

Learning and Skills Council Local Area Statement of Need

Black Country

2008/09

December 2007

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities
across West Midlands

Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the West Midlands Regional Commissioning Plan and the West Midlands Regional Strategic Analysis.

This Black Country sub-region covers four local authority areas – Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, and has a working age population of 656,000. The skills base is the lowest in the West Midlands region, with 57% of the working age population having a Level 2 qualification, against regional and national figures of 64% and 67% respectively. Similarly, attainment of Level 2 and Level 3 at age 19 is the lowest in the West Midlands, the gap having widened over the three years since 2004.

The main themes of our annual Plan in 2007/08 reflected the national priorities for the year, and our challenges for 2008/09 remain in the same broad areas. Examples of key areas where progress has been made are –

- Increase participation of young people
- Increase adult basic skills
- Increase employer skills provision
- Construct Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Plans for all City Strategy wards
- Support regeneration of Black Country by renewing the FE estate
- Support providers under 'Notices to Improve'

The progress mentioned above has largely resulted from collaborative working, and would not have been possible without the continued commitment of partners to work together to find innovative and sustainable solutions. Black Country LSC has a strong record of working with external partners, both at a local authority area level and importantly, at a pan-Black Country level; this must be maintained and developed.

There are 12 major developments in the Black Country due for completion by 2010. These are forecast to create 5,000 new jobs across the retail, service and knowledge based sectors. We will need to ensure that local training provision allows local people to benefit from these opportunities.

Mike Bell
Area Director

Challenges, key actions and measures of success for Black Country

Our challenges and actions are based on our *Regional Strategic Analysis*; a robust strategic analysis of supply, demand and need; as well as ongoing dialogue with key partner organisations. The analysis can be accessed at <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/WestMidlands/wmr-regionalstrategicanalysis-dec07.pdf>

National Priority 1: Create a Demand for Skills	
Challenge – Reduction of numbers of young people classed as NEET	
<p>Action:</p> <p>Ensure rigorous and rapid response to September Guarantee monitoring, by engaging the Connexions and Provider networks to locate and provide an offer where needed.</p> <p>Using each LA area NEET steering group, commission provision targeting specific wards identified as ‘hotspot areas’ as well as specific ‘high risk’ groups – young offenders, LAC, teenage parents, LLDD learners.</p>	<p>Measure of Success:</p> <p>September Guarantee met across Black Country</p> <p>Reduction of NEET cohort in each area to meet respective LAA targets.</p>
Challenge – Provision of a curriculum offer that meets the needs of each Black Country area 14-19 cohort in line with the Black Country Consortium ‘Enjoy and Achieve’ Plan.	
<p>Action:</p> <p>Through each local 14-19 Partnership Board, agree a 14-19 Plan that identifies issues to be addressed in each LA area, and proposes actions.</p> <p>Support the providers, including the School Sixth Forms, to enable them to</p>	<p>Measure of Success:</p> <p>Curriculum offer agreed with partners and providers.</p> <p>Achievement of the September Guarantee in each BC area by 30 September 2008.</p> <p>Green RAG rating for collaboration and NEET reduction, for all BC areas in the autumn 2008 14-19 Progress Check</p> <p>Reduction in small volumes and low quality delivery in School Sixth Forms.</p>

<p>deliver a high quality learning experience.</p> <p>Maintain continuous development of post 16 infrastructure</p> <p>Increase WBL participation, targeting recruitment in key sectors – Health & Care, Retail, ICT, Engineering, and Construction.</p>	<p>Ensure BSF plans are fully aligned with FE capital plans in all BC areas. Support the development of academies in Wolverhampton and Sandwell.</p> <p>WBL 16-18 participation increase from 2847 to 3200.</p>
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National Priority 2 : Better skills, Better jobs, Better lives

Challenge – A coherent and effective Adult and Community Strategy across the Black Country

<p>Action:</p> <p>Working with LA and Third Sector, align work of the new EI in Walsall with the targets of the refreshed LAA, the ‘NESPs’, and the aspirations of the LPs</p> <p>Continue to support the development of high quality learning in the new EI in Walsall</p> <p>Create a mechanism for effective planning of all Adult Learning in Dudley.</p> <p>Ensure that all new Local Area Agreements across the Black Country include LSC priorities, which can be measured.</p> <p>Ensure effective implementation of City Strategy across the Black Country.</p> <p>Review public sector provision for 25+ apprenticeships.</p> <p>Support Sandwell Adult Education Service with their capital programme</p>	<p>Measure of Success:</p> <p>Merger of the two Walsall EIs in early autumn 2008</p> <p>Cabinet approval of a Walsall A&C strategy that aligns with the refreshed LAA targets</p> <p>No Sector Subject Area falling below the MLP thresholds by the end of 2009, or any ‘Notice to Improve’ issued to the new EI.</p> <p>Dudley Adult Strategic Partnership in place by the Summer Term 2008, together with a strategy created for the delivery of Adult Learning and Skills in Dudley.</p> <p>New LAAs agreed and in place by June 2008</p> <p>Deprived Area Fund (DAF) and relevant ESF contracts in place managed and monitored.</p> <p>Places available in each BC area</p> <p>Approval of Stage 2 capital proposal.</p>
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Challenge – Meet skills needs of employers	
<p>Action:</p> <p>Work with JobcentrePlus, local authorities and other partners to identify skills needs of local employers, and ensure local provision is available or commissioned; with a focus on retail and construction.</p> <p>Work with Black Country partners to assess skills requirements for key inward investment and future development projects</p>	<p>Measure of success:</p> <p>Effective employer partnerships in retail and construction in place across the Black Country.</p> <p>Key sites identified with analysis of potential jobs and sectors. Outcomes used to target worklessness and increase employment levels.</p>

National Priority 3 : Transforming FE	
Challenge – Augment the learning capital infrastructure across the Black Country	
<p>Action:</p> <p>Submit full West Walsall 16-19 Competition solution to Regional Capital Committee, autumn 2008</p> <p>Support Walsall College to ensure its capital project is completed, and does not destabilise the College's financial stability</p> <p>Oversee the effective merger of Dudley and Stourbridge Colleges.</p> <p>Support and challenge for Dudley College to enable them to achieve a positive outcome from their re-inspection.</p> <p>Ensure a successful outcome to the Application in Principle and full application for new FE facilities in Brierley Hill and support for other capital proposals in line with the Regional Capital Plan.</p> <p>Deliver Phase 1 of City of Wolverhampton College Capital Plan by September 2009</p> <p>Ensure a successful outcome to the Application in Principle, and full application, for new FE facilities in West Bromwich for Sandwell College.</p>	<p>Measure of Success:</p> <p>West Walsall Enterprise Centres in advanced planning stage with at least one in place by September 2009</p> <p>New Walsall College open for business in September 2009</p> <p>New college incorporated in 2008/09.</p> <p>Agreed completion of PIAP and removal of their 'Notice to Improve'.</p> <p>AIP approved and achievement of a joint capital strategy between Dudley and Stourbridge Colleges.</p> <p>No low quality accommodation, and enhanced specialist facilities.</p> <p>AIP approved and work started on site by Autumn 2008.</p>

Partnership Working

We cannot deliver our challenging agenda and create a new learning culture on our own. We have formed strong links with others who share our passion for transforming learning.

We have built strong relationships with Local Authorities and Jobcentre Plus. These are helping to develop high-quality learning which meets the demands of employers and individuals. We also have strong patterns of partnership outside of government, including employers, the voluntary sector, and trade unions.

Our wider partnerships extend well beyond direct campaigns to promote learning. All our partnerships create opportunities to promote a new learning culture.

Black Country LSC already has clear operating relationships with a number of key groups, namely:

- Government Office West Midlands and Advantage West Midlands
- Jobcentre Plus / New Deal Task Force
- Black Country Local Authorities
- Black Country Consortium
- Black Country Training Organisations network (BCTG)
- Black Country Partnership for Learning
- Small Business Service
- Urban Regeneration Companies
- Economic Regeneration Partnership Groups
- Connexions and adult guidance services
- NEET steering groups
- 14-19 Partnership groups
- Employment and Skills Boards
- Learndirect
- Adult Learning Inspectorate and OFSTED
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and awarding bodies
- Voluntary and community organisations, and those representing equal opportunities issues