Successful Participation for All: Widening Adult Participation

Learning+Skills Council

Summary

This document outlines the Widening Adult Participation Strategy of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and follows the consultation document *Successful Participation for All*, published in May 2003. There is a description of the vision behind the strategy, including the need to extend educational opportunities not only by increasing numbers of learners, but also by ensuring that these are from under-represented groups in our communities. It is noted that the LSC cannot undertake this task in isolation, so links with partner organisations are discussed, along with other major governmental initiatives. The document includes an Implementation and Delivery Plan.

The strategy is of interest to the full range of stakeholders involved with, affected by, or having an interest in, widening adult participation.

September 2003

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Foreword

Inequality within our education system is nothing new. In 1934, RH Tawney wrote:

Educational inequalities which make it impossible for the nation to develop the full power of all its children are not merely offensive to humanity… they are an economic burden which we cannot afford to carry.

Despite the many changes that have dramatically altered the face of education since the early 1930s, it remains a huge cause for concern that 35% of adults do not engage in education and training after their period of statutory schooling (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2003). This is just one factor that gives rise to *Successful Participation for All*, the Widening Adult Participation Strategy of the Learning and Skills Council.

The LSC has a duty not only to develop a pattern of learning in increasing numbers of learners, but also to ensure that those new learners are in greater numbers from those groups in our communities that are least likely to participate and achieve in education and training.

The arguments in support of extending educational opportunities go beyond the individual and economic. Access to education has been shown to have an impact not only on individuals and the nation's economic performance, but also on the incidence of criminal re-offending, the physical and mental well-being of individuals, and the development of cohesive communities.

The Government's recently published *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* (DfES, July 2003a) announces a major initiative which identifies that new and targeted strategies are called for, in order to reach out into new 'markets'. Accordingly, the strategy seeks to target these learners by identifying various incentives and support measures.

We have begun to make significant progress to tackle the inequalities that hold us back from achieving our national potential, but there is still a lot more to do. The challenge of widening participation and achievement cannot be addressed by the LSC alone; it must be taken up by all our partners in delivery. In return the LSC must recognise and reward their efforts.

The LSC can play its part in implementing the actions outlined in *21st Century Skills* by persuading those adults not engaged in learning that education will benefit them, their families and their life prospects. Learning offers a win for the individual and a win for society. We must continue to raise the profile of learning in all spheres of daily life, but particularly in employment.

This strategy calls for commitment, organisational change and supportive action at national level. But it is at local level where the true impact will be seen, as local LSCs – in collaboration with providers, with the voluntary sector and with other public bodies – seek to address those inequalities that Tawney spoke about, as experienced by communities and individuals.

John Harwood
Chief Executive, Learning and Skills Council

Executive Summary

September 2003

This document outlines the Widening Adult Participation Strategy of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and follows the consultation document *Successful Participation for All*, published in May 2003.

It is of great cause for concern that a significant number of adults in the UK do not engage in education and training following their statutory schooling. This fact has individual and economic implications, but also affects our society in terms of crime, health and community cohesion.

These facts are the basis of the vision behind the LSC's new strategy, along with the need to extend educational opportunities not only by increasing numbers of learners, but also by ensuring that these are from under-represented groups in our communities.

This document lays out the LSC's vision that wider adult participation will contribute to its objectives for 2010, and describes the milestones that have been set for 2004 and 2007 in order to achieve this. The strategy explains how the LSC's vision for widening adult participation will be achieved, and outlines how the work within the LSC matches with activities elsewhere in education and with other governmental agendas.

The background and rationale to the strategy are discussed, and previous work and publications upon which it draws are covered. These include *Learning Works* ('the Kennedy Report'), *Inclusive Learning* ('the Tomlinson Report'), *Success for All*, and *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential*.

The objectives underpinning our vision are examined and set out here. It is recognised too that the LSC cannot undertake this task in isolation, so there are recommendations for the development of essential partnerships between the LSC and:
- other bodies involved in education, training and employment;
- other bodies engaged in related social policy; and
- education and training providers.

Actions to implement the strategy are proposed in four cross-cutting themes: supporting learner interests, promoting demand for learner opportunities, developing the supply of diverse learning opportunities and creating a learning environment for adults.

Finally, delivery arrangements are proposed, embracing implementation, monitoring and review. It is recognised that the strategy itself will not widen adult participation and produce change; it is its successful implementation that will make the difference. An Implementation and Delivery Plan is included as Annex A to the document.

Intended recipients
The full range of stakeholders involved with, affected by, or having an interest in, widening adult participation.

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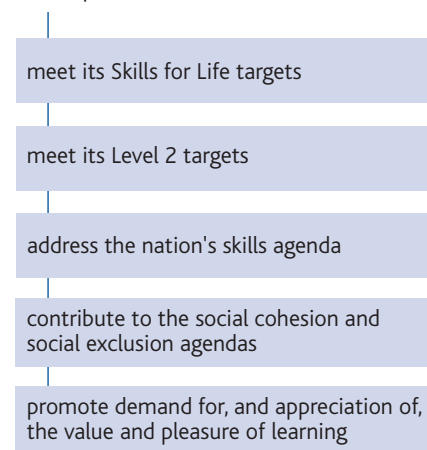E-mail: mike.barrett@lsc.gov.uk

Successful Participation for All: Widening Adult Participation

Vision

1
The LSC's vision is that wider adult participation will contribute to its objectives for 2010, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Widening adult participation
will help the LSC:

meet its Skills for Life targets
meet its Level 2 targets
address the nation's skills agenda
contribute to the social cohesion and social exclusion agendas
promote demand for, and appreciation of, the value and pleasure of learning

2
In particular, the LSC's vision is that by 2010:
- adults from all social backgrounds will have the opportunity to engage equally in the learning and skills development available to them, in work and in preparation for work;
- adults from all social backgrounds will be empowered to engage equally in learning that helps them contribute as active citizens, utilising and extending their talents to benefit themselves and their wider local community;
- adults from all social backgrounds will achieve success and satisfaction from their learning;
- adults from disadvantaged groups will have the support to access and value the benefits associated with education;
- adults will have an equal opportunity to access education and training, whatever their gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic background, disability or age;
- adults will be able, in line with national Skills for Life targets, to acquire literacy, numeracy and language skills to a level that enables them to participate fully in modern life, in employment and in recreational activities; and

- adults, particularly those who experience economic disadvantage, will have opportunities to develop the skills to engage with information technology as a tool for communication, for business and for accessing learning.

Milestones

3
To achieve this vision we have set out the following milestones.

4
By 2004:
- all local LSCs will have identified measures and agreed priority areas to address adult under-representation in all types of provision, including non-accredited learning;
- widening participation will be an important part of the assessment of provider performance;
- a programme of national and regional research will be under way on under-representation and underachievement, to provide a framework for local evidence and strategic planning;
- widening participation processes will be included in the quality improvement activities for all providers;
- a priority for LSC funding will be those learners who have yet to achieve a qualification at Level 2; and
- local LSCs will have established a powerful mutually supportive relationship with key statutory, voluntary and community sectors to support learning.

5
By 2007:
- tracking and monitoring systems will be in place to support detailed planning for adult participation;
- a national credit system will be in development to support flexible learning;
- there will be evidence that employers are playing a greatly increased role in encouraging and promoting employee learning and training;
- the LSC provider base will maximise innovative provision that targets disadvantage; and
- the LSC provider base will better reflect the important contribution of the voluntary sector.

Strategy

6
For the purposes of this strategy, widening participation is defined as:
a process where education and training providers successfully adapt their programmes and ways of working to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals and groups whose experiences or circumstances inhibit participation.

It involves:
- attracting and engaging learners;
- identifying appropriate programmes;
- appropriate support for learners during their programmes; and
- securing achievement.

7
Our strategy:
- explains how our vision for widening adult participation will be achieved;
- outlines our understanding of how the work within the LSC matches with activities elsewhere in education and with other governmental agendas; and
- includes an Implementation and Delivery Plan (see Annex A).

8
This strategy will sit within an overarching policy for the promotion of learning and the motivation of learners of all ages and in all provision.

9
The strategy proposes new actions, but also identifies how existing LSC practices and processes can be adapted to take on the commitment to widening participation.

10
It is essential that there is effective integration and coherence between the different aspects of the LSC's activities to support widening adult participation. The success of this strategy to widen adult participation in learning will, when fulfilled, be seen as one of the most significant of the LSC's achievements. It will not, however, be an area of significant quick wins. The strategy rightly

takes a long-term view, recognising that the process of cultural change represented in this document, particularly in raising the status of learning and tackling low aspirations, will not happen overnight.

11
The strategy comprises:
- background and rationale (paragraph 12);
- delivering the vision (paragraph 44);
- developing essential partnerships (paragraph 48);
- proposed actions in four cross-cutting themes (paragraph 68); and
- delivery arrangements embracing implementation, monitoring and review (paragraph 78).

Background and Rationale

12
The strategy draws heavily upon:
- the process of collaboration and subsequent consultation involved in *Successful Participation for All* (LSC, May 2003);
- *Inclusive Learning* ('the Tomlinson Report') (FEFC, 1996);
- *Learning Works* ('the Kennedy Report') (FEFC, 1997);
- *Success for All* (DfES, November 2002); and
- *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* (DfES, July 2003a).

Consultation

13
The LSC consulted widely on *Successful Participation for All: Widening Adult Participation Strategy* (LSC, May 2003) from February to May 2003, a process that involved written responses and 'expert seminars'. There was considerable support for the detail contained in that document, though understandably the consultation produced many additional issues and suggestions about priorities.

14

The actions outlined in this document are entirely consistent with *Successful Participation for All: Widening Adult Participation Strategy* and build on the proposals set out in the document that went out to consultation.

15

The consultation document proposed actions designed to motivate adults to participate in learning, to overcome barriers to learning and to help providers to raise participation and achievement. The document and a full report on the LSC's extensive consultation exercise are available on the website at www.lsc.gov.uk under Consultation Papers and Responses.

Key messages

16

Some of the key messages from the consultation responses include:
- the importance of maintaining opportunities for informal or non-accredited adult learning;
- the need to resolve any policy 'conflict' between the social and economic agendas for learning;
- the importance of synergy between the criteria governing the benefits system and the promotion of learning and skills for adults;
- the need for the LSC to maximise the benefits of collaboration, to develop its own skills in collaborative working and to incentivise collaboration between providers;
- calls for a national credit framework;
- the importance of locally determined targets and priorities; and
- the key role of employers in widening participation in learning by employees.

17

Whilst the LSC and the Government share the desire to achieve increased numbers participating in education, the widening participation agenda is, however, a more complex task since it involves reaching those learners most likely to have negative attitudes to the value of education, and a fear or disregard for its institutions. These learners may also experience disadvantage and exclusion in other parts of their lives, often making it difficult for them to appreciate the value of education.

18

The work described in this document is therefore central to the mission of the LSC, and will be reflected in the LSC's planning, funding and administrative processes.

Inclusive Learning: Report of the Tomlinson Committee

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The LSC is committed to the goal of drawing in those learners who have not been involved in learning beyond their compulsory schooling, as well as those who currently have little understanding of the value of education in their lives. We are also committed to engage those learners for whom existing systems of delivery and provision have failed to address their needs and aspirations.

20

The definition of widening adult participation given in paragraph 6 has been overwhelmingly endorsed by respondents to the consultation document. Respondents particularly felt the definition gave proper emphasis to the need for development and change within organisations. The definition builds on the work of the Tomlinson Committee report *Inclusive Learning* (FEFC, 1996) and the LSC accepts the key role it must play to facilitate for providers the process of meeting the needs of a wider group of adult learners.

21

Essentially the process of inclusive learning requires organisations and providers to put the learner at the heart of their work. They must understand the need for the integration of all the processes that contribute to the learning experience to ensure the best match between the learners' needs and aspirations and the provision available to them.

22

The Widening Adult Participation Strategy will incorporate the concepts inherent in the Tomlinson Report and will seek to embed its principles within all of the post-16 education and training sector and in respect of all learners.

Learning Works: Report of the Kennedy Committee

23

Helena Kennedy observed in *Learning Works* (FEFC, 1997) that access to learning for adults is not systematic, consistent or equitable. Kennedy argued that any strategy that purports to address widening participation needed to reflect these features.

24

The process of widening adult participation will be **systematic** in that it will influence all aspects of the LSC's work, from informal learning opportunities through to formal training and qualifications. We will ensure that this process is integrated into policy development, operational arrangements and quality assurance.

25

Consistency will be achieved by the establishment of a policy framework from which each local LSC can draw, as it integrates widening participation into local plans. Consistency will not mean that each local LSC will be required to act in the same way; this would undermine the role of local agencies in determining the priorities for action their area. It will be for local LSCs to determine their local priorities to reflect local circumstances.

26

Equity can be achieved only by eliminating disadvantage. The strategy will prioritise the targeting of those groups and learners most disadvantaged in both the learning and economic contexts and seek to equalise their access, success and progress in education.

27

A strategy to widen adult participation will not only contribute to an increase in the numbers of learners, but will also draw new adult learners from disadvantaged and socially excluded groups in society. Widening participation is seen as a process encompassing not only access, but also retention, achievement and progression.

Success for All

28

Improving retention, achievement and progress to raise standards and quality are central to the strategy for reform set out in *Success for All* (DfES, November 2002). The Success for All Strategy is radically reforming the quality of training supply to meet learners' and employers' needs. *Success for All* has many areas of particular resonance for the Widening Adult Participation Strategy and comprises the following four themes.
- Meeting needs, improving choice.
- Putting teaching, training and learning at the heart of what we do.
- Developing the leaders, teachers, trainers and support staff of the future.
- Developing a framework for quality and success.

29

The LSC will undertake strategic area reviews (StARs) to determine the configuration of provision that best meets the needs of learners, employers and community. The concept of widening adult participation is inherent in the process of StARs and associated mission review, as well as improving basic skills for adults, tackling the numbers of adults without qualifications at Level 2, and addressing skills shortages in the workforce.

30

Success for All recognises the contribution of non-accredited adult learning in meeting needs and improving choice in the areas of:
- support for social inclusion;
- widening participation in learning;
- building communities' self-confidence and capacity; and
- promoting good citizenship and personal development.

31

The Success for All Strategy also highlights the need to include the voluntary sector in the drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

32

One of the goals of the *Success for All* reforms is to improve teaching and learning through:
- identifying effective teaching and training methods;
- developing new teaching and learning frameworks to support teachers and trainers;
- providing a programme of training for teachers, trainers and support staff; and
- developing a coherent national e-learning strategy.

33

The LSC strategy to widen adult participation similarly identifies these features as fundamental to attracting and retaining adults from disadvantaged groups into learning for the first time.

34

Success for All identifies the importance of increasing the diversity of leaders and managers. This emphasis has particular importance to the development of an ethos within providers to mainstream widening participation.

35

Central to the successful implementation of a framework for quality and success is the establishment of new three-year development plans and improvement targets. All providers will be expected to improve learner achievement, retention and overall success rates in the context of widening participation.

36

The emphasis on continuous improvement requires, in the context of widening adult participation, the development of means by which under-representation and underachievement by different groups can be identified and targeted.

21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential

37

The Government's recently published 21st Century Skills Strategy provides the context for the LSC's work to widen adult participation. The 21st Century Skills Strategy seeks to ensure that employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses, and individuals have the skills they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled.
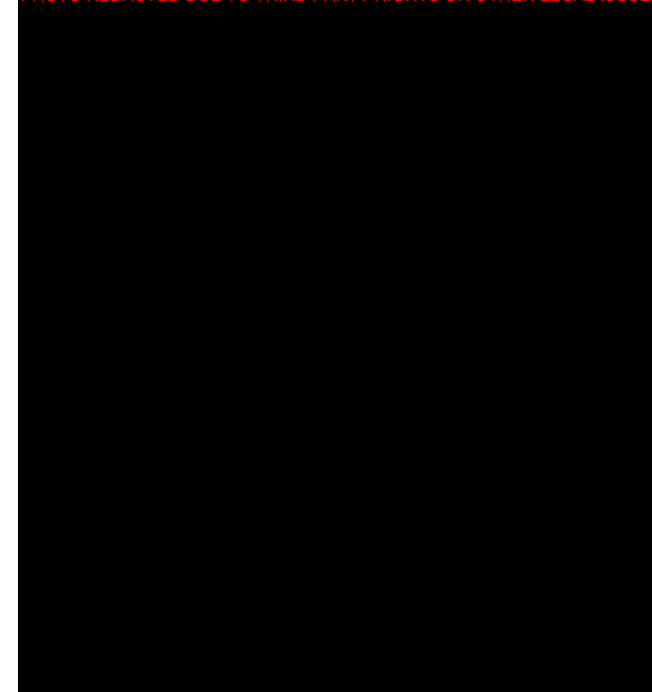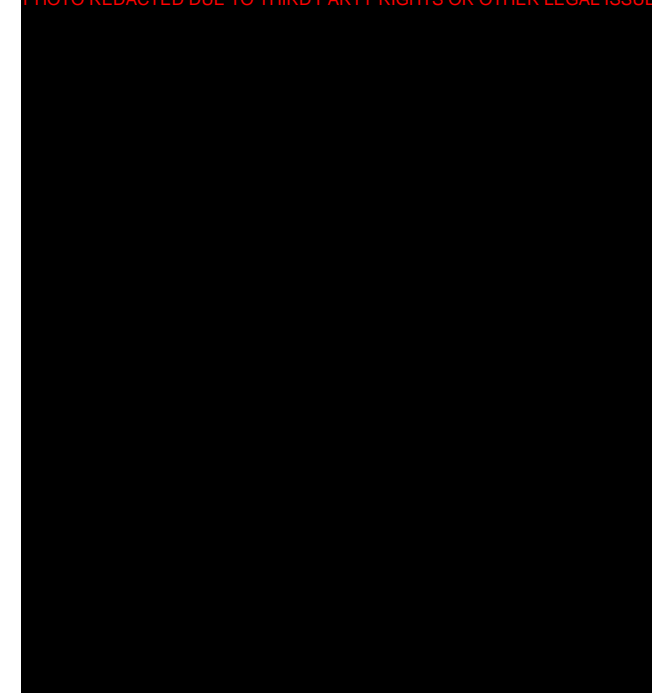
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The key themes of the 21st Century Skills Strategy are:
- putting employer needs centre stage;
- helping employers use skills to achieve more ambitious longer-term success;
- motivating, supporting and enabling learners;
- enabling colleges and training providers to be more responsive to the needs of individuals and employers; and
- developing a qualifications framework that is more flexible and responsive to the needs of employers and individuals.

39

We welcome the commitment to individual learners outlined in *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* (DfES, July 2003a), including:
- entitlement to free learning to achieve a first qualification at Level 2;
- targeted support for qualifications at Level 3;
- the piloting of new adult learning grants;
- a safeguard for a wide range of adult learning opportunities;
- improved information advice and guidance;
- opportunities for the development of information and communications technology; and
- development of the concept of learning communities.

40

The 21st Century Skills Strategy also sets out proposals to create an employer-led qualifications system for adults that responds quickly to changing skill needs and recognises the achievements of units as well as opportunities to gain whole qualifications. It will also give adults with few or no qualifications access to broad programmes that develop the foundation of employability skills.

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The 21st Century Skills Strategy presents powerful arguments for integrating the process of widening adult participation into our work, in pursuit of our key objectives:

Many individuals do not see how better skills, training and qualifications can help them achieve their personal goals, whether for financial rewards through better jobs and higher wages, for supporting their families or communities, or for their own personal fulfilment. We are concerned that skills and learning initiatives are not reaching all of society. We want to increase the skills levels for all under-represented groups and encourage all individuals to improve their employability. DfES, July 2003a

42

There has long been recognition that all groups in society do not access the benefits of learning equally. Evidence quoted in the LSC's consultation document *Successful Participation for All: Widening Adult Participation Strategy* (LSC, May 2003) shows a pattern of under-representation from certain socio-economic groups at some levels of provision. Where there is engagement, there is evidence of limited progression and achievement.

43

Factors such as gender, age, ethnicity and disability can have an adverse impact on the scale and type of access, success and progress that an individual achieves. In addition, groups that are marginalised in society – whether economically, socially or geographically or for whatever reason – may require particular support to access education and progress.

Delivering the Vision

44

This Widening Adult Participation Strategy will link a series of actions, seeking to maximise their impact in support of the process of widening adult participation. The primary goal of some of these actions is not necessarily that of widening participation as such, but the strategy will seek to capitalise on all possible opportunities across the full range of the LSC's work. Our vision outlined at the outset of this document expresses the LSC's understanding of the process of widening adult participation as embracing both the social and economic agendas.

45

We understand the social agenda to be about the benefits of learning to the individual, such as increased confidence and self-esteem, and the benefits to communities, such as increased social capital and social cohesion. We acknowledge that such benefits can contribute to an individual's sense of well-being, often having an impact on health, family life, and social engagement. For some people, for example some elderly people or those with disabilities, learning also provides a means to maintain their independence.

46

Social benefits are also linked to economic benefits, in that levels of employability are enhanced by an individual's increased skills and confidence.

47

We understand the economic agenda to be about the benefits of a skilled workforce to the nation's economic performance. A workforce with the learning capacity to re-train and upskill as required is a considerable national asset.

Developing Essential Partnerships

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This strategy recognises that the achievement of the vision is dependent not only on the commitment of the LSC but upon our capacity to develop essential partnerships.

49

To achieve the objectives of the widening participation strategy, we will draw from, build on the strengths of, and proactively develop, partnerships at national, regional and local levels:
- between the LSC and other bodies involved in education, training and employment;
- between the LSC and other bodies engaged in related social policy; and
- between the LSC and providers.

50

We acknowledge that partnership working is a continuous process with significant resource implications for all partners. We also acknowledge that our strategy to widen adult participation needs to be understood and supported by all our partners. Equally, the LSC must itself understand the culture and working styles of other organisations so that collaboration can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes. We will learn from existing good practice and will ensure that information is disseminated on practice which is proven to have led to wider participation.

The Learning and Skills Council and other bodies and sectors involved in education, training and employment

51

We recognise that our drive to engage adults in education sits within a complex framework of activity from other organisations contributing to other strands of the nation's educational agenda.

52

Not all providers of education are funded by the LSC. Our planning processes need to take account of the full range of provision and expertise in a locality. Our funding should also be used strategically to maximise the contribution from other parties and funding sources.

53

As part of the *Success for All* agenda, local LSCs are required to carry out StARs by March 2005. In carrying out the reviews, the LSC will consider provision funded by all relevant agencies in the area, and will develop a coherent approach to minimise the risk of duplication, competition or confusion. *Every opportunity should be taken to encourage collaborative working between different funding agencies and promote coherent 'offers' of learning to individuals and employers.* (LSC, March 2003)

54

In addition, we must maximise the contribution being made to widening adult participation by informal adult learning opportunities, frequently but not exclusively offered by the voluntary and community sectors. The links between these informal opportunities for learning and LSC-funded provision will be strengthened and sustained. The LSC will ensure that it develops points of connection and transfer between these learning contexts and more mainstream opportunities.

Case study 1: The role of local strategic partnerships

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The Widening Participation project in Leicestershire, funded through Local Initiative Fund and European Social Fund co-financing, has put in place a framework of activity that can support potential learners through to participation in the mainstream, if that is the appropriate route. Having built on activity developed under the Further Education Funding Council's non-schedule 2 pilots, the project is able to demonstrate success in learner progression. The four dimensions to the project are:

- face-to-face contact to encourage engagement;
- first stage learning – finding a safe starting place (including basic skills, and English for Speakers of Other Languages);
- information advice and guidance – to support choice; and
- access to mainstream education.

56

The project, managed by the local strategic partnership, recognises the value of support from the LSC for a process that is more costly than 'standard' provision, and does not produce quick returns.

The Learning and Skills Council and other bodies engaged in related social policy

57

Increasingly, learning is seen as a contributory activity within programmes to improve public health, to regenerate communities, to develop social cohesion or to reduce offending. Such policy initiatives also provide contact with potential learners who might, with appropriate information, support and encouragement, consider more formal learning opportunities.

58

There are numerous examples of this aspect at work.

- Engaging in learning has been identified as a factor contributing to physical and mental health and well-being. It can be difficult to distinguish between activities that are therapeutic and those that are educational. What may start as therapy may develop into education.
- The Social Exclusion Unit report on reducing re-offending (SEU, 2002) points to dramatic evidence about the impact of education. It highlights Canadian research showing that participation in basic skills can reduce re-offending by around 12%.
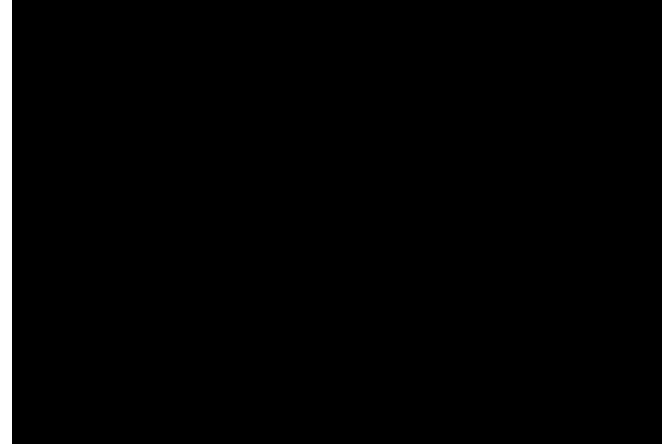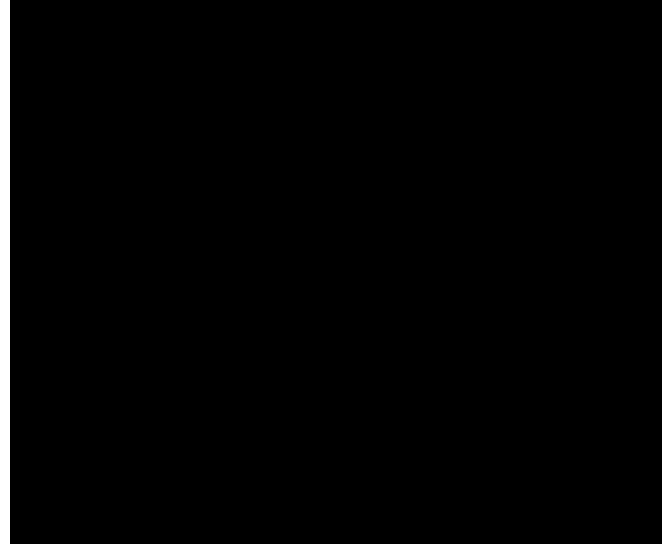
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We will continue to explore how the LSC can most effectively and efficiently contribute to agendas such as these by building our understanding of multi-agency working at national, regional and local levels. Specifically, within the framework now set by the 21st Century Skills Strategy, we fully support the development of learning communities. We want to work with local strategic partnerships to renew the drive to build learning communities and form a much stronger link to the regional economic agenda, led by the regional development agencies.

Case study 2: Equal access to open learning

60

Supported by the LSC, the National Extension College piloted a home study project to help people get back into learning who cannot access mainstream college courses because of disabilities, ill health or because they are full-time carers. The courses include general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) and general certificate of education (GCE) A levels, information technology, study skills, and professional courses in childcare, bookkeeping and counselling.

61

The report on the project highlighted the difficulty of using traditional measures of achievement for these learners. Disabled students and carers can take much longer than usual to complete their courses. For many, the growth in self-confidence and self-respect that comes with successful study is more important than gaining a qualification. The report also found that this student group needed high levels of support to achieve their learning goals.
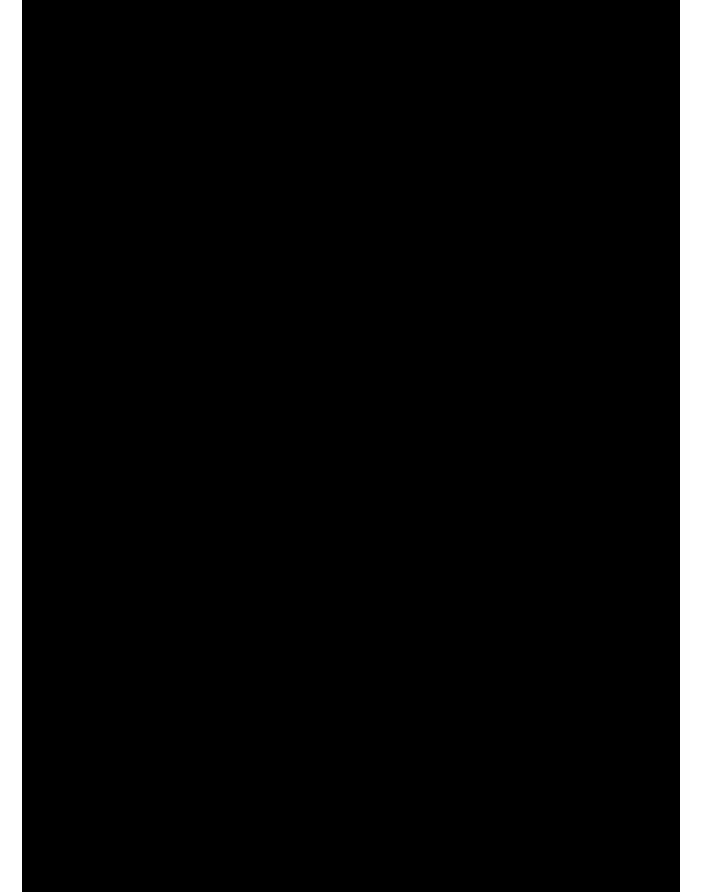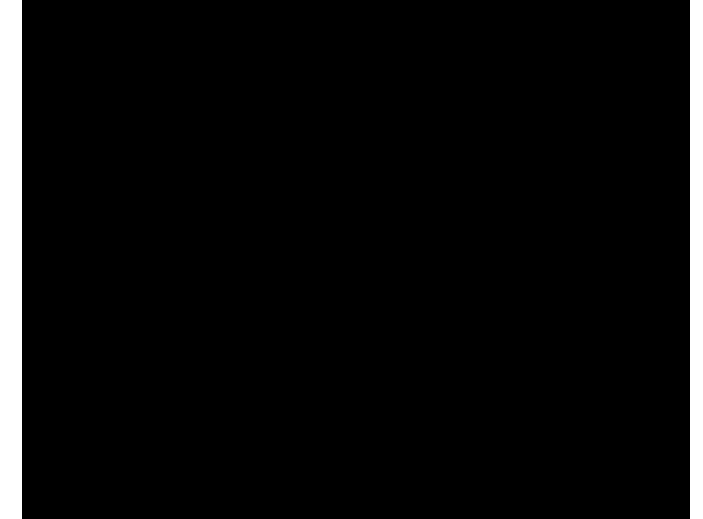
The Learning and Skills Council and providers

62

The widening adult participation agenda is wide reaching, making it unlikely that any one provider can address all aspects of it. Local LSCs will identify and agree with providers, individually and in collaborative groups, those areas where they can best make a positive contribution.

63

Many providers are capable of achieving a greater degree of contact with target groups provided that they have the confidence they will receive appropriate support from the LSC. Where local evidence supports the need, providers will be encouraged and supported by the local LSC to target particular groups of learners.

64

We will encourage existing providers to develop innovatory provision. We will also develop capacity in new providers where there are gaps in provision, and where there is evidence that a new approach is required. This development is particularly likely to relate to voluntary sector providers. Some solutions to gaps in provision may lie in joint provision between providers – the StAR process provides an opportunity for local LSCs to engage providers in discussions about shared activities.

65

Though this strategy relates to adults, it is essential that there is continuity between this process and arrangements that seek to reduce achievement gaps by young people from different social backgrounds in statutory education. In particular, the LSC must ensure that the expectations rightly raised by the proposals in the Government's White Paper *14-19 Opportunity and Excellence* (DfES, 2003) are sustained as far as possible into post-compulsory education.

66

The LSC will engender a spirit of cooperation and collaboration between providers, by ensuring that any administrative barriers to collaborative working are kept to a minimum. Indeed, where possible, we will consider how to incentivise collaboration in crucial areas of low participation and achievement. Figure 2 conveys the wide, but necessary, partnerships that must be maintained and developed if our long-term vision for widening participation is to be achieved. The lists of partners detailed are not exhaustive. Several types of organisations appear in all three organisational categories. Some partnerships and networks, such as local strategic partnerships and learning partnerships, comprise organisations from all three categories and are therefore separately identified.
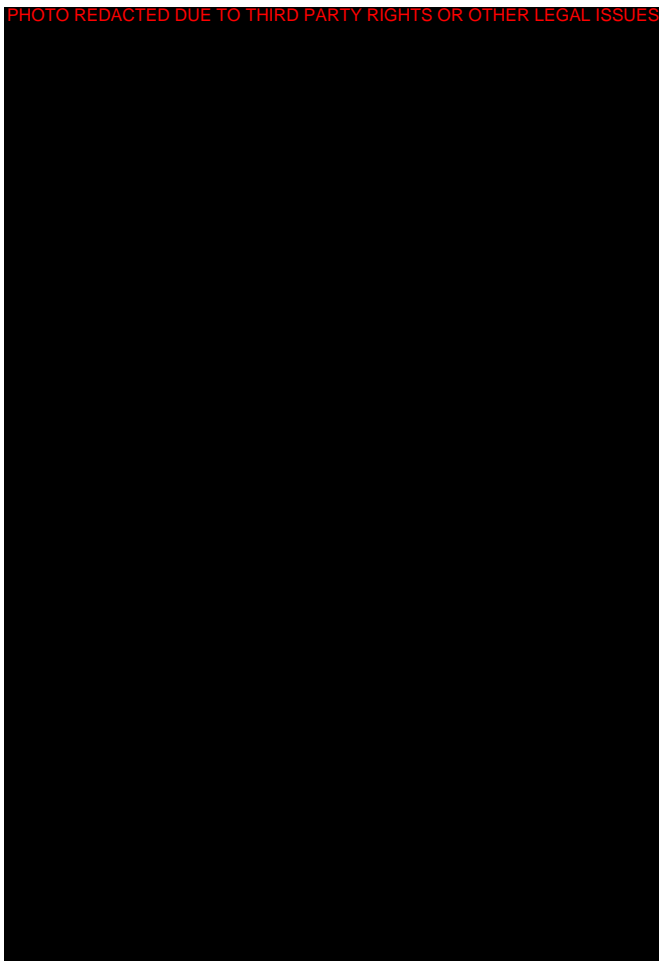
Figure 2: Developing essential partnerships for widening adult participation
(See Annex C for key to abbreviations)

Education, training and employment partners
Employers
Trade unions
Local authorities
HEFCE, DfES
ALI/Ofsted, DTI
Ufi/learndirect
RDAs
SSDA/SSCs
Jobcentre Plus
Voluntary and community sectors
National organisations and agencies
(such as QCA, AoC, ABSSU, NIACE,
LSDA, NOCN, SBS)

Connexions service

LSPs

LPs

IAG partnerships

Sub-regional strategic partnerships

LSC

Provider partners
General FE colleges
Specialist colleges
HEIs
Adult education institutions
Private sector providers
Specialist providers of open, distance,
e- and blended learning
Ufi/learndirect hubs
Employers
Voluntary and community sectors

Related social policy partners
Home Office
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
DoH
NHSU
DWP
Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
Active Communities Unit
Social Exclusion Unit
Local authorities
Government offices
Employers
Voluntary and community sectors

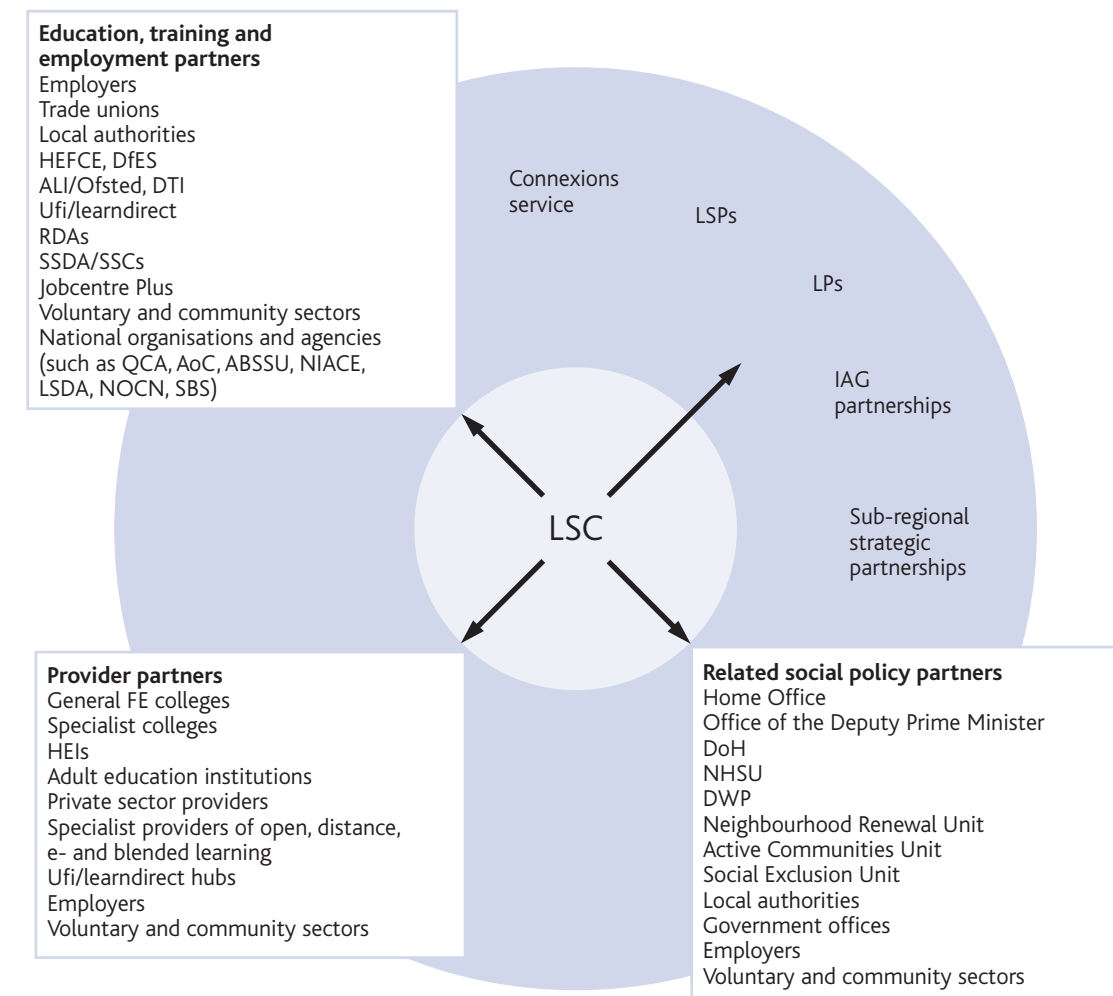PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

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Case study 3: Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley Court project

67
This project demonstrates the coming together of the skills of the voluntary sector (the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), the Library Service, and librarians trained in basic skills towards supporting people whose lack of financial, literacy and numeracy skills (among other problems) has led them to default on debt payments. The Government has called for a response from all its departments to tackle crime and reduce re-offending. Local initiatives such as the Court project from LSC Tees Valley show how learning can play a key role in this agenda, and if introduced in a positive way might encourage participation in more sustained learning opportunities.

Proposed Actions in Four Cross-cutting Themes

68
The LSC recognises that significant progress towards widening adult participation can be achieved only by incorporating a range of actions into the mainstream of its business.

69
These actions can be categorised into four cross-cutting themes, which are:
- supporting learner interests;
- promoting demand for learning opportunities;
- developing the supply of diverse learning opportunities; and
- creating a learning environment for adults.

Cross-cutting theme 1: Supporting learner interests

70
Learners have varying needs and interests. The LSC must be proactive in understanding and meeting those needs whether in further education, in workforce development, in vocational skills or in non-accredited adult learning. Learners must be assured of support to make appropriate choices.

71
We will do this by:
- supporting the development of an intensive, coherent, targeted approach to information advice and guidance as proposed in *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* (DfES, July 2003a);
- ensuring the incorporation of the equality agenda, addressing not only the statutory duties placed on the LSC to promote equality of opportunity, but also its wider commitment to all learners regardless of religion, age or sexuality;
- taking into account the work of other governmental agencies to promote participation in education by those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ex-offenders, and refugees and asylum seekers;
- acting on the findings of our annual National Learner Survey;
- developing approaches to meet the needs of older learners;
- recognising the lifelong learning and skills agenda for many people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities;
- building on the impact of our Skills for Life achievements by seeking to encourage learners whose skills in literacy, numeracy and language provided the motivation for learning to consider further learning opportunities; and
- proactively developing and/or maintaining partnerships and networks committed to learners' interests.

Cross-cutting theme 2: Promoting demand for learning opportunities

72
Learning in the 21st century takes place in a variety of life contexts and through many different styles of delivery. We have a responsibility, if we are to attract new learners, to be creative about the nature of the learning opportunities available.

73
We will do this by:
- promoting inter-generational and family learning opportunities in partnership with other organisations, by offering free 'bite-size' opportunities and by campaigning to promote positive attitudes to learning;
- developing transition arrangements (based on analysis of successful provision) between informal learning and more structured opportunities, by encouraging collaboration and synergy between local providers;
- ensuring transparency of qualifications and provision;
- taking steps to capitalise on work such as embedded basic skills and Skilled for Health, as entry points for progression to further learning;
- developing information and communications technology, to target those likely to be excluded from learning through 'new' technologies, as suggested in the DfES consultation paper *Towards a Unified E-learning Strategy* (DfES, July 2003b);
- ensuring that open and distance learning, e-learning and blended learning are developed in all sectors, and investigate and overcome any existing administrative barriers faced by innovative provision; and
- proactively developing and/or maintaining partnerships and networks committed to the promotion of learning.

Cross-cutting theme 3: Developing the supply of diverse learning opportunities

74
We recognise the value of diversity in the provider base. We will create an environment in which existing providers can develop and we will seek to attract new types of providers, particularly from the voluntary and community sectors.

75
We will do this by:
- recognising within local planning the need to safeguard a varied range of leaning opportunities for personal fulfilment, community development and active citizenship;
- developing a strategic approach to our work with the voluntary and community sectors, which explores the potential of these sectors as providers;
- reflecting diversity in our learners and by diversifying our provider base;
- continuing to develop a strategic funding regime that recognises the additional costs associated with widening adult participation;
- developing a widening participation strand within quality improvement, and ensuring that excellence in this area of work is recognised and rewarded;
- ensuring, primarily through the mechanism of StARs, that the locally agreed pattern of provision fulfils the need to widen participation; and

- proactively developing and/or maintaining appropriate partnerships and networks committed to diversity in delivery.

Cross-cutting theme 4: Creating a learning environment for adults

76
The education and training needs of adults are not about re-offering the school-based curriculum and delivery methods that have previously failed them. Adults engaging in education and training should not perceive the process as making up for the deficits of statutory education. We will support the development of an adult learning environment by seeking to ensure the highest levels of learner achievement and satisfaction.

77
We will do this by:
- supporting work to develop an appropriate range of learning opportunities for adults, including non-accredited learning;
- implementing the relevant proposals arising from the 21st Century Skills Strategy (DfES, July 2003a);
- working to introduce a national credit framework to provide opportunities for flexible opportunities throughout life;
- establishing a programme of research into under-representation and priority groups, which is able at local level to provide a consistent evidence base for setting local priorities;
- establishing a programme of action research activities to identify good practice in targeting and supporting learners;
- linking our promotional activities with major media campaigns for learning; and
- proactively developing and/or maintaining partnerships and networks committed to adult learning.

Delivery Arrangements Embracing Implementation, Monitoring and Review

78
The strategy is comprehensive and ambitious. As stated earlier, it takes a long-term view, recognising that the process of cultural change will require sustained effort over several years.

79
However, the strategy itself will not widen adult participation and produce change; it is its successful implementation that will make the difference. Local LSCs and their local partners are critical and key to this. Strategy implementation and delivery should, and will, rest with them.

80
For the academic year 2003/04, all local LSCs have set equality and diversity impact measures (EDIMs) for increasing participation, retention and achievement for groups that analysis shows to be under-represented or underachieving. The EDIMs focus on achievements differentiated according to gender, age, disability and ethnicity. The links with the widening adult participation agenda are clear, and we propose to undertake development of this work as a means of charting local progress in widening adult participation.

81
Without pre-empting possible developments, it should be possible to link EDIMs more consistently to the national targets, so that we can demonstrate how this process is contributing to the achievement of headline targets.

82
To support local LSCs in the implementation and delivery of the strategy, we will establish a Widening Adult Participation Implementation Group (the Implementation Group) by October 2003. As well as local LSC members, the Implementation Group will contain representatives from the wide range of organisations mentioned under paragraph 48 ('Developing Essential Partnerships'). It will be chaired by the LSC's Director of Policy and Development.

83
The role of the Implementation Group will be to:
- advise on the implementation and delivery of the proposed actions;
- monitor and review progress of the impact of the strategy; and
- provide advice and guidance to the LSC in updating and revising the strategy.

84
In an attempt to ensure immediate implementation and delivery of many aspects of the strategy, the Implementation Group will be invited to consider, refine and endorse the Implementation and Delivery Plan shown in Annex A.

85
We have consulted widely on the production and development of this strategy and are grateful for the advice and commitment of the many partners who have helped to shape it. Even though we are beginning immediate implementation, we would welcome further comments and views. Please address these to:
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Annex A: Implementation and Delivery Plan

Cross-cutting theme	Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner/partner
Supporting learner interests	Support and develop IAG	Local LSCs will have identified measures to address under-representation and agree priority areas	December 2003	LSC DfES IAG partnerships Ufi/learndirect Jobcentre Plus
	Ensure incorporation of equality agenda		From summer 2003	LSC DfES Providers
	Promote participation among offenders, refugees, asylum seekers, people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities		April 2004	LSC DfES Providers
	Act on the findings of the National Learner Survey	LSC provider base will better reflect the voluntary sector and innovatory provision	Annually	LSC
	Meet the needs of older learners		Ongoing	LSC Providers Employers
	Encourage further learning for Skills for Life learners	Established powerful, mutually supportive relationship with key statutory, voluntary and community sectors	September 2004	LSC ABSSU LPs, LSPs Providers
	Develop partnerships and networks		Ongoing	All the above
Promoting demand for learning opportunities	Promote inter-generational and family learning opportunities		April 2004	LSC LEAs Providers
	Collaborate to develop informal learning into more structured opportunities	Employers have a greatly increased role in employee learning	Summer 2004	LSC Providers LPs, LSPs
	Ensure transparency of qualifications and provision		From autumn 2004	LSC DfES QCA Providers
	Develop ICT to target the excluded	Agreed widening participation benchmarks as part of the assessment of provider performance	From summer 2003	LSC Ufi/learndirect DfES Employers
	Develop open and distance learning, e-learning and blended learning		From summer 2003	LSC Ufi/learndirect DfES Employers Providers

Cross-cutting theme	Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner/partner
Promoting demand for learning opportunities (cont'd)	Develop partnerships and networks		Ongoing	All the above
Developing the supply of diverse learning opportunities	Safeguard learning opportunities for personal fulfilment, community development and active citizenship	Widening participation processes included in provider quality improvement	From autumn 2004	LSC, Providers, LEAs, ALI/Ofsted
	Reflect diversity in our learners and diversify our provider base		April 2004	LSC Providers LEAs Employers
	Use funding strategically		December 2003	LSC DfES LEAs
	Develop a widening participation strand within quality improvement	A priority for LSC funding will be those learners who have yet to achieve a qualification at Level 2	Summer 2004	LSC Providers LSDA NIACE
	Ensure through StARs that provision fulfils the need to widen participation		From April 2004	LSC Providers LEAs ALI/Ofsted
	Develop partnerships and networks	National credit system will be in development	Ongoing	All the above
Creating a learning environment for adults	Develop an appropriate range of learning opportunities		From autumn 2003	LSC DfES QCA Providers
	Introduce a national credit framework	Programme of national and regional research will be under way	2005 onwards	LSC QCA DfES
	Establish a programme of research into under-representation		From autumn 2003	LSC LSDA NIACE DfES Providers
	Establish a programme of action research activities to identify good practice in targeting learners	Tracking and monitoring systems will be in place	April 2004	LSC LSDA NIACE Providers
	Link promotional activities with major campaigns		From summer 2003	LSC NIACE DfES LPs, LSPs
	Develop partnerships and networks		Ongoing	All the above

See Annex C for key to abbreviations

Annex B: Bibliography

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Annex C: Abbreviations

ABSSU: Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
ALI: Adult Learning Inspectorate
AoC: Association of Colleges
DfES: Department for Education and Skills
DoH: Department of Health
DTI: Department of Trade and Industry
DWP: Department for Work and Pensions
FE: further education
HEFCE: Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI: higher education institution
IAG: information advice and guidance
ICT: information and communications technology
LEA: local education authority
LP: learning partnership
LSC: Learning and Skills Council
LSDA: Learning and Skills Development Agency
LSP: local strategic partnership
NHSU: NHS University
NIACE: National Institute for Adult Continuing Education
NOCN: National Open College Network
Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education
QCA: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RDAs: regional development agencies
SBS: Small Business Service
SSCs: sector skills councils
SSDA: Sector Skills Development Agency

Learning+Skills Council