Evaluation Strategy

For Information

Learning+Skills Council

Meeting Needs, Improving Choice

Evaluation arrangements for 'Success for All' Theme 1 Meeting Needs, Improving Choice

Summary

This strategy confirms the evaluation arrangements made by the Learning and Skills Council for Theme 1 Meeting Needs, Improving Choice, including strategic area reviews of all LSC-funded post-16 learning and skills provision across England in response to *Success for All*, the Government's reform strategy for further education and training.

This strategy will be of interest to Learning and Skills Council members, executive directors, national directors, senior managers and strategic planning managers.

October 2003

Contents

Section 1: Evaluation Strategy

Summary

1   The evaluation strategy is an important part of the delivery of any new policy. This strategy sets out how the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) will evaluate Success for All Theme 1 'Meeting Needs, Improving Choice' (Theme 1). It confirms the arrangements and action the LSC will need to take to find out whether it is delivering the key policy goals of:

- meeting learner, employer and community needs; and

- improving the choice and quality of post-16 learning and skills provision.

Rationale

2   A primary function of the LSC is to shape the supply of education and training to better meet the needs of learners, employers and communities. In carrying out this function, the infrastructure and provision that exists needs to be continually reviewed and improved on, and if necessary reshaped to ensure it is consistently operating effectively and responding efficiently to the changing needs of the economy and society. To make this happen, Theme 1 has introduced strategic area reviews to provide a coordinated approach to planning the organisation of post-16 education and training.

3   Post-16 education and training must respond to external factors, social challenges and employment needs. It is important therefore that coherent strategies are in place that allow and encourage providers to keep pace with the needs of the market place while ensuring the operational capacity of the provider network delivers best value.

4   The LSC's approach to planning will impact on the way in which providers in an area structure their operations to create highly regarded learning environments that are flexible enough to support curriculum and structural change. Different types of structures and modes of delivery will suit different local situations. Although some areas may face similar problems, different solutions may be appropriate due to differing local circumstances.

5   Local LSCs will need to work with schools, colleges, work-based, voluntary and community providers to find ways of increasing capacity or even creating new provision/providers where demand is growing. Equally, where demand is shrinking or where overlap and duplication exists, it will be necessary to rationalise provision and scale back capacity.

6   Theme 1 is making a significant contribution towards the Government's twin aims of social inclusion and economic prosperity. It has a direct impact on the LSC's overall targets that underpin the level 2 targets within the Public

Sector Agreement. Theme 1 also supports the delivery of other key Government strategies, such as:

- Skills for Life Strategy;
- 14-19 Strategy;
- Skills Strategy;
- Higher Education Strategy;
- E-learning Strategy; and
- London Challenge.

7   To ensure the policy goals of meeting needs and improving choice are achieved, the following high-level aims have been identified:

a   to ensure the pattern and mix of provision, including e-learning, meets the current needs and future priorities for all learners and communities while enhancing quality and improving choice;

b   to create a more responsive infrastructure that directly engages employers;

c   to achieve better choice for young people and more parental confidence through improved 16-19 provision;

d   to strengthen the links with higher education providers and achieve better pathways; and

e   to develop a coherent post-16 learning and skills sector by embracing and integrating all strategies (e.g. 14-19, Skills, HE) through local decision making.

Objectives

8   Theme 1 embraces the LSC's corporate objectives that underpin the Public Sector Agreement level 2 targets. These objectives are disaggregated to local LSCs and aim to improve participation and basic skills and address diverging standards of learner achievement.

| Corporate Objectives	Targets
• Extend participation of young people in education and training;	• 90% by age 22 in FT by 2010
• Raise the attainment of young people at level 2;	• Increase of 3% between 2004-06
• Raise the attainment of adults at level 2; and	• 1 million between 2003-06
• Improve the basic skills levels of adults	• 1.5 million by 2007

9   The following specific Theme 1 objectives have been identified to bring clarity to areas of priority with the organisation of post-16 provision. There is no blue print for the organisation of post-16 provision and the LSC will not reorganise for reorganisation sake. In order to improve choice and access for 16 to 19 year olds and shape provision to focus more on skill needs, the LSC

will consider establishing new sixth forms and CoVEs depending on local and regional circumstances. The LSC will actively promote equality and diversity in all of its work.

Theme 1 Objectives	Indicator
Increase specialist provision to meet skill needs in priority areas	Establish 400 Centres of Vocational Excellence by 2006
Increase distinct 16-19 provision	Establish between 40-60 new sixth forms by 2008
Actively promote Equality & Diversity through local planning	Establish, monitor and assess EDIMs for the 47 local LSC areas

Trajectories and Milestones

10   The CoVE programme trajectory below shows the distance travelled since September 2001 and the distance to travel to secure the approval of 400 CoVEs by March 2006. This quantitative target demonstrates the LSC's commitment to improving the supply of specialist provision to meet the needs of employers in priority areas. Table 1 below outlines the milestones of the CoVE Programme.
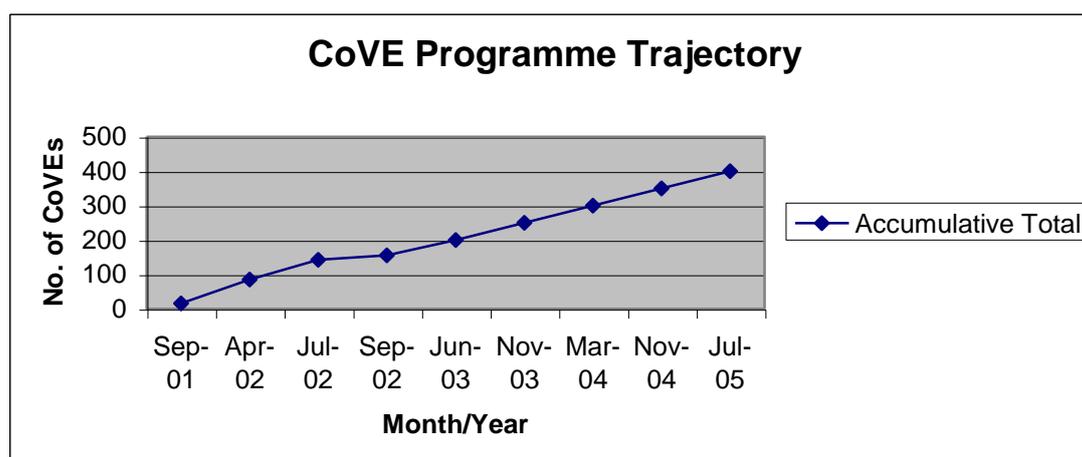
Table 1 – Milestones for the CoVE Programme

Likely dates for acceptance	No of proposals	Cumulative Total
Sep-01	16	16
Apr-02	69	85
Jul-02	58	143
Sep-02	13	156
Jun-03	44	200
Nov-03	50	250
Mar-04	50	300
Nov-04	50	350
Jul-05	50	400
Mar-06	0	400

11   The sixth forms trajectory below indicates the likely range of new sixth form developments, such as new sixth form colleges, new school sixth forms, new sixth form centres within FE colleges or new collaborative sixth form models between colleges, schools and work-based learning providers. This trajectory has been derived from a very early and basic bottom-up survey of 47 local LSCs' forecasts of the possible future organisation of 16-19 provision. It is important to acknowledge that the local forecasts are extremely tentative as some local LSCs are further along the StAR process than others and their predictions about outcomes are not particularly well grounded.

12   The forecast is based upon initial estimates by local LSC staff about the range of probable outcomes of the StARs process. For this reason, the trajectory can only be indicative. The LSC is currently forecasting establishing between 40 and 60 new sixth forms by 2008. Early indications show that at least 20 of these proposals will come to fruition. Table 2 provides milestones of the indicative range (ceiling and floor) for the possible establishment of new sixth forms.
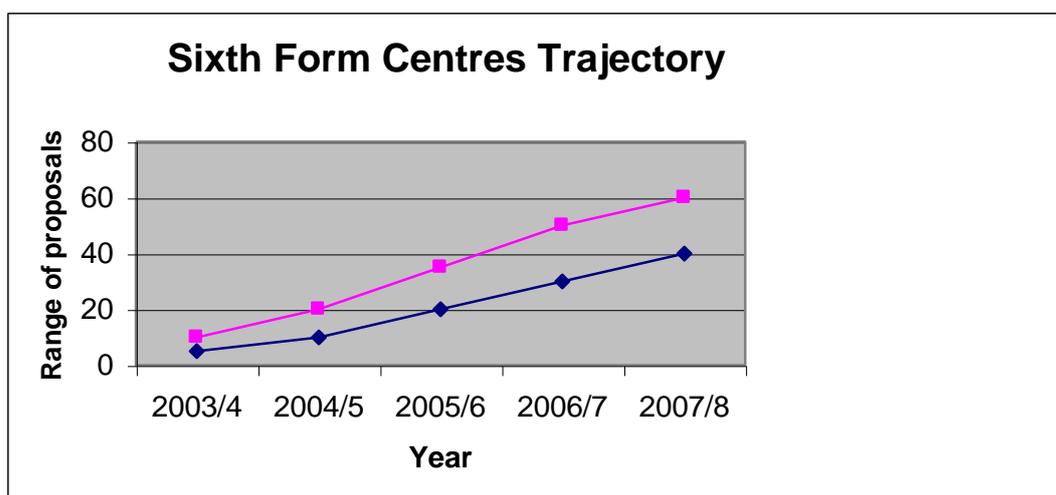
Table 2 – Milestones for New Sixth Forms

Dates	Range of New Sixth Forms
2003/4	5-10
2004/5	10-20
2005/6	20-35
2006/7	30-50
2007/8	40-60

Equality and Diversity

13   Equality and diversity (E&D) are an integral part of the LSC's new local strategic area review planning arrangments. From 2003/04, the LSC is committed to using locally-set Equality and Diversity Measures (EDIMs) as the mechanism for monitoring and assessing the impact of its equality and diversity work within its local strategic area review planning arrangements. EDIMs allows local LSCs to set targeted measures for increasing participation, retention and achievement for men and women, disabled people

and people from different racial and age groups where analysis shows that people from these groups are underrepresented or underachieving in learning.

14   EDIMs are informed chiefly by statistical data drawn from the ILR, though relevant, reliable qualitative information will also be used where applicable. This evaluation will draw on this evidence to show the impact that is being made with improving equality and diversity.

Conclusion

15   The necessary changes and investment to be made to the organisation of post-16 learning and skills provision should flow from strategic area reviews. The pragmatic approach adopted to evaluate Theme 1 is to focus on the delivery of strategic area reviews and consider the impact made towards the achievement of the key policy aims and objectives. The evaluation arrangements described in section 2 specifically outline the approach to be adopted to evaluate strategic area reviews.

16   This strategy recognises that there will need to be alignment of the LSC's business processes over the next two to three years to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the future organisation of and investment in provision. In an ideal world decisions on capital investment, CoVEs and new sixth forms would flow from or be informed by strategic area reviews. However, some decisions must be made before outcomes of strategic area reviews are known. The evaluation of strategic area reviews, the CoVE programme and capital programme will therefore remain discrete activities. The findings of these evaluations will provide the overall picture and impact of Theme 1.

Section 2: Evaluation Arrangements for Strategic Area Reviews

Purpose

17   The purpose of these evaluation arrangements is to identify how effectively StARs have been rolled-out and how effective the outcomes of StARs are in meeting needs and improving choice for learners, employers and communities. This plan is a working document that will be reviewed and revised in light of continued developments and emerging practice.

Evaluation Framework

18   The following questions provide the basis of the framework for evaluating strategic area reviews. The annex provides framework indicators to further clarify what factors should be taken into account when answering the questions.

Assessment of the Management Arrangements

a. How effective are the local management arrangements for StARs?

b. How well do stakeholders contribute to StARs?

c. How effective are the local StAR consultation arrangements?

Assessment of the Current and Developing Position

These questions must be assessed in the context of the learning and skills needs for each of the following customer groups, with particular focus to those who are not in education, employment and training: 1) young people aged 16 to 19 years; 2) adults; 3) employers.

d. How effective and responsive is provision within the area and how is this position likely to change?

e. How accessible is provision within the area to support participation and how is this position likely to change?

f. How good is the choice of the offer and type of provision within the area and how is this position likely to change?

g. How much provision and of what type is needed within the area and how is the position likely to change?

h. How good are information, advice and guidance on the choice and suitability of provision within the area and how is this position likely to change?

Assessment of the Review Outcomes

i. What 'area wide impact' have the implementation of strategic options (local strategies) made in meeting needs and improving choice?

How Evaluation will be Carried-out

19   Local LSCs will self-evaluate strategic area reviews against the questions in the framework to support continuous development and improvement of local strategic planning. The organisation of provision and its quality is different in every local area. Local LSCs will also be at different stages of the review process and will have started the review from a different position depending on previous work already undertaken. Many local LSCs will have started review work before the introduction of StARs and some will only now be starting for the first time. This should be reflected within the self-evaluation process.

20   The nine StAR pioneers will form the national evaluation and will work with the Success for All implementation team to develop the evaluation arrangements further in order to ensure consistency. At this time, only the nine pioneers will be in scope of the national evaluation. Although the national evaluation will only draw on the sample of the nine pioneers, local LSCs may be approached to provide further details of their self-evaluations.

The Role of the Local LSC Board

21   The primary audience for local LSC self-evaluations will be the local LSC Board. The self-evaluations should provide a clear indication of how well the strategic area review is being implemented and the level of impact that is being made to the organisation of provision locally to meet future local needs and priorities and improve choice.

The Role of the Local Stakeholder Group

22   Members of the local LSC StAR stakeholder groups have a key role to play in the evaluation by providing an external view and will have the opportunity to provide constructive feedback on StARs in line with the evaluation framework.

The Role of the Success for All Implementation Team

23   The Success for All implementation team will provide advice on the evaluation framework to local LSCs to ensure consistency of application. They will ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to support the self-evaluation undertaken by the StAR pioneers for the national evaluation.

Reporting and Timetable

24   Local LSCs should develop a position statement at the earliest opportunity. Each StAR pioneer will develop a position statement by the end of November 2003 for the national evaluation. The position statement will show the starting/current position against the evaluation framework. The first self-evaluation report will be provided to the local LSC Board by the end of May 2004. Further reports should be provided every six months (November 2004 and May 2005) showing the distance travelled from the original position statement. The position statement and subsequent self-evaluation reports should follow the report structure in annex D.

25   It is unlikely that all the questions within the framework will be fully answered as a result of each self-evaluation, however, over time as each local LSC progresses through the process, the self-evaluation framework will be applied in full. When StARs move towards the implementation phase, reporting will increasingly focus on the impact strategic options are making in meeting local needs and strategic objectives.

26   The collective six monthly self-evaluations of the StAR pioneers will form the basis of a series of national evaluation reports on StARs and be considered by the Theme 1 Programme Board.

What should be Included in the Position Statement?

27   The position statement should:

- set out clearly the local strategic objectives and targets that need to be met from the outset with milestones (taken from local strategic plans);

- summarise the local approach to the strategic area review (taken from local StAR project plans) and the rationale of why this approach was adopted;

- show how the review is expected to impact on the local strategic objectives and targets;

- make judgements against the framework to demonstrate the current position. This should include:

  I. an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the management arrangements and any action to be taken to address weaknesses;

  II. an indication of current educational and financial issues in relation to the organisation of provision against the framework with a description of any changes under consideration/planned (if any work in this area has taken place at this stage);

  III. outcomes of strategic options appraisal work or new strategies with impact measures with a description of the expected impact to be made and commentary on any impact that has already been made (if any appraisal work has taken place at this stage)

What should be Included in the Self-Evaluation Report?

28   The self-evaluation should take a similar format to the position statement. It should up-date either the original position statement or previous self-evaluation. It will show:

- progress towards the milestones and targets;

- summary of new review work undertaken with an explanation if any modifications have been made to the approach of the review;

- up-dated judgements against the framework to demonstrate the current position with an explanation of what has changed and why (e.g. local planning assumptions were unfounded or changed). This should include:

    I. an up-dated assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the management arrangements with identification of new issues and action taken to address weaknesses;

    II. an up-dated assessment of current educational and financial issues in relation to the organisation of provision against the framework with a description of any new changes under consideration/planned;

    III. outcomes of new strategic options appraisal work or new strategies with impact measures with a description of the expected impact to be made and commentary on any impact that has been made.

Annex A: Framework Indicators

These framework indicators underpin the evaluation framework for Strategic Area Reviews and must be taken into account when making judgements.

Assessment of the Management Arrangements

a) How effective are the local management arrangements for StARs?

In making judgements, you will consider the extent to which:

1. There are clear local LSC management and decision-making arrangements for the StAR that take into account the StAR decision-making criteria at para 31 of Circular 03/06.

2. The Executive Director and local LSC Board are fully informed of progress on a regular basis and are providing clear direction on the way forward.

3. The project plan clearly meets the quality indicators in annex B.

4. The milestones within the local project plan and Table 1 of Circular 03/06 are successfully achieved (Table 1 is attached at annex C for ease of reference).

5. Issues and risks are identified, monitored on a regular basis and are being effectively managed.

6. Sufficient resources and expertise (e.g. administration budget, staff skill levels) are available to support StARs.

7. Section 2 of the latest support and performance health check return is an accurate reflection of the local LSC position at this time.

8. There are clear arrangements in place for working with neighbouring local LSCs on cross-boundary activity that are being implemented effectively.

b) How well do stakeholders contribute to StARs?

In making judgements, you will consider the extent to which

1. There is a stakeholder group with LEA, college and provider, employer, Job Centre Plus and local LSC member representation that meet regularly and provide clear advice on StAR progress and developments.

2. There are sub/themed specific review stakeholder working groups (or learning partnerships) that meet regularly and provide clear advice on StAR work

3. Connexions, IAG, Job Centre Plus and the RDA provide intelligence and effectively inform decision-making.

4. All providers, such as sixth form schools, colleges, work-based leaning, voluntary and community etc are regularly kept informed of StAR developments and provided with an opportunity to discuss their views.

5. There is clear evidence to demonstrate how stakeholders' advice and views has influenced the direction and decisions of StARs.

c) How effective are the local StARs consultation arrangements?

In making judgements, you will consider, the extent to which

1. There are mechanisms within the consultation strategy that effectively engage the wider community, such as learners, parents, those not in learning, disadvantaged groups, community groups and effectively takes account of their views.

2. Specific changes to the organisation or funding of provision have been fully consulted upon in line with either the minimum consultation arrangements for StARs or the appropriate statutory regulations.

3. There is clear evidence to demonstrate how consultation responses have been analysed and influenced the direction and decisions of StARs.

Assessment of the Current and Developing Position

These questions must be assessed in the context of the local learning and skills needs for each of the following customer groups, with particular focus to those who are not in education, employment and training:

> 1) young people aged 16 to 19 years;
>
> 2) adults; and
>
> 3) employers.

d) How effective and responsive is provision within the area and how is this position likely to change?

In making judgements, you will consider the extent to which:

1. The provider base is performing (e.g. evidence from the Council's performance review process):

   - How well are providers widening and increasing participation?

   - How well are providers ensuring a positive learner experience and high performance?

   - How well are providers managing quality and sustaining organisational viability and stability?

2. The provider base is meeting the targets within three-year development plans:

   - Learner numbers.
   - Employer engagement.
   - Success rates.
   - Professional qualifications for teachers and lecturers.

e) How accessible is provision within the area to support participation and how is this position likely to change?

In making judgements, you will consider the extent to which:

1. The location, offer (range of subjects/courses) and type (work-based, FE, schools, community and voluntary) of 14 to 19 provision encourages participation and inclusion of 16 to 19 year olds (e.g. distinct 16-19 provision is available).

2. The location, offer and type of post-19 provision encourages participation and inclusion of adults.

3. The facilities and equipment encourage participation and inclusion of people with learning difficulties and disabilities and caters for their specific needs

4. Transport, travel and associated costs affect access, participation and inclusion

5. Collaboration between providers increases access and encourages participation and inclusion

6. Educational, social, cultural and financial barriers exclude those not in education, employment and from learning

7. The mode of delivery (part-time, full-time, e-learning, distance) increases access and encourages participation and inclusion

8. Recruitment policies, teaching and learning encourages, promotes and supports equality and diversity

f) How good is the choice of the offer and type of provision within the area and how is this position likely to change?

In making judgements, you will consider the extent to which:

1. The offer of general and specialist provision meets the local social and economic (regional and sectoral) needs of the area.

2. The type of provision meets the distinct learning needs of 16 to 19 years olds, adults, and people with learning difficulties and disabilities and local/regional employers.

3. There is a range of general and specialist progression routes to further learning, higher education and employment.

4. Collaboration between providers can widen the choice and improve progression.

5. Range of provision can improve participation and achievement.

6. Provision allows learners to study at a pace that meets their needs.

g) How much provision and capacity is needed within the area and how is this position likely to change?

> In making judgements, you will consider the extent to which:
>
> 1. The volume of provision in the area needs to increase or decrease to meet learners entitlements and local social and economic priorities.
>
> 2. New provision needs to be established to meet skill gaps.
>
> 3. The learner places available in the area are being utilised, especially where duplication of provision exists.
>
> 4. The current structure of provision is offering the most cost effective and efficient form of delivery to meet local area wide needs.
>
> 5. Participation funding and capital resources available are sufficient to meet local area wide needs.

h) How good are information, advice and guidance on the choice and suitability of provision within the area and how is this position likely to change?

> In making judgements, you will consider the extent to which:
>
> 1. Clear and impartial information, advice and guidance is accessible on the wide range of learning opportunities, quality of provision and progression routes within the area.
>
> 2. Potential learner have access support in making the most appropriate choice of course to enable them to achieve their goals.

Assessment of the Review Outcomes

i) What 'area wide impact' have the strategic options (local strategies) made in meeting needs and improving choice?

> In making judgements, you will consider the extent to which:
>
> 1. Initial review assumptions (benefits and objectives) have been realised.
>
> 2. Outcomes are embedded in providers' three-year development plans.
>
> 3. Local strategic targets have been met.
>
> 4. Participation and achievement levels have changed.
>
> 5. Collaboration and progression has improved to meet local needs.
>
> 6. Distinct 16-19 provision has been improved to meet local needs.
>
> 7. The balance of general and specialist provision has changed to meet needs.
>
> 8. Equality and diversity has been improved through EDIMs.
>
> 9. Best value has been achieved.

Annex B: Quality Criteria for the Strategic Area Review Project Plan

Good StAR project plans contain:

a. a clear and concise overview of the purpose of the local strategic area review;

b. a detailed statement of the specific aims and objectives of the strategic area review;

c. specific details of the approach to delivering the strategic area review, including previous work undertaken and future review work;

d. specific details of how communication with stakeholders will take place and how they will be involved;

e. specific details of the managerial arrangements for the delivery of the strategic area review, including cross-boundary arrangements;

f. specific timescales, along with the key milestones for the delivery of the strategic area review;

g. an overview of the evaluation arrangements for the strategic area review; and

h. the risks of delivering and implementing strategic area reviews locally and arrangements for managing those risks.

Annex C: Table 1 Key milestones and dates

Milestones	Completion Dates
Local stakeholder group established and terms of reference determined	By 31 May 2003
Local arrangements and timetable in place in the form of a project plan	By 31 July 2003
Mission review arrangements established with each provider	By 31 July 2003
All mission reviews completed – providers focusing on strengths with distinct mission	By 30 April 2004
StAR completed and outcomes published in the plan for reform	By 31 March 2005

Annex D: Report Structure

This report structure should be used for both the position statements and self-evaluation reports.

1) **Introduction**: an outline of the purpose of evaluation and the current status of the position statement or self-evaluation.

2) **Local Objectives**: set out clearly the local strategic objectives and targets that need to be met from the outset with milestones (taken from local strategic plans).

3) **Local Approach**: summary of the local approach to the strategic area review (taken from local StAR project plans) and the rationale of why this approach was adopted;

4) **Executive Summary**: summary of:

- how the review is expected to or has impacted on the local strategic objectives and targets
- key issues of 5 and 6 below

5) **Management Arrangements**: an assessment of the effectiveness of;

a) local management arrangements
b) stakeholders contribution
c) local consultation arrangements

6) **Current and Developing Position**: an assessment of:

d) effectiveness and responsiveness of provision
e) access and participation
f) choice of the offer and type of provision
g) capacity
h) information, advice and guidance

7) **Outcomes and Impact**: details of the outcomes and:

i) the expected impact and an ongoing assessment of the actual impact.