

Competence and Capacity: Enhancing Information and Advice Delivery Potential

February 2005

Of interest to local Learning and Skills Council,
TUC, individual trade union and **nextstep**
colleagues

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The strategy aims to provide a coordinated and quality-controlled continuing professional development (CPD) programme across the whole LSC information and advice (IA) programme. This strategy sets out responsibilities for CPD at national, regional, local, organisational and individual levels – its associated schedule of events reflects priorities as determined by government policies and the LSC Strategy for IAG.

For information

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Introduction

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Following the publication of the National Policy Framework and Action Plan for Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in December 2003 and the Strategy for Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance Services by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the need for an ongoing programme of support has been identified as a key tool for information, advice and guidance (IAG) improvement planning.

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The strategy aims to provide a coordinated and quality-controlled continuing professional development (CPD) programme across the whole LSC information and advice (IA) programme. This strategy sets out responsibilities for CPD at national, regional, local, organisational and individual levels – its associated schedule of events reflects priorities as determined by government policies and the LSC Strategy for IAG.

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A review of activities undertaken to improve CPD within the IA sector will be undertaken during the second year of implementation to determine priorities for the following three-year period. In addition, maintenance activities such as refresher courses and ongoing training needs for new staff will be included annually.

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The LSC is committed to providing a quality-assured and valued IA service which also seeks to promote innovative strategies in the delivery of CPD. In striving to ensure excellence the LSC will continue to consult with key national stakeholders and IA providers and welcomes your feedback and ideas for further improvement.

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Our Vision

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The availability of high-quality local IAG services for learning and work is key to the success of national policies for learning and skills development. The number of adults involved in learning is set to increase dramatically over the next few years thus widening participation in learning and raising levels of achievement. In order to make informed choices, people need access to good-quality, comprehensive and impartial IA about local learning and work opportunities and their relevance to the labour market.

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The Skills Strategy, *21st Century Skills – Realising our Potential* (DfES, 2003), recognises that high-quality and easily accessible IAG for adults has an important role to play in meeting the skills challenge. This document responds to the recommendations for improving services contained within the White Paper and sets out the LSC strategy to deliver a nationally recognised high-quality and better-integrated IAG service for adults.

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The LSC Strategy for IAG for Adults aims to improve the participation and achievement of adults in learning and work by ensuring that good IAG on skills, training and qualifications is at the heart of everything we do.

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It is therefore crucial that competency and delivery capacity throughout the LSC-funded IA delivery network is sufficiently robust to meet these challenges.

Purpose of Continuing Professional Development

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As the term implies, CPD is a continuing process by which people are enabled to keep up to date, maintain their fitness for purpose, and continuously develop quality approaches to service delivery.

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The benefits of this are:

- enhanced customer satisfaction with services received
- increased contractor ability to deliver quality services
- sectoral capacity to cope with changes in emphasis and focus
- clarity regarding the tangible benefits and impact of the application of learning and development.

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Responsibility for Continuing Professional Development

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CPD is an ongoing activity and responsibility for its effective implementation must lie at national, regional, local, organisational and individual levels.

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All organisations in receipt of LSC programme funds to deliver IA services are contractually required to quality assure their services by achieving **matrix** accreditation. The **matrix** Standard (www.matrix-quality-standard.com) is the outcome-based quality framework for the development of people through effective delivery of IAG. Element 8 of the **matrix** Standard requires organisations to demonstrate that staff competence and the support they are given are sufficient to deliver the service.

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All LSC-funded IA contractors are required to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of IA and enhanced services by:

- training staff from across the network to the appropriate level of competence
- maintaining and expanding, where appropriate, the number of organisations accredited to the **matrix** Standard
- developing an independent evaluation review process to assess the effectiveness of the delivery network.

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Local continuous quality improvement strategies will be informed by local training needs analysis, analysis of sub-contractor **matrix** accreditation reports (subject to the organisation's agreement), inspection, planning review and evaluation outcomes.

Scope of the Learning and Skills Council's Information and Advice Continuing Professional Development Strategy

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Three priorities have been identified to underpin this CPD Strategy.

Strategic development of information and advice services

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Strategic Boards for IAG services have been established and convened by the LSC at local level. Each Board includes representatives from Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, higher education institutions and Business Link to ensure a more strategic approach to:

- planning and ensuring delivery of coherent local IAG services
- reviewing the network of deliverers of IAG to ensure services are clearly focused on the delivery of the Skills Strategy and LSC objectives and provide added value that benefits the service user
- targeting of local priority groups while ensuring the universal entitlement to IA services is met
- contributing to and drawing on the findings of LSC strategic area reviews as they relate to IAG
- integrating IA effectively in all LSC-funded provision including IA programme funds and IAG delivered through further education, adult and community learning, work-based learning and workforce development
- working with key stakeholders and partners to ensure integrated "joined-up" services in their local area.

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To support this the LSC will nationally convene a series of events and courses covering:

- leadership development
- understanding and applying labour market information in the context of IAG
- the use of performance data to inform ongoing service development to support the ongoing development of Strategic Boards.

Using business acumen to improve service delivery

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Ongoing analysis of IA contractor delivery plans indicates that there is further scope for developing the skills and disciplines involved in business planning within some contracting agencies. The robustness and clarity of key performance indicators (KPIs) varies considerably from quite precise and measurable indicators (often numeric) to much more general and imprecise "activities".

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In order to provide a service which is prioritised and with the necessity to ensure resources are most effectively used to engage hard-to-reach customer groups, the LSC will enable resources, events and courses to be provided to assist contractors develop their business acumen skills such as:

- effective business planning – setting SMART objectives and measurable KPIs
- using continuous quality improvement to develop responsive delivery networks.

Coherence in service delivery

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A "no wrong door" access to national and local IA became effective from August 2004. Service users need to be provided with information on the full range of online, telephone and face-to-face services available to them irrespective of their initial point of contact. IA contractors are responsible for ensuring that stakeholders are aware of the services available in the area through close working arrangements with **learnirect**, HM Prison Service and Probation Service, Jobcentre Plus, Business Link, higher education institutions and Connexions.

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The LSC is committed to producing a series of "working together" guides throughout 2004/05. These will be complemented by a programme of events to encourage the further development of protocols and joint service planning with relevant agencies.

Evaluation

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It is our intention to externally review and evaluate this CPD programme on an annual basis as a minimum and to adapt the programme of support as appropriate from:

- the lessons learnt
- policy developments.

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Annex: Schedule and Action Plan

Table 1: Schedule of events and action plan for the effective implementation of the LSC IA CPD Strategy.

Objective	Oct 2004 – Dec 2004	Jan 2005 – Mar 2005	Apr 2005 – Jun 2005	Jul 2005 – Sep 2005	Oct 2005 – Dec 2005	Jan 2006 – Mar 2006	Apr 2006 – Jul 2006	Target impact measure
To improve the strategic development of IA services	Nine regional roadshows to increase awareness of IAG in meeting the Skills Agenda	Working Together event(s) for senior LSC, Jobcentre Plus and nextstep Managers to clarify requirements of the National Employment Panel Welfare to Workforce Report (Mar)	Labour Market Intelligence training course (April – May)		Leadership Development Programme	National IA conference (Mar)	Measuring the Impact of IAG Services conference	95 per cent achievement of advice and enhanced service delivery targets
To develop the business acumen of contractors		National IA conference (Mar)	Developing continuous quality improvement strategies for IA delivery networks Effective Business Planning workshop		Bringing nextstep under the scope of Inspection workshops			A reduction by 50 per cent in the number of business plans showing weakness in setting KPIs

Objective	Oct 2004 – Dec 2004	Jan 2005 – Mar 2005	Apr 2005 – Jun 2005	Jul 2005 – Sep 2005	Oct 2005 – Dec 2005	Jan 2006 – Mar 2006	Apr 2006 – Jul 2006	Target impact measure
To increase coherence in service delivery	Publication of Working Together IAG and Connexions (Nov)	Publication of Working Together: IAG and TUC (Mar) IAG and Jobcentre Plus (Mar) IAG and Business Link (Mar) IAG and Offender Learning and Skills Unit (Mar) National Conference (Mar)	Working Together event(s) for front line Jobcentre Plus and nextstep advisers to clarify requirements of the National Employment Panel Welfare to Workforce Report (April/May)			National IA Conference		An increase of 100 per cent in the number of appropriate referrals to or from the following agencies: learndirect; Business Link; Probation Service; Jobcentre Plus

Note: Dates and titles are indicative only. Further details of events will be published on a quarterly basis

Related Publications

Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance Services
Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-050025

Further Information

Visit the LSC online at www.lsc.gov.uk for up-to-date news on the LSC and education and training in England. There's a lot more here about our policies and activities and you can access online versions of LSC publications.

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