1.4 Routes for Young People

Apprenticeships (NI 79,80, 91)

The Government wants to see continued growth in the number of young people undertaking an Apprenticeship, to meet the long-term ambition that at least one out of every five young people are undertaking an Apprenticeship programme. The ASCL Act will ensure that by 2013 an Apprenticeship place will be available to all suitably qualified young people, increasing the number and variety of places available.

Diplomas (NI 90)

Diploma consortia will be delivering increased numbers of Diploma places by offering young people a choice of Phase 1, 2 and 3 qualifications. It is also a critical year for 14-19 Partnerships in terms of ensuring that they have robust plans to secure enough places to deliver the Diploma entitlement in 2013.

Foundation Learning (NI 79, NI 91, NI 117)

By 2010/11, all local authorities should be delivering Foundation Learning for 14-19 year olds in their areas, building on previous programmes, evidence from pilots and the phased implementation of Foundation Learning in the post-16 sector. From 2010/11, the majority of 16-19 providers should be involved in its delivery, as Foundation Learning will encompass all existing programmes at Entry Level and Level 1 for 16- to 19-year-olds, including E2E.

Functional Skills

Functional Skills qualifications are now available at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2. Providers are now expected to deliver these qualifications for young people wherever possible. The number of young people taking adult literacy or numeracy qualifications should fall significantly.

Community service

It is the Government's ambition that, in time, all young people will complete at least 50 hours of community service by the time they reach the age of 19. The community service for 16- to 18-year-olds initiative will continue and be integrated into Foundation Learning from 2010/11 and, together with the local authority 14-16 pilots to be launched in early 2010, will inform future developments, including on the issues of capacity, delivery and recognition.

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Flexible provision

Flexible and responsive provision is essential if every young person is to be enabled to participate in learning. In order to meet the requirements of vulnerable young people provision may need to be available at different times of the day with a range of flexible start dates should be available from colleges and other providers throughout the year.

2.1.5 Support for Young People

Access to learning and transport

A short-term £12 million Transport Partnership Fund has helped local authorities to develop innovative and sustainable transport solutions. This fund will continue in 2010-11 and will be administered by the YPLA.

Information, Advice and Guidance

Local authorities should take forward the DCSF information, advice and guidance (IAG) Strategy: *Quality, Choice and Aspiration*, to ensure that the right support and guidance is in place for all young people by 2013 as an essential component of the 14-19 Entitlement. Local authorities will be expected to follow the related Directions and Statutory Guidance which is expected to be issued in Spring 2010. Local authorities must work with and through 14-19 Partnerships to ensure that the Common Application Process is in place by September 2011 for all young people in Year 11. The Common Application Process links with the 14-19 Prospectus and aligns with the Apprenticeship Vacancies Online system to give young people ownership of the application process and equal access to all curriculum routes. .

Work experience for people over compulsory school age

As part of the new vision for work experience and the review of the DCSF's work experience standard (as announced in October 2009 in *Quality, Choice and Aspiration*), more post-16 work experience with employers will be promoted. From 2010, local authorities will have the power to secure the provision of work experience for people aged 16-19 within their area, and for those aged 19-25 who are subject to a learning difficulty assessment.

Learner voice

The 14-19 Partnerships are developing good practice that enables the learner voice to be heard at the local level. The Learning and Skills Council's YPLA Committee has committed itself to listening to the learner voice in its deliberations, and it is planned that this will continue after April 2010 when the YPLA begins to operate

Education of young offenders (NI 19, NI 45)

The YPLA will support local authorities in fulfilling their new responsibilities from 2010 to commission and fund education and training for young offenders in youth custody (this includes young people aged 10-17 and some 18-year-olds near the end of their sentence who remain in youth custody).

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2.1.6 Attainment and Progression

Narrowing the attainment gaps (NI 81, NI 82, NI 148)

Narrowing the gap between the attainment of the most disadvantaged young people (including those who are looked after or who are care leavers) and their peers is a key policy priority. The YPLA will provide local authorities, sub-regional groupings and regional planning groups with data on, and strategic analysis of, the attainment gaps.

Equality and diversity

The LSC will ensure that those providers it commissions comply with all the relevant legislation that relates to gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief, age and transgender equality, and the statutory codes of practice for education published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Equality and diversity will be embedded in the new commissioning arrangements.

Raising the Quality of Provision for Young People

The Framework for Excellence (FfE) is the Government's performance assessment framework for further education colleges and post-16 education and training providers. The Framework for Excellence will be implemented in schools with sixth forms from 2010.

Non-section 96 funding

In 2009 an impact assessment, using 2008/09 data, was undertaken of a proposal that external qualifications for young people should only be funded if they have been approved by the Secretary of State under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. Following consideration of the results of this impact assessment, funding will be withdrawn from 31 July 2010 from over 1,000 qualifications that are currently eligible for funding. A list of those qualifications will be published on the LSC's website in January 2010.

14-19 Qualification Strategy

The 14-19 Qualification Strategy is designed to ensure by 2013 the majority of young people will access qualifications through one of the four national learning routes: Apprenticeships; Diplomas; Foundation Learning; and GCSEs/A levels. Providers are responsible for ensuring that they deliver only those qualifications approved by the Secretary of State under section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and should also be working to align their offer to the four national routes.

Level 2 to Level 3 conversion

Around a quarter of young people who achieve Level 2 do not go on to achieve Level 3. This includes some 30 per cent of those who achieve eight GCSEs at grade A*-C and 40 per cent of those who achieve seven GCSEs at grades A*-C. Local authorities should consider with their 14-19 Partnerships how such young people can be best supported to achieve Level 3.

2.1.7 Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Budgetary control

A key challenge for local authorities from 2010 will be to maintain control of the budgets to support learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD). In particular, they should, through Children's Trusts, seek to ensure that third-party contributions are secured wherever appropriate.

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Roles and responsibilities

The ASCL Act fundamentally changes the responsibilities of local authorities for learners with LDD. Local authorities become the sole accountable bodies for all the outcomes and services for learners with LDD aged 0-19 and for those aged 19-25 who are subject to a learning difficulty assessment. Local authorities must secure appropriate provision for these learners.

Local provision and inclusion in mainstream learning

The inclusion of more young people with LDD in mainstream learning (for example in FE colleges) will remain a key priority. Local authorities should be working towards the development of high-quality provision to enable learners to participate locally (rather than be reliant on residential provision which can often be some considerable distance from the learner's home).

Employment and access to Apprenticeships

By September 2010, providers will no longer be funded to deliver work-preparation programmes for learners with LDD that do not focus on learning in the workplace and the supported employment model.

3 Social and Economic Context

This section draws upon the strategic analysis that LSC South West has completed during 2009 and has shared with the Regional Development Agency, the Regional Planning Group and all local authorities in the region. The strategic analysis is an iterative process and elements of the analysis have developed through the dialogue with these partners.

3.1.1 Increasing Participation

South West Position on existing PSA target for participation at age 17

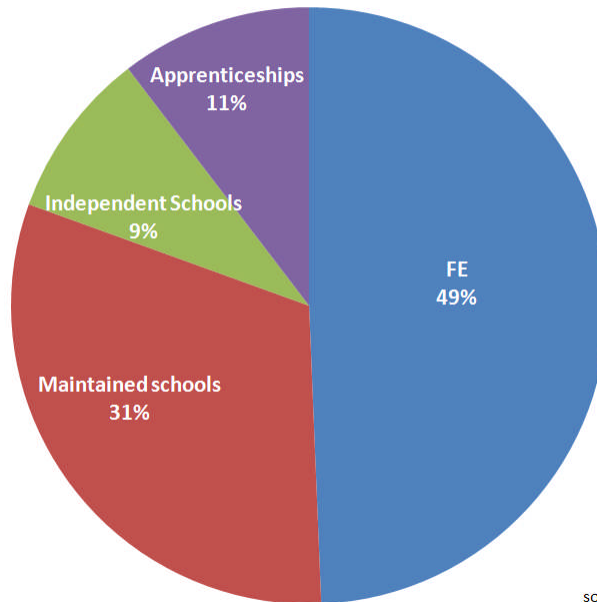
- 52% of learners at the end of key stage 4 at schools in the South West achieved 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C in 2008/09, compared to 50% nationally. This equates to around 18,000 young people having completed compulsory education in the region without level 2 qualifications.
- The age of compulsory participation in education or training will be raised to 17 in 2013 and to 18 in 2015.
- The proportion of 17 year olds participating in learning increased from 75% to 77% in the South West between 2004/05 and 2007/08, the latest year for which figures are currently available⁴. Over the same period, participation by 17 year olds increased from 75% to 78% nationally. Subsequent participation in the SW region will need to increase by an average of four percentage points annually for the target of 100% participation to be met in 2013.
- From the same data source, Further Education providers accounted for approximately 49% of 17 year old learners in the South West, with maintained

⁴ June 2009 update of Statistical First Release 13/2008, source DCSF (next update June 2010)

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school sixth forms (SSF) holding 31%, independent schools with 9% and Apprenticeships with 11% of learners.

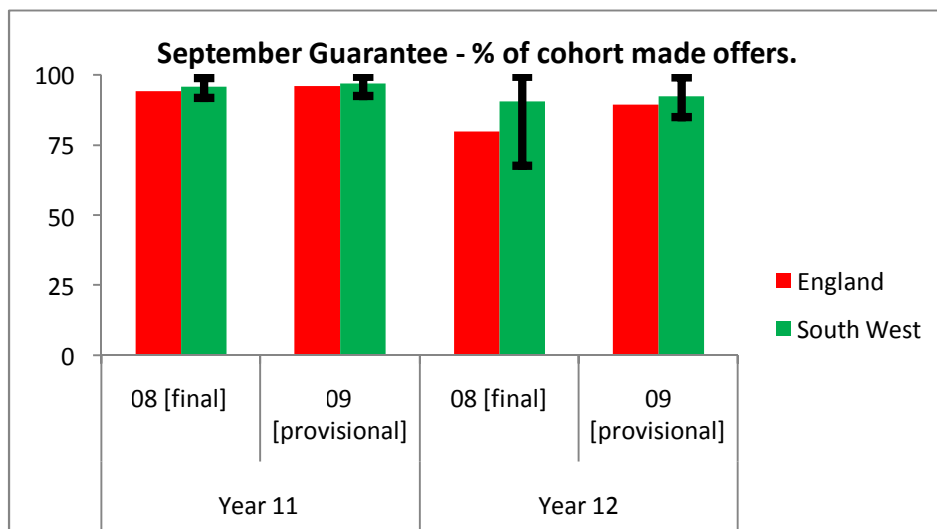
17 year olds participation in the SW region



source: DCSF June 2009 update of SFR 13/2008

- Whilst over 90% of SSF learners are studying at level 3, FE learners are distributed more across levels, with approximately 57% studying at level 3, 26% studying at level 2 and 17% studying at sub level 2.
- The extension of the September Guarantee to 17 year olds is intended to support increased participation ahead of the raising of the age of compulsory participation in education or training in 2013.

September Guarantee.



Source: NCCIS

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- With 95.8% of year 11 learners receiving an offer through the September Guarantee in 2009, the South West is the best-performing region in England. Only one region out performed the South West's proportion of 17year-olds receiving an offer [92.3%].
- The region recorded an improvement in performance for both measures between 2008 and 2009.
- This performance means that around 1,800 young people in year 11 and 4,600 aged 17 were not made offers in the region in 2009.
- There was some in-region variation, with, for example, performance at year 11 ranging from 92.6% in Bristol to 99.4% in Plymouth.

Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

- At the end of November 2009, there were around 9,015 16-18 year olds in the South West who were categorised as Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). This equates to around 5.6% of the cohort, compared to a national figure of 6.5%. The South West's NEET rate fell by two percentage points between November 2008 and November 2009, while the national NEET rate fell by three percentage points.
- The region is noteworthy for its wide variation in local NEET rates, in November 2009, with Swindon having a NEET rate of over 8% whilst Torbay has a rate below 4%.

Youth Unemployment

- The South West's youth⁵ unemployment rate stood at 11.0% [or around 46,000 people] at March 2009, an increase of 1.4 percentage points since March 2008. This rate is below the national rate of 16.0%, and has risen at a slower rate⁶.
- However, the regional average conceals several youth unemployment hot-spots, with, for example, Swindon and Wiltshire's totals of youth unemployed more than doubling between October 2008 and October 2009⁷.

Teenage Pregnancy

- With a conception rate of 36 [a total of 3,500 pregnancies] compared to an England average of 42, teenage pregnancy is a smaller issue in the South West than in some other regions. As with most other measures, there is marked variation between parts of the South West, with Torbay's rate of 57 being more than twice as large as Bath and North East Somerset's.
- A similar rate of decline in teenage pregnancy was measured in the South West and in England between 1998 and 2007 [-11% and -9%, respectively]. The South

⁵ 16-24

⁶ Source: Labour Force Survey March 2009, Nomis, ONS. © Crown Copyright.

⁷ Source: Claimant Count. Nomis, ONS. © Crown Copyright.

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West average masked wide variation, however, with Gloucestershire registering a 25% decrease while in Bristol there was a 7% increase.⁸

Youth Offending

- There were 16,643 disposals⁹ relating to 10 to 17 year olds in the South West in 2007/08. This total represents a fall of around 5% on the previous year, compared a fall of around 2% nationally. The number of disposals varies between parts of the South West, with, for example, Devon recording four times as many as North Somerset.¹⁰

3.1.2 Attainment and Progression

Achievement by age 19 – closing the gap

- At 74%, the South West's proportion of 19 year olds qualified to at least level 2 is¹¹ one percentage point above the England average. Progress has been slower-than-average in the region, with an increase of seven percentage points between 2003/04 and 2007/08, compared to a national increase of 10 percentage points.
- There is considerable in-region variation about the regional average, with local authority areas recording scores ranging from 80% in Bath & North East Somerset to 65% in neighbouring Bristol and Swindon.
- At level 2, the gap between the proportion of SW 19 year olds who were and were not eligible for free school meals at the age of 16 is 26 percentage points. This figure has fallen from 29% in 2004/05. The South West's gap is larger and falling more slowly than the England average. The difference between the South West's performance by this measure and the England average is equivalent to around 300 SW region free school meal-eligible 19 year olds attaining level 2 qualifications.
- At 49%, the South West's proportion of 19 year olds qualified to at least level 3 is two percentage points above the England average. Progress has been slower-than-average in the region, with an increase of six percentage points between 2003/04 and 2007/08, compared to a national increase of seven percentage points.
- There is considerable in-region variation about the regional average, with local authority areas recording scores ranging from 55% in Bath & North East Somerset and Wiltshire to 38% in Swindon.
- At level three, the gap between the proportion of SW 19 year olds who were and were not eligible for free school meals at the age of 16 is 29 percentage points. This figure has fallen from 30% in 2004/05. The South West's gap is larger than the England average, although it is falling by the same rate. The difference between the South West's performance by this measure and the England average is equivalent

⁸ Under 18 conception rate per 1,000 females aged 15-17. Source: Sources: Office for National Statistics and Teenage Pregnancy Unit. 2007 data are provisional.

⁹ Disposal is an umbrella term referring both to sentences given by the court and pre-court decisions made by the police. Disposals may be divided into four separate categories of increasing seriousness: pre-court; first-tier; community-based penalties; custodial sentences.

¹⁰ Source: Regional disposals 2006/08, Youth Justice Board.

¹¹ 2007/08

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to around 175 free school meal-eligible 19 year olds in the SW region attaining level 3 qualifications¹².

3.1.3 Meeting the Needs of the Economy

The recent changes to the education, employment and skills system have been designed to ensure that the skill system is demand led – producing young people and adults that have the skills that local, regional and national employers need. In order to achieve that outcome commissioning processes need to be more closely to the demands of the local and regional economy. This section sets out the regional economic context which informs the commissioning of 16-19 provision.

The economic downturn began in 2008 and in April 2009, as part of the wider government response to the crisis the department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) launched ‘New Industry, New Jobs’ (NINJ) which put forward a strategic vision for the recovery of the UK economy. Its focus was the need to return to pre-recession rates of growth by removing the barriers that were holding business back and by building on our economic strengths. It identified a number of industrial sectors where the UK has particular strengths that could be built on and further exploited. The South West has a strong presence in the following NINJ sectors:

- Low carbon – the South West was the first region to be designated a low carbon economic area, with an expertise in marine energy, offshore wind and nuclear.
- Composites – the South West RDA is the national lead on composites and its associated work with aerospace and advanced engineering.
- Digital, industrial biotechnology and micro and nano technology.
- Future nuclear; with the first new UK build happening in the South West

In December 2009 BIS launched ‘Going for Growth: Our Future Prosperity’ which emphasised that in order to decrease the fiscal deficit we need to maximise economic growth in the short to medium term. The paper reiterated the importance of NINJ and ‘a jobs-rich’ recovery and highlighted the need to ensure that the skills of all are relevant to the demands of a low carbon economy, particularly in terms of higher level skills.

Local Authority commissioning can support the delivery of NINJ and ‘Going for Growth’ in two main ways; promoting the take up of apprenticeships both generally (see below) and specifically in relation to the NINJ agenda, and by commissioning provision that is relevant to NINJ. We would expect to see the nature of the commissioning will vary from area to area as the spatial concentration of the sectors needs to be taken into account. For example the nuclear agenda is of particular significance to Somerset as the new build will be taking place at Hinkley Point and EDF Energy have a target of ensuring that 50% of local people get jobs related to the build and running of the facility. These priorities have also driven the Regional Priorities Statement that will inform the Skills Funding Agency spend on adult provision. Some of the future need identified in the Regional Priorities Statement includes level 2 and 3 provision in the NINJ sectors. [PUT IN LINK TO RPS]

¹² Source: Matched Administrative Dataset / Fischer Family Trust.

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3.1.3.1 Apprenticeships provision

- The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, which received royal assent in November 2009, requires schools to provide advice about Apprenticeships so that young people are properly informed about Apprenticeships as a career choice.
- Currently the rate of Apprenticeship participation for 16-18 year olds averages c10%, with significant variation across the region, from under 7% in BANES to 14% in Dorset. Local authorities will have a duty to co-operate with the National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) to identify local demand from young people and to stimulate demand to ensure that the Apprenticeship entitlement is delivered and the trajectory for increasing participation is met.
- A higher than average proportion of employers continue to employ apprentices in certain key sectors in the region - Summit Skills (building services), IMI (automotive) and SEMTA (science, engineering and manufacturing technologies). Within its Employer Engagement Strategy for 2009/10, SW National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) identified national priorities (logistics, creative and cultural and IT), and a number of sectors with potential for growth, particularly in 16-18 apprenticeships:
 - Retail (Skillsmart);
 - Hospitality & Catering (People 1st);
 - Health (especially public sector elements);
 - Care (especially public sector elements);
 - Justice (especially public sector elements);
 - Education (Lifelong Learning – especially public sector elements);
 - Financial Services.
- In addition to these sectors, for 2010/11 NAS will also seek to increase penetration in engineering, which will support the NINJ agenda, and in elements of the public sector not covered above. It is crucial therefore that quality provision is commissioned to match these aspirations for growth, especially in 16-18.
- Additional to these regional priorities the following sectors are key national priorities where NAS intervention is expected to make an impact: Logistics; Creative and Cultural; and IT (e-skills).
- Anecdotal evidence from Employer Services Manager visits, Federation of Small Businesses and Confederation of British Industry liaison suggest increasing awareness of Apprenticeships and the need to use the programme to solve some persistent acute skill shortages. A high proportion of micro-businesses (55% of total of 1,293 Customer Relationship Management requests) have registered interest in the Apprenticeship programme; however they often are not able to make the longer term investment. This latter issue will be addressed by a regional ESF programme that will launch in April 2010. Requests have come from a broad range of sectors with Public Services (usually Care), Engineering and Construction being prevalent. Conversely there has been little demand from Logistics, Marine, Sport/Fitness and retail – all sectors that could offer growth.
- A key challenge for the SW will be the continued work with the Public Sector to drive both 16/18 Apprenticeship starts (and 19–24 starts as second priority). There

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will be a need to work in partnership to help them utilise their procurement powers to the full to support the Apprenticeship programme.

- A number of large Health Sector Trusts may have the potential to become direct deliverers of Apprenticeships and are considering the potential to cluster together to offer 'Training Centres of Excellence' within 3 Skills Alliance areas in the SW. NAS will wish to monitor this development and if they can offer the required volumes, quality and access to clinical Frameworks not offered by the present Provider network NAS will want to consider extending ER contracts or encouraging an OCT exercise.

Demand and Supply of STEM skills¹³

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills are crucial to the delivery of the NINJ agenda and are vital to a wider range of employers across the economy. Prior to the recession employers needing STEM skills were finding it increasingly hard to recruit, and although numbers in some hard to fill vacancies have dropped with the recession, there are still skills shortages in these areas.

Local Authorities can help improve the STEM pipeline by continuing to encourage demand for STEM and by commissioning relevant provision - in line with the targets set by government in the Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-14 (HMT). The current regional picture is summarised below:

- In general the region performs fairly well at both Key Stages 2 and 3 (pre-GCSE) in Maths and Science, with increasing levels of achievement in both subjects.
- The region has a higher level of achievement of five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including both English and Maths compared to England as a whole, and has seen year-on-year improvement on this measure since its introduction.
- The number of students taking a Double Award in science has fallen significantly across the region, down by more than 3,100 (6.8%) in just two years, albeit less than the decline nationally (10.6%). The pass rate in double science is improving. The number of GCSE entries in all three sciences (Chemistry, Physics and Biology) separately has been increasing year on year since 2004.
- The number of A level entries in STEM subjects in schools has only increased by 3.8% between 2001 and 2007.
- In FE (which includes A levels and Work-Based Learning (WBL)), between 2004/05 and 2006/07, the number of enrolments on courses in STEM subjects declined by 36% (mirroring declines nationally). The greatest decline was in Information and Communication Technology down by over 40%. Compared to England as a whole, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies was the only subject area in the region to experience a greater level of decline than is the case nationally. By level, the most significant declines are at the higher level and Level 2.

¹³ STEM: supply and Demand of Skills in the South West. SLIM for SW RDA

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4 Regional Priorities for 16-18 participation and success

Local LSC and local authority colleagues have prepared 15 Local Area Statements of Need¹⁴ in the region to articulate key challenges and actions to be taken into account when commissioning 16-18 provision in each area. These have been informed by the strategic analysis summarised in the previous section and, in turn, have informed our regional commissioning priorities for 2010/11. The local challenges will be used by local LSC teams to inform their commissioning dialogue with providers.

Naturally, many challenges and actions articulated in the local Statements reflect themes in the DCSF national 14-19 Implementation Plan and other relevant national policies. This section brings together regional priorities that are derived from LSC South West's strategic analysis and the Local Area Statements of Need. It represents priorities that we believe should have particular emphasis within the South West, which are complementary to the national priorities summarised in Section 2.

Challenges and Actions	Commissioning Priorities
1. Youth employment has fallen significantly during the recession and not all of the displaced young people have entered learning. To reduce youth unemployment levels, regional commissioning needs to secure learning provision that meets the needs of all young people, particularly those who traditionally have sought to enter employment before age 18.	Ensuring that the balance of provision by institution, qualification type/level and mode of delivery responds to the changing labour market, and which can respond to the drive from LAs to improve the STEM pipeline in a timely way.
2. Rising NEET in the South West creates pressures on Entry to Employment (E2E) places and on meeting the September Guarantee. Securing provision that meets the needs of NEET and which facilitates progression is a challenge, particularly in the absence of traditional employment options.	Ensuring effective transfer of E2E to Foundation Learning and ensuring sufficient appropriate learning provision is available to meet the needs of NEET.
3. Learning participation at age 17 rose by 2 percentage points between 2004/05 and 2007/08 and growth has lagged behind the national rate of increase. In preparation for the raising of the age of compulsory participation in education or training, it is important that the region's providers can improve retention, achievement and progression in learning, ensuring that learning routes for young people extend to age 18 and beyond. Living in a rural area should not be a barrier to learning.	Securing provision that provides all young people with learning that takes them through to age 18, along identified progression routes, as needed.

¹⁴ There is a combined Local Area Statement of Need for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

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<p>4. There is a need to increase participation by vulnerable young people, particularly learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD) and care leavers. The South West region showed the fastest growth in LLDD spend between 2005/06 and 2007/08. It is important that local authorities and Connexions establish the scale and nature of LLDD provision needed and assure capacity with the FE sector to meet these needs. Young people should be made aware of the support available through Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and other Learner Support programmes.</p>	<p>Making best use of ALS and LLDD budgets to assure provision available allowing all young people to achieve their potential.</p>
<p>5. Increased demand for learning in the absence of employment opportunities implies a need to make best use of funding opportunities such as the recent refresh of the ESF regional framework. Commissioning bodies need to be aware of prospective areas of growth in demand to meet the learning needs of 16-18 year olds.</p>	<p>Ensuring LSC ESF and Open Competitive Tendering activities are integrated with mainstream LSC negotiated funding allocations for 2010/11.</p>
<p>6. Only one-in-five of jobs in the region held by 16-18 year olds has structured training. Increasing employer investment in young people's learning is a significant challenge for the National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) and the provider network. A change to contracting arrangements nationally means that we now manage 12-15% fewer Apprenticeships within the region as a result. Identifying the volume and mix of 16-18 Apprenticeships provision needed to meet local and regional needs is a task for the NAS.</p>	<p>Assuring National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) support for commissioning proposals in region. Ensuring NAS and locally identified priorities are secured through national contracting approach for Apprenticeships.</p>
<p>7. Commissioning needs to be responsive to cohort change.</p>	<p>Ensuring consolidated learner baselines issued in January 2010 reflect cohort change at each provider.</p>
<p>8. There has been only limited growth in the proportions of young people achieving Level 2/Level 3 by age 19. Raising success rates for young people in FE is a clear way in which this can be tackled.</p>	<p>The commissioning process will set out to remove provision that is under-performing against national minimum levels of performance. Using learner success as a criterion for allocating any available growth, after prioritising growth arising from cohort and structural changes.</p>
<p>9. There remain differences between participation and achievement based on gender and ethnicity, between those eligible for free school meals and those that are not. One commissioning aim should be to reduce disparities and close the gaps in participation and achievement for disadvantaged groups of young people.</p>	<p>Reinforcing the use of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures through the provider dialogue.</p>