

successforall

Looking Back and Looking Forward

Strategic Area Reviews

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Strategic Area Reviews – Looking Back and Looking Forward

Strategic Area Reviews (StARs) have delivered a key element of the *Success for All* change programme. They have been invaluable in terms of building strategic relationships and trust across local areas.

To effect change to meet needs and improve choice for young people, adults and employers, StARs have provided the mechanism for partners to engage in strategic discussions concerning the needs and priorities for the local area. They have supported the drive within the sector to work in partnership to gain consensus on future developments to drive up quality, relevance and accessibility.

There are a vast number of different review outcomes, depending on the locality, that we should all celebrate. These include:

- new collaborative models with a wide range of different approaches
- new sixth form provision
- curriculum rationalisation
- new provision to address skills gaps
- agreement of 14–19 local learning entitlements
- capital investment.

StARs have started us on a journey towards ongoing strategic assessment of the pattern of provision against demand. In each part of the country, information and intelligence are helping us make robust decisions to secure changes and developments that will lead to more effective and efficient post- 16 education and training.

As a direct result of StARs, we all share a deeper understanding of local issues, needs and priorities.

The collaborative ways of working which were established to undertake StARs will continue to be taken forward in the future by the LSC, through its local planning arrangements.

This document looks back at examples from the wide range of outcomes which have been instigated through local reviews, and it looks forward to proposals to further improve provision to better meet needs and improve choice for young people, adults, employers and local communities throughout England.



**Rob Wye – Director of Strategy and Communications,
Learning and Skills Council**

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A strategy for 14-19 learning has been developed between Lancashire Local Authority and Lancashire LSC, which has resulted in the establishment of Learner Entitlement Action and Delivery (LEAD) groups. LEAD groups will develop learner entitlement models, tailored to meet the needs of young people in each 'travel to learn' area

Case Study 1

Sussex centre tackles skills shortages

LSC Sussex is piloting a new approach to **increasing participation** and **raising achievement** with a new state-of-the-art vocational centre.

'Near to school' vocational skills provision for young people aged 14+ will be delivered by Chichester College in partnership with Bognor Regis Community College.

The facility will provide training for young people and adults in construction, care and sport management and leadership, which are the **skill shortage areas in the local economy**.

Apprentices will be employed by local construction firms, so the project will be truly intergenerational, supporting young people, adults, local service providers and the local economy.

In addition, the centre will also provide a purpose-built environment for training staff from a local children's nursery, school and recreation centre, as well as offering a place where adults can improve their basic skills – and get rid of their Gremlins!

Case Study 2

Partnerships deliver fast-track Apprenticeships in Derbyshire

A collaborative partnership in Amber Valley and Erewash, Derbyshire, has introduced Key Stage 4 **fast-track Apprenticeships in five skills gap sectors**. The project is working with 25 schools and key partners in four areas to develop the qualifications, which will develop skills in engineering, construction, health and social care, leisure and tourism (sport), and business administration.

In September 2004, 250 students started fast-track Apprenticeship programmes that are **delivered by collaborative partnerships**, mostly on school premises. All teaching teams include school and FE or training provider staff.

And, from September 2005, Aldercar and Long Eaton schools will be delivering a Young Apprenticeship programme in health and social care, working collaboratively with NHS services. A further four fast-track Apprenticeship programmes are scheduled to start in beauty therapy, motor vehicle engineering, ICT and electrical engineering.

On the Isle of Wight, a 20% co has been established between choice and protect minority su transport arrangements

Case Study 3

Great demand for work-based courses in London North

In London North, the LSC has brokered a programme of literacy and numeracy courses for over 40 staff employed by Initial Hospital Services, working at Whipps Cross Hospital and delivered in the workplace by Waltham Forest College.

The courses are offered at times to suit employees, employers and the hospital management and the college has given Initial staff access to its facilities, so that they are able to use the Learning Centre, which offers library services and IT facilities.

This exercise in building **partnerships between providers, employers and learners** has been a resounding success. The combination of Initial's offer of paid time off to study, the employees studying on their days off and the excellent and flexible provision has led to great demand for places on the programmes. Many of the learners are already seeking **progression** onto other courses.

The learners started their programmes during October 2004 and, of the initial cohort that completed the course, **92 per cent have achieved their qualifications**. Many more are continuing their studies, using the flexibility of the provision to progress at their own pace. A further programme of courses will begin in September and the project partners are working together to develop a rolling programme of study to meet demand.

The work carried out at Whipps Cross Hospital has informed the development of further **employer engagement programmes** in the London North area. The LSC is currently supporting over 250 people working for 22 employers to undertake similar programmes and has encouraged the development of different suppliers to deliver the courses to improve the choice and quality of provision in this sector.

Case Study 4

Barnsley: "Re-making Learning"

Ambitious plans to re-shape the education service in Barnsley have been drawn up by the Local Authority in Barnsley, working in partnership with LSC South Yorkshire.

The proposals, which form part of the **regeneration initiative** "Re-making Barnsley", are based on a number of innovative **new Advanced Learning Centres**, which will be introduced over a period of 12 years. The plan is expected to increase performance and achievement in the area.

The centres will have 11–16 school designation, but will have some post-16 provision for those youngsters who are unlikely to progress straight to further education or work-based learning and to encourage more participation of adults in an area where aspirations are traditionally low. The centres will work on extended days and a flexible academic year to offer maximum **access for all**.

The centres will have subject and vocational specialisms and be federated with FE colleges and the University of Huddersfield to give clear lines of progression into further study.

Common timetable

the five high schools to widen subjects, backed by integrated

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Mid Kent College, along with five others in the South East region has received **Action for Business College** accreditation, a quality standard to recognise responsiveness to employers. Under its 'Business Class' banner, Mid Kent College has been developing specific training solutions for employers across the Kent and Medway areas. In addition, the college works closely with Business Link Kent to ensure that employer training needs are identified and dealt with speedily

Case Study 5 Construction training centre builds regeneration in Birmingham

A state-of-the-art construction training centre the size of two football pitches has opened its doors to learners in Birmingham.

The South Birmingham College Construction Centre will be **one of the major catalysts for the regeneration of the Bordesley area of the city**. The centre will **increase the number of qualified employees in the construction industry**, in line with accelerating demand for trained staff in the Birmingham and Solihull area. In addition, the centre will be able to provide facilities to upskill workers who have skills and experience but not qualifications.

The centre represents a major **collaborative venture** between the colleges in Birmingham and Solihull and the LSC to **rationalise and expand existing provision**, and to create a potential Centre of Vocational Excellence in construction. A total of £19 million was invested, with the LSC contributing £6 million along with funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

High-quality tiling company Bissiza, and major construction company Laing O'Rourke, are among the significant industry employers with which the centre has already established links.

Since it opened, the centre has been overwhelmed by demand for courses, enrolling 3,500 learners in the first six months, with a further 3,000 learners on waiting lists. It has also already responded to the demand to train those redundant staff from MG Rover interested in construction trades. In fact, the centre is proving so popular that an in-house teacher training course has been set up to increase teaching capacity.

South Birmingham College Principal Alan Birks said: "We are very proud of what is now the largest and best resourced construction training centre in the country. The college has worked closely with the local LSC and with the construction industry to fund and develop the centre to ensure it meets the local and regional demand for the full range of construction skills."

Sheffield College is due to open within its new campus at Hills

Case Study 6

Vision becomes reality in Nottinghamshire

A **strategic partnership** has taken the first step in making a vision for 14–19 education and training a reality, through the launch of a **shared post-16 offer** between all schools in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.

From September 2005, the choice available to learners will be greatly extended, with a more coordinated and planned curriculum in place. A three-year delivery plan has been agreed by the strategy group, which will be implemented through a range of organisations and structures.

Firstly, new curriculum offerings made in 2005/06 will be examined for take-up and outcomes achieved. Mansfield secondary schools and other providers understand that more vocational and lower level provision is required by post-16 learners in Mansfield, and this will develop during 2005/06. In addition, a review of careers education, advice and guidance, to be completed in September 2005, will inform future developments in this area of work.

Strategies to streamline employer engagement and further develop enterprise education are also being established by the Area Strategy Group.

These areas for development will significantly improve post-16 education and training provision in Mansfield.

Case Study 7

StAR commends model specialist learning centre in London West

London West's StAR identified a support centre for learners with visual impairment as a successful model of specialist expertise to **support access** to mainstream provision and concluded that it should be replicated to support provision for other learners with disabilities.

Based at the College of North West London (CNWL) in Brent, the Visually Impaired Learning Support Centre was established in 2004. LSC London West and the College planned for the centre to be a specialist resource for further education colleges and adult and community learning providers. Its remit is to:

- promote and increase support for visually impaired learners through working in partnership with other organisations such as Middlesex Association for the Blind and Action for Blind People
- increase the number of staff qualified to work with visually impaired learners
- improve the quality of learning
- provide a wider curriculum
- increase progression opportunities

The College of North West London won the 2004/2005 Royal National Institute of the Blind Beacon Award.

Through ongoing planning and review work, LSC London West and stakeholders will continue to assess provision and learner need and consider further expansion of this initiative. Plans are already at an advanced stage for a new Learning Support Centre for Asperger Syndrome, which is to be developed at another London West Further Education College.

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n a sixth-form centre borough

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In West Yorkshire, a **review of the pattern, planning and contracting arrangements for adult learning** across the area is planned. The aim is to ensure adult learning is based on individual needs and the skills needs of employers and meets LSC priorities

Case Study 8

State-of-the-art learning centre in store for Portsmouth

Improving school leavers' access to opportunities in inner-city Portsmouth is a key aim of the soon-to-be-built City of Portsmouth Learning Centre. The centre will also help **widen learner participation and boost achievement rates**.

Highbury and Portsmouth Colleges have been invited by the LSC to develop innovative vocational courses for disadvantaged school leavers in a state-of-the-art building on the site of a former car park. The £13 million project includes key partners such as schools, Portsmouth City Council, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and the LSC.

Highbury College Principal Stella Mbubaegbu said: "This exciting opportunity to develop a purpose-built, world-class facility in the heart of Portsmouth will enable young people and the community to further their learning. We will be working in partnership with Portsmouth College to provide a centre that Portsmouth can be proud of."

Case Study 9

Curriculum audit delivers local strategies in Tyne and Wear

LSC Tyne and Wear has produced a detailed **curriculum audit** for each Local Authority area and this is being used by schools, colleges and work based learning partners to identify gaps in provision and ensure that the curriculum offer meets the needs of individuals and employers. This will stand providers in good stead for responding to the requirement for all areas to make 14 specialised diplomas available to all young people.

Over the last three years, significant change in the curriculum offer, both in relation to qualifications and locations for learning, has taken place. As a result, considerable numbers of young people are following individual learning programmes with more than one provider.

A learner entitlement statement is now a feature of the local strategy. There is an expectation that every young person will be able to access a minimum of 20 AS-Levels, 15 A-Levels, five advanced vocational programmes/Advanced Apprenticeships or equivalent, five intermediate vocational programmes /Apprenticeships or equivalent, five Entry/Foundation level programmes, which offer progression to Level 2, as well as access to appropriate literacy and numeracy qualifications and support.

LSC London East is developing learndirect and London East provide information, advice a

To deliver this entitlement to all, irrespective of their place of residence or study, has necessitated cluster/area collaborative arrangements between providers. In one part of the sub-region this has led to the creation of joint school and college sixth forms, with the staff from the tertiary college and 11–16 schools planning, delivering, managing and governing these new entities in partnership. Increasingly, the local LSC and its Local Authority partners are developing complementary strategies for capital developments.

Lynda Brown, the co-ordinator of the Tyne and Wear Learning Partnership, comments: "We believe that local strategies are delivering a better deal for learners in Tyne and Wear."

Case Study 10

Two colleges - one big step forward for learners: Shrewsbury colleges plan co-location

A highly innovative plan will see two Shrewsbury colleges accommodated in one location. Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology and Shrewsbury Sixth Form College have been working collaboratively with the LSC to **improve accommodation and meet the future needs of learners**. The colleges believe that co-location would be a big step forward on a number of issues including, **student recruitment, curriculum delivery and staff development**.

The move will involve the building of a new campus for the two colleges, featuring **high-quality facilities** and creating the possibility of a **truly comprehensive post-16 educational experience**, one in which young people would be able to choose from a continuum of educational programmes from the academic to the vocational.

Greg Molan, Principal of Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology, comments: "We feel that a closer relationship will allow us to make the best use of our resources to benefit students."

As well as a central hub, the new site will include a technology centre that could be accessed by students of both institutions to link academic study with actual applications of technology and science. In addition, the plan incorporates an enhanced sports and fitness facility, with separate access for the public at weekends and evenings.

The colleges have been working in partnership with the Local Authorities to ensure that the scheme will contribute not only to educational improvements, but also to aid wider regeneration in the area.

Bill Dowell, Principal of Shrewsbury Sixth Form College, says: "The colleges will retain their independence and separate identities, but a new, state-of-the-art campus would be an enormous benefit to the people of Shrewsbury."

Case Study 11

Hair gel and engine oil fuel training opportunities in Hertfordshire

The Bishop's Stortford Vocational Centre will open in September 2005 to **increase participation in post-16 learning and achievement** in the Bishops Stortford and Sawbridgeworth area. The centre will initially offer vocational courses in hairdressing and engineering for 14–19 year-olds, but it is intended that the range of courses will be expanded in the future to include construction and sport.

Due for completion in August 2006, the new centre is being established by Birchwood High School and Hertford Regional College, in collaboration with other Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth schools. Specialist facilities for hairdressing training will be established at Birchwood High School in a new £2.1 million expansion programme.

The school's new leisure complex will incorporate a hairdressing salon, providing a realistic work environment for students and attracting clients from the community. The centre's construction training will help support planned regional development linked in part to the expansion of Stansted airport.

The provision of facilities for vocational training will in future also enable a broader curriculum to be offered for 14–19-year-olds, through a combination of mainstream FE and schools funding.

an interactive website with
Advice partnership to
and guidance to adults

In Haringey, North London, 160 Year 10 students from seven schools now attend vocational programmes at the College of North East London's Young People's College. The programmes cover hair and beauty, construction, health care and sports, and the City Learning Centre offers courses in music technology and video production. In December 2004, student evaluations were very positive, and the attendance target of 85 per cent is likely to be reached. In addition, 210 more Year 10 students are attending five vocational programmes in schools and in 2005/06, additional vocational courses will be offered at Levels 1 and 2 in subjects including construction, sport and leisure and health and social care.

Case Study 12 Stockport Colleges Propose Merger

Two colleges in Stockport are presently awaiting the outcome of their merger proposal.

Assuming the Secretary of State for Education and Skills agrees (her response is due in early autumn 2005), North Area College and Stockport College of Further and Higher Education (SCOFHE) plan to merge from 1 January 2006. The StAR in autumn 2003 identified synergies in the two colleges' curriculum provision that could be usefully combined. This was explored further with a feasibility study into a possible merger. Public consultation on the proposed merger took place in autumn 2004 and the colleges formally presented their proposal to LSC Greater Manchester in May 2005.

The proposed merger is taking place in the context of a broader 14-19 and adult plan for Stockport where all the providers engage equally in planning and delivery of activities, in a way that allows for **flexibility and responsiveness** to both current and future needs. North Area College, SCOFHE and the other providers in the area have agreed to work together, whenever possible, to deliver the highest quality provision for the learner regardless of institutional barriers.

Alongside the merger proposal, the colleges are planning a major **capital rebuild** of SCOFHE's site in the town centre of Stockport. The aim of this ambitious and exciting project, costing around £42 million, is to develop a 'flagship' location for the merged college. The LSC has agreed in principle to fund £15 million of this. Stockport town centre is part of a regeneration scheme itself, so the colleges are working closely with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council to ensure 'best fit' between their own plans and the wider plans for the area.

Case Study 13 Easier Access to Learning in Weston-Super-Mare

Choice in the North Somerset town of Weston-Super-Mare will be radically increased by September 2006, as a result of the Strategic Area Review in the West of England.

Weston College's sixth form centre is being rebuilt, with £7.5m of funding from the LSC, and is due to open in September 2006. At the same time, new A-level provision will become available in the town's four schools.

The decisions were made by a group of representatives from the LSC, the Local Authority, local schools, the local FE college and the Connexions service, who were convened in 2003 to explore a range of options to address concerns about the choice of provision for young people in the town.

The developments will reduce the burden of daily travel for local young people, who often used to study outside the town, due to a lack of choice in the local area. The young people who left the town to study elsewhere were often the most academically able and confident, and it is expected that the development will bring balance to the cohort of learners in the town.

It is also expected that participation and achievement rates will be driven up by the developments.

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