

Helping people with learning difficulties and disabilities in further education and training

Through Inclusion to Excellence – easy-read version

One of the most important jobs at the Learning and Skills Council is to help people who have learning difficulties or disabilities. The Council believes it is time to have a fresh and full look at all the ways that education and training for these learners should be carried out and paid for in future.

So the Learning and Skills Council (called “LSC” in the rest of this report) arranged for a special group of experts – a “Steering Group” – to put together a report and make recommendations that say what should be done by LSC, the Department for Education and Skills and others. The report is called “Through Inclusion to Excellence”.

This is a short easy-read of the full report of the Steering Group. It is about the main points of the report and explains the recommendations. If you would like to see the report in its original wording, how to get this is shown at the end of this leaflet. Information is also given about how you can let the LSC know what you think.

The report sets out how more can be done for all those who are more than 16 years old who have learning difficulties or disabilities. The purpose is to make sure that these people have the best chance to learn those skills and other things that will help them in life and at work.

The report shows that if you have learning difficulties or disabilities you are certainly not on your own. There are many thousands of these people – 579,000 of them, in fact. They are learning through further education, school sixth forms, at work, at adult and community learning or at specialist colleges. This is paid for with money from the government.

In putting together its report the Steering Group asked 300 of these people what they thought about what they were getting from their learning. Mostly, they said their education and training had helped them make progress. They found it specially helpful when the learning was set at their own speed and level so that it suited them personally.

LSC believes that everybody should have the chance to find what they can do best so that they can reach their full abilities. The LSC wants to make sure that people with learning difficulties and disabilities get what they need and expect from education and training. This should be given to them the same way it is given to everybody else.

Different parts of the country have slightly different ways of going about the way they provide education and training. But there are important things that should be the same everywhere. One of these is making special arrangements for people with disabilities who find it difficult to travel to the place where they do their learning.

The report also looks at how those with learning difficulties or disabilities can be helped to get jobs after education or training. The report says that better ways are needed to find what each learner can do and what sorts of jobs will best suit them.

It is made clear that everybody involved with education, training, care and jobs need to work together to make improvements possible. But this should not involve more “red tape” and filling in forms that are not really necessary.

What the recommendations say

There are recommendations about what it is felt the Government, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and other official bodies should do. These are:

The best use should be made of money available to meet the needs of learners.

The legal rights of people with learning difficulties or disabilities must be looked after.

The Ministers from different Government Departments should agree together how money can be provided for the health and care of people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

People with learning difficulties or disabilities who are more than 19 years old should be helped with transport.

The next recommendations are about how all those involved in providing education can plan to work well together and understand what is needed:

Those who provide education should all use the same clear wording in the information they use. This is so that everybody knows what exactly is meant. The same clear way of putting things should be used right through from children’s schools to adult education.

The needs of people with learning difficulties or disabilities should be looked after everywhere in England.

The LSC should have the same sort of staff set-up in every part of England. This is so that all learners with learning difficulties or disabilities have the same good services.

The head office team of LSC who deal with helping people with learning difficulties or disabilities need to know what is happening in education and training over the whole country. They should keep in touch with the other people involved and work with them.

There are recommendations about how to improve the quality of education services:

Those who provide education should think specially about what more is needed for people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The LSC should keep improving what is being done for learners so that there is good education and training for them in every town and city.

The LSC should talk with others about how it can get better at what it does.

The best providers of help for learners should be officially known as “centres of excellence” that set a good example to others.

It should be made sure that the people working with learners have the skills and knowledge they need to do their jobs well.

The LSC and other organisations should work together to make better the lives of learners and learners' families and helpers.

The best ways should be found to help learners who are not yet able to join normal starting levels for learners from 14 years old and upwards.

There should be a way of seeing how well education for people with learning difficulties or disabilities is being done in every part of the country. Part of this is by counting how many learners there are and measuring their progress. The LSC should also work out all the other ways to measure success.

Education providers must make sure these learners are treated the same way as everybody else. Providers should have better ways of finding out what people with learning difficulties or disabilities think about what is being done for them.

The next recommendations are about the best ways to use the money that has been provided to pay for the education and training of people with learning difficulties or disabilities:

The LSC should think about the way it shares out the money for the education and training of people over 16 years old. This should be done in a fair way over the whole education system. This includes how any new way of sharing out funds might affect people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

There should be money available to pay for any special help needed by learners, such as a signer for a learner with hearing difficulties. Also, there should be extra help for

learners with the most difficulties, including places at specialist colleges if there is no suitable local arrangement.

Schools should all have the same ways of planning how they help these learners over the age of 16.

The DfES should look into what is done for learners over the age of 16 with special educational needs.

People in detention centres or prisons should be able to have learning and skills help.

It should be looked into whether it would help learners and save money if some of the education providers share places of work.

Finally, there are recommendations about how the LSC and others can work together in the best way:

It should be decided how it can be made easier for learners to have further education and training. And after that for them to get jobs and join in with other people in the areas where they live.

LSC and Office for Disability Issues (the government department that deals with things affecting people with disabilities) should talk together about learning needs.

More disabled people should be given a better chance to get jobs. They should be given ways of learning skills while in paid work.

The LSC should check how many learners get apprenticeships and have training given by their employers.

People with learning difficulties or disabilities should be told about ways to get jobs. This should be part of their education.

In all the new arrangements in these recommendations it should be made sure that people with learning difficulties or disabilities get the best chances to make progress in their education and then are able to get jobs. This includes people on Incapacity Benefit.

It should be made easier for more disabled people to carry on their education to higher levels.

The LSC would like to know what you think about this report and its recommendations. You can write to the LSC yourself, or if you have helpers you can tell them what you think and ask them to write for you.

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Or your comments can be faxed to 024 7682 3284 or e-mailed to LLDD@lsc.gov.uk.

You can also tell the LSC if you would like to have a copy of the full “Through Inclusion to Excellence” report.

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