> 2 The Skills Strategy

The Skills Strategy identifies the actions we will take to build relationships with employers, define skills needs and develop the workforce. Workforce development is essential to competitiveness and has been highlighted through the work of the National Skills Taskforce and the November 2001 publication of "In Demand: An Adult Workforce Development Strategy for the 21st Century" by the Government's Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU).

The report documents the skills deficit in the UK workforce and recommends a radically different strategy for skills - a more demand-led system founded on the needs of employers and employees. This approach is fundamental to the role of the LSC and will be implemented as the PIU develops a detailed action plan and agreed policy across government departments. The PIU defines workforce development as "activities which increase the capacity of individuals to participate effectively in the workplace, improving their productivity and employability."

The LSC has a statutory duty to encourage employers to participate in the provision of post-16 learning and to contribute financially to their employees' learning. This skills strategy aims to raise the sustainability of employment by improving the existing skills of the workforce and of people who are out of work. It will also target the development of new skills to meet the emerging needs of employers in line with regional and local economic development strategies. The current skill levels within the local economy will not meet emerging needs unless we take action.

We recognise the diverse issues which range from the need to focus on Basic Skills and Level 2 attainments through to higher-level requirements (eg. for leadership and enterprise skills).

Given the number of small businesses in Lincolnshire and Rutland, we need to encourage many owner managers to recognise the benefits of continuing their own learning.

We are committed to developing a co-ordinated partnership approach to promoting the benefits of workforce development and adopting joint approaches to providing solutions to the needs of business. We will continue to engage with employers to ensure a customer-focused approach.

A detailed workforce development strategy will be developed by the LSC in 2002.

Targets:

> Measures for employer engagement will be developed in next year's national plan, which will allow local targets to be set

> In advance of this we have, however, set ourselves the local target of achieving Investors in People status for over 300 organisations by December 2002 and increasing this year on year thereafter

The objectives of this skills strategy are to:

> Stimulate investment in workforce development to enhance business competitiveness and economic development

> Identify and support workforce development in key employment sectors

> Identify and support the specific workforce development needs of SMEs, including high-value and growth businesses

> Raise the importance and recognise the value of vocational and work-based learning

> Encourage employers to recognise and support diversity, equal opportunities and Basic Skills issues in the workforce

Objective Six:

Stimulate investment in workforce development to enhance business competitiveness and economic development

Recent research (Employer Survey 2001) indicates that 52% of employers do not have a training budget and 40% have no training plan. In addition, 59% do not have personal development plans for staff linked to business objectives.

Employment rates are high - 77% of the working-age population in Lincolnshire and 80.7% in Rutland are employed, above the national (73.8%) and regional (75.9%) figures. Unemployment rates are low - 3.3% in Lincolnshire and 0.7% in Rutland (March 2001), although rates varied between the districts in Lincolnshire and pockets of relatively high unemployment remain in the travel-to-work areas of Gainsborough, Skegness and Mablethorpe, Louth and Lincoln.

In 2001, 28% of businesses had vacancies for permanent staff and 55% of the vacancies were proving difficult to fill. Seasonal employment is a problem, particularly in tourism and agriculture in the eastern part of Lincolnshire.

Actions
Encouraging employers to invest

> Identify why some employers and sectors remain reluctant to invest in workforce development

> Promote, alongside Business Link, Connexions, the Job Centre Plus (Employment Service) and employer representatives, the benefits of employer investment in the workforce as an essential contributor to competitiveness, to meet current and emerging business needs, enhance staff retention and reduce recruitment difficulties

> Promote workforce development through the Investors in People programme and increase participation in IIP

> Promote workforce development through a range of intermediaries, for example banks, accountants or accredited mentors

> Promote incentives to encourage employers to invest in workforce development (the existing support available through mainstream learning programmes will be enhanced substantially if training tax credits and support for level 2 achievement for adults are introduced)

> Work with local unions to develop links with the Union Learning Fund to provide employees with access to qualifications. Pilot training projects supported by the TUC

> Encourage employer investment in learning facilities, linking with *learndirect* and other providers, for example encouraging the establishment of *learndirect* and other ICT-based learning centres within local companies. Company-based centres can provide flexible-learning opportunities to employees working shift patterns that may preclude participation in established learning opportunities and may provide access to employees of other local companies and the wider community. Clusters of employers (eg on a local industrial estate) may collaborate to establish shared facilities

Objective Seven:

Identify and support workforce development in key employment sectors

The economies of Lincolnshire and Rutland are dominated by a few key industries. The most up to date documentation and statistics available on employment, economic development, skills shortages and wealth creation have been used to prioritise the six areas with which we will work in the first instance.

In identifying these six key sectors, account has also been taken of the role of employment patterns in the following sectors:

Retailing	10% of employment
Public administration and defence	9.3% of employees (Rutland)
Education, social work and healthcare	21.7% of employees (Rutland) 19.6% of employees (Lincolnshire)
Other potential growth areas are:	culture creative studies

The following six areas are, however, a first focus of our agenda. These include those identified as key to the local economy in the Lincolnshire Agenda adopted by the Lincolnshire Development Partnership and also in emda's Skills Action Plan 2001/02.

(Source: Drivers for Change The Lincolnshire Agenda.)

Actions
Working with key sectors

> Work with employers in specific sectors to establish skills needs and to encourage joint working and the sharing of good practice. Our initial focus will be on:

Agriculture, food and distribution

Food production is the most important manufacturing sector. The food chain generates 20% of the gross value added in Lincolnshire from 13% of the workforce. The sector will continue to make a significant and growing contribution to GDP at a faster rate than nationally.

Manufacturing/Engineering

This sector employs 20% of the workforce and within this engineering accounts for 8%. There is a net demand for labour in engineering owing to the ageing workforce and value added is expected to grow by 2.4% per year.

Tourism, including hospitality and leisure

Tourism is estimated to have supported 30,687 jobs in the area either directly or indirectly in 1999 and future growth is predicted. The tourism industry accounts for 10% of employment in the area and is a key growth area for several locations, although it is characterised by seasonality, low skills and low wage levels.

Finance and business services

In 1999 this sector employed 11.8% of the workforce in Lincolnshire and 8.9% in Rutland. This is lower than the regional (13.6%) and national (19%) averages. The sector is projected to be the fastest growing sector to 2006, in both gross value added (currently 12%) and employment.

Care

The area's ageing population and regulatory demands are creating a need for a larger and more highly-qualified workforce (currently 12,000-14,000 employees). Conversely there is an increased demand for childcare provision, with a complementary training demand, to meet national targets.

Construction

This is an increasingly important sector locally. The current employment level of 5.2% is higher than the regional (4.8%) and national (4.6%) averages. The Construction Industry Training Board reports significant skills shortages in key construction areas.

Best practice

> Use the polymer industry initiative in Lincolnshire as a potential model for this sectoral approach. Experience with this sector locally has demonstrated the benefits of group working, sharing best practice and expertise; cost-effective access and signposting to services, external funding and support; introducing and sharing experiences of new initiatives, and developing business-to-business opportunities

> Develop links with existing activities, for example the MATIC manufacturing initiative in Lincoln

> Investigate opportunities for wider activity linking with other local LSCs on a regional or national basis. The polymer sector, for example, has developed and piloted customised ICT-based materials to support literacy and numeracy; the training of in-company mentors, the development of on-line materials to support craft/technical training and the development of a regional resource centre

> Work with education business links to increase work experience opportunities in the key sectors

> Develop supply-chain links in key sectors

Identifying demand

> Continue to work closely with partners including the new Sector Skills Councils, emda and Business Link to develop complementary approaches to the needs of key sectors and clusters

> Develop regular contact between employers and providers in these key sectors to ensure the learning offer meets current and emerging needs.

> Continue to work closely with Business Link and other agencies to share business intelligence, databases etc. Link with partners and employers to further develop and share Labour Market Intelligence to support decision-making. Support the development of the Lincolnshire Research Observatory as a vehicle to share information

> Build relationships with the voluntary and community sectors to identify measures to meet their needs for learning and development

Objective Eight:

Identify and support the specific workforce development needs of SMEs, including high value and growth businesses

In 2000, there were 28,900 businesses in Lincolnshire and 1,900 in Rutland. 85% of those in Lincolnshire and 89% in Rutland employed less than ten people. Only 0.5% of businesses in both counties employed more than 200 people. Of those in employment in Lincolnshire in 1999-2000, 12.1% were self-employed.

Earnings in Lincolnshire are low, 9.3% below the East Midlands average and 19.3% lower than the national average. In Rutland, earnings are 0.8% above the Lincolnshire level. The pay levels reflect the economic structure of the area with its dependence on low-value industries.

Professional, managerial and administrative staff commute out of the area due to a lack of employment opportunities. This is a particular problem in South Holland, South Kesteven and Rutland.

Actions

Co-ordinated approach

> Work in partnership with Business Link, Connexions, Job Centre Plus (Employment Service), Government Office East Midlands and emda to deliver a co-ordinated package of support to businesses, minimising the number of separate approaches to employers and working towards a single point of contact

> Review with Business Link and other partners the support available for business start-ups, the self-employed, enterprise, innovation, entrepreneurship, management and leadership, recognising the importance of self-employment and owner-managed businesses in the economy in Lincolnshire and Rutland

> Work with local authorities and other partners to attract and retain high-value industry into Lincolnshire and Rutland while maintaining our prime focus on existing businesses

Best practice

> Promote with Business Link specific government incentives targeted at SMEs, for example Small Firm Learning Accounts

> Support and encourage the development of cross-sector groups based in local areas, enabling employers to link with local training providers to address generic skills needs, including ICT, Basic Skills and management development

> Develop small businesses by realising the potential of ICT-based learning, particularly supporting the achievement of Basic Skills and key skills, but also accessing support for technical training and management development which will often be at level 4 or above

> Provide support through such initiatives as "pairing" to encourage good practice

Objective Nine:
Raise the importance of and recognise the value of vocational and work-based learning.

Throughout our consultation, employers identified the need for improvement in personal and communication skills, IT, craft, technical and manual skills. There were also concerns about the perceptions of vocational training held by some learners, parents and advisers. Young people from black and ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are less likely to participate in vocational learning.

Actions

Promoting vocational learning

> Ensure local promotional activity mirrors national campaigns and highlights the benefits to employers

> Raise the profile of vocational and work-based learning and promote parity of esteem, valuing all routes of learning

> Pilot the use of "Skills on Wheels/Learning Lorries" to improve access to vocational learning. This will enable a wider choice to be offered to learners in the range of craft and engineering related skills, particularly in the east of the county

> Encourage and develop education business link activity, support Young Enterprise, provide links between education and employers and support key employers in providing quality work experience for 14-16 year olds

> Build on the contacts made through work experience to encourage more employers to support work-based learning and workforce development

Modern Apprenticeships

> Increase the number of 16-24 year olds undertaking Modern Apprenticeships and, in particular, the number of 16-18 year old learners and those from black and ethnic minority groups or those with a disability

> Increase the number of employers involved in Modern Apprenticeships

Objective Ten:
Encourage employers to recognise and support diversity, Equal Opportunities and Basic Skills issues in the workforce

Although unemployment in Lincolnshire and Rutland is below the national average, there are various groups that are under-represented in employment. The Welfare to Work Plan for Lincolnshire and Rutland suggests that 50% of disabled people are unemployed and, of those, 46% would like to work. Most disabled people who are in work are employed in the public, community and voluntary sectors.

Lincolnshire and Rutland have an expanding and ageing population. This age imbalance is reflected in the workforce and engaging people over 50 in learning is increasingly important to business competitiveness and the personal development of individuals.

Women are expected to account for 70% of the growth in the workforce. In 2000, 9.1% of male employees were part-time compared with 53.9% of women. Men are more likely to be employed as managers, plant and machine operators and especially in craft occupations. Women are more likely to work in clerical and secretarial jobs, in personal and protective service occupations and in sales. Clear gender patterns persist, influenced among other things, by gender stereotyping and the availability of full and part-time jobs.

Actions

Targeting diversity

> Work with employers, Business Link and the Employment Service to increase the learning opportunities for under-represented and disadvantaged groups in the workforce

> Encourage employers to promote the participation of men and women in non-traditional occupations

> Encourage employers to implement the Disability Discrimination Act and increase opportunities for people with disabilities

> Work with employers, schools, Connexions and the Education Business Partnership to ensure that career choices genuinely reflect aspiration and needs and are not based on stereotypes

> Develop innovative methods of supporting Basic Skills needs in the workplace

> Target, with the Employment Service, those employers with migrant workers and refugees to identify and support Basic Skills and English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)

> Ensure employers are aware of age-diversity issues and activities such as the Third Age Employment Network and the Mature Workforce Initiative to establish the value of employing older workers

> Identify and share good practice in the recruitment of older workers and those from disadvantaged groups who are under-represented in the workforce

3 The Learning Strategy

The Learning Strategy of the LSC Lincolnshire and Rutland aims to provide learning opportunities that meet the needs of individuals, communities and employers and are delivered to high standards of quality and professionalism. It takes into account the issues identified in the Participation Strategy and the Skills Strategy and seeks to develop meaningful solutions to these at the same time as building on good practice.

A wide range of providers within the two counties are delivering learning opportunities currently. These include further and higher education institutions, external institutions, school sixth-forms, employers, private and charity-based providers, the local education authorities, Trade Unions and voluntary and community groups. We will seek to ensure that provision is appropriate, high quality, in convenient locations, has suitable access and is sustainable.

Although it is responsible for all post-16 learning (excluding higher education), the LSC Lincolnshire and Rutland recognises that learning is not confined by age or institution. This learning strategy will seek to develop clear progression routes in partnership with all our providers.

Raising the quality of learning provision is central to the strategy. We will work with providers, OFSTED and the Adult Learning Inspectorate to improve standards of delivery and the overall management of provision. We are conscious of the levels of bureaucracy demanded of providers and will at all times attempt to keep the administrative workload to acceptable levels.

We will encourage high retention and achievement rates and ensure that learning is delivered by competent and qualified staff. Learning must offer equality of opportunity and success in a safe and supportive environment. Wherever possible, learner and user feedback will inform our decisions. We will be rigorous in the actions we take to improve quality and will apply robust criteria for engaging new providers and for monitoring current providers.

Targets:

> We will increase the number of young people at level 2 by age 19 from 5,819 in 2000 to 6,330 by 2004, an increase of 8.8%

> We will increase the number of young people at level 3 by age 19 from 3,313 in 2000 to 3,712 by 2004, an increase of 12%

> We will increase the number of adults at level 3 from 135,000 in 2000 to 155,474 by 2004, an increase of 15.2%

> We will establish at least one Centre of Vocational Excellence in college-based provision by 2004

> We will carry out at least one Sub-Area Review of 14-19 provision each year

> We will train 250 Basic Skills tutors to the new national qualification standards by 2004

> We will increase the number of adults at level 2 and will develop a target in 2002

The objectives of the learning strategy are to:

> Raise the level of achievement of young people

> Raise the level of achievement of adults

> Identify the learning needs of individuals, communities and employers

> Plan learning provision to match the needs of individuals, communities and employers

> Improve the quality of learning provision funded by the LSC

> Establish clear progression routes from pre-entry and level 1 to level 4

Objective Eleven:
Raise the level of achievement of young people

The percentages of 16-year-olds achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A-C are above the national average in Lincolnshire (53%) and Rutland (62%) and DfES figures suggest that achievements for 19-year-olds at level 2 are close to the national target of 85% for 2002. However, retention and achievement rates for young people in further education and on work-based learning need to be improved. There is a relationship between achievement, retention and participation rates. We need to ensure high levels of achievement but not at the expense of completion rates and wider participation. We also need to counter peer group pressures which can lead young people to disengage from learning.

From 2002, the LSCs are responsible for school sixth forms. The current location of sixth forms in Lincolnshire has resulted from the challenges imposed by a very rural county. We recognise the importance of the sector in raising young people's achievements and aspirations and will work with schools with sixth forms in a supportive and collaborative way.

Actions
Learner support

> Monitor the quality of the initial assessment of individual needs and the matching of learner needs to appropriate programmes

> Monitor the frequency and adequacy of progress reviews for individual learners

> Encourage the development of learner-tracking systems to monitor progress and provide information on achievement rates and early leavers

> Benchmark rates of progress towards achievement for individual providers

Barriers to achievement

> Use Connexions intelligence to identify the reasons for drop out and the barriers to achievements

> Involve communities, parents and schools in identifying ways to develop motivation and focus on mechanisms to address the root causes of lack of aspiration

Retention and achievement

> Require providers to set and achieve challenging targets for retention and achievement

> Actively support providers who are seeking to improve retention and achievement. We will focus on individual learner needs and differentiated support to maximise achievement (eg via pastoral support, mentoring of learners, buddies etc)

> Encourage the expansion of providers with successful achievement and retention records, set targets for improvement for providers with below average achievement and retention levels and cease to fund providers who consistently fail to meet such targets

> Further develop value-added measures to more accurately reflect "distance travelled" by learners

> Build on identified good practice from the 2001-02 Level 2 Initiative

Information, advice and guidance

> Work with partners to ensure that information, advice and guidance is readily available to those in learning and proactively used to support learners questioning the merits of completion

> Ensure that transfer routes from one type of provider to another are clearly marked so that young people are retained in learning

> Objective Twelve:
Raise the level of achievement of adults

This is one of our most challenging targets but it is crucial if we are to respond to the need for higher-level skills in the economy. Achievement levels for the adult workforce in Lincolnshire are low.

In 2000 only 39% of adults were qualified to Level 3 compared with 44% in the East Midlands and 47% nationally. Only 20% of adults were qualified to Level 4 (East Midlands 25% and England 28%). We are also losing many of our younger more highly-qualified adults. Recent national guidance for target setting, based on the 2001 Labour Force Survey, has indicated an Level 3 achievement figure of 43.8% in Lincolnshire and Rutland. About a third of the Lincolnshire and Rutland workforce has no NVQ or equivalent qualification and unemployed people are more likely to have no qualifications at all.

The first step for adults returning to learn is vitally important and many of our community providers offer supportive local access as the first rung on the ladder. These providers can help to encourage progression and raise our adults' aspirations providing accurate signposting to higher levels of learning.

We will need to work in tandem with other partners who are targeting the retention of young graduates and with employers to encourage graduate recruitment.

Actions
Promoting the value of learning

> Work with learners, employers and other partners to establish the culture and value of learning using quantitative evidence where possible

> Promote the personal benefits in terms of work and progression that engagement and achievement in learning can bring

> Explore and develop alternative approaches in promoting learning, stressing the wider benefits for the individual in terms of social and community involvement

> Use Adult Learners' Week and other high-profile events to celebrate learning success

> Target adults in the workforce to improve their skills levels, through employers and employer representatives, Trade Unions and Learner Representatives

Flexible delivery

> Build on the successes of Adult and Community Learning, Family Learning and neighbourhood centres in engaging adults and provide support and advice to signpost progression pathways

> Ensure that providers offer sufficiently flexible learning programmes which match the lifestyle needs of employers and adults

> Ensure that providers deliver an adequate range of support mechanisms which recognise the specific needs of adult learners (for example, using successful community providers to influence other providers' support for adult learners by sharing models of good practice)

> Build the capacity of voluntary and community groups who are closest to "hard to reach" adults

Retention and achievement

> Facilitate adult achievement of ICT skills by mapping existing provision and identifying gaps

> Identify and share good practice as evidenced by high levels of retention and achievement by adult learners

> Actively support providers who are seeking to improve retention and achievement and emphasise our focus on individual learner needs and differentiated support to maximise achievement (eg via pastoral support, mentoring of learners etc)

> Encourage the expansion of provision which has a proven success rate in relation to adult learner retention, progression and achievement

> Encourage the development of measures of achievement for programmes for which conventional assessment methods are not appropriate

Objective Thirteen:
Identify the learning needs of individuals, communities and employers

Within Lincolnshire, in particular, there is a lack of the adequate skills training needed for the development of the area's economy and some of the qualifications on offer do not match the needs of local employers. Difficulties that have arisen in some areas in accessing craft skills were highlighted in our consultation process.

In 2001, 45% of employers said they did not use local providers to meet their training needs. The reasons included a lack of provision locally. Specific concerns have been raised over the choices on offer for young and mature men in further education and work-based learning, the availability of craft and trade courses and the low aspirations of many young people.

Local consultation has indicated that there are various groups who are unable to participate fully in learning and are more likely to drop out, including people with mental health difficulties, people with disabilities, people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, care leavers, ex-offenders and young disaffected people. Inspection history nationally shows the quality of provision for learners with specific support needs is of poorer quality.

We need to develop inclusive learning by fitting the provision to the learner, rather than expecting learners to adapt to the provision. This involves identifying learner-specific or additional needs, provider resources and appropriate support, meeting their preferred learning styles and giving them fair access to appropriate assessment.

We are committed to the government's proposals for a seamless 14-19 curriculum and look forward to the Green Paper. We will work closely with the Local Education Authorities in developing these proposals to create a coherent learning offer for this age group. We welcome the pilot initiatives to provide the opportunity for 14-16 year-olds to spend more time on vocational options.

Actions
Employer needs

> Work with the Sector Skills Councils, employers and providers to ensure that the learning, skills and qualifications offered are aligned with employer needs

> Use employer surveys to establish why employers are using providers outside Lincolnshire and Rutland

Young people

> Encourage and develop further Education Business Partnership activity and support Young Enterprise to embed work-related learning into secondary school practice

> Facilitate links between education and employers and support key employers in providing quality work experience for 14-16 year olds

> Promote more dialogue and partnership working between schools, colleges, private training providers and employers to stimulate understanding, innovation and flexibility across the learning routes

> Share key data on post-16 choices and identify key sectors to develop the vocational pathways for 14-19 year olds, building on pilot activity

Learner feedback

> Work with the voluntary groups and specialist agencies to consult those not engaged in learning

> Establish with the learning partnerships co-ordinated systems to gather feedback from learners on satisfaction and standards of learning provision and use it to inform programme delivery, development and marketing

> Conduct individual learner surveys to measure satisfaction levels at regular intervals during and at the end of programmes

> Use the outcomes of dedicated research to facilitate provision which meets young people's aspirations and needs

Objective Fourteen:
Plan learning provision to match the needs of individuals, communities and employers

In the absence of any organisation having an overall strategic planning function, the pattern of learning provision in the past has not been adequately structured to meet the identified needs of employers and learners. This has affected provision

in both rural and urban areas. Some rural areas have no learning provision and in some of the urban areas a sufficiently diverse offer has not been fully developed. Duplication of provision by different providers in the same location is evident in some areas, particularly in IT and between schools and colleges. The LSC Lincolnshire and Rutland will use its planning responsibilities to ensure that provision is coherent, comprehensive, accessible and relevant to the needs of individuals, communities and employers.

Our research has already identified that there is a lack of adequate local facilities for young disabled people and those with learning difficulties. Compared with neighbouring LSCs, Lincolnshire and Rutland has a disproportionately high number of learners under 25 in residential learning establishments and correspondingly low levels of activity in mainstream further education.

We have also observed a serious decline in agricultural provision. The Strategic Review of this provision is due to be completed by mid 2002 and an implementation plan based on the findings will follow.

Actions
Mapping provision

> Map the choice and breadth of learning available across the area and seek to address gaps and duplication. Initially we will focus on Boston, Gainsborough, Grantham, Oakham, Sleaford, Skegness and Spalding

> Review local provision ahead of area inspections with the full co-operation and support of the Local Education Authorities. (At least one sub-area review will be conducted annually. These reviews will be complemented by area inspections as the schedule for 2002-05 unfolds)

> Examine the activities of providers from neighbouring local LSC areas and the activities of our local providers outside our boundaries to establish whether they are positive and working in the interests of learners or are symptomatic of problems and are duplicating or diluting the local offer

> Identify the reasons behind the high levels of residential placements for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities via dedicated research

> Work with the LEAs, Connexions, local special schools, colleges, learners and parents/guardians to broaden local learning opportunities and to reduce the levels of residential placements

> Improve the availability and quality of learning for those young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure they have adequate local support

> Build on the outcomes of the review of further education agricultural provision, in association with the University of Lincoln and local employers, to ensure that the future needs of this industry are supported

Planning

> Respond to the aspirations of young people by providing a sufficiently broad choice of learning so that our future adults may reach their full potential

> Work closely with the two county councils and the colleges to ensure adult learning plans and college strategic plans incorporate actions to support this LSC Lincolnshire and Rutland plan

> Establish new providers where necessary, but we will not support new provision where it compounds duplication or jeopardises the viability of quality local provision

> Build positive relationships with Lincolnshire's 35 schools with sixth-forms (there are none in Rutland) to develop a reasoned approach to sixth-form provision

> Support innovative models for sixth-form, college and training provider collaboration. The Lincoln sixth-form model provides an opportunity for evaluation of such practice

Under-represented groups

> Increase the participation of men, people with disabilities, young people leaving care, ex-offenders and members of the black and ethnic communities in adult and community learning

Learning infrastructure

> Evaluate the distribution and adequacy of existing premises and resources across the area

> Encourage partners to work together to address gaps

> Seek capital funds to support college, sixth-form and adult and community learning providers in redevelopment and rationalisation

Develop the use of alternative premises and maximise the use of community, school and employer facilities, particularly in the evening and weekends.

Promote and support co-operative working to provide staffing support in rural areas.

Contribute to the development of England's first Rural Academy, linking "Skills on Wheels/Learning Lorries'" with e-learning support.

> Objective Fifteen:
Improve the quality of LSC-funded provision

The provision of high-quality education and training is essential if young people and adults are to acquire world-class skills. Quality provision contributes to performance across all of our objectives. High-quality provision will encourage participation, engage employers and provide high levels of achievement. Sub-area reviews and the resulting action plans will be vital tools in contributing to raising standards, improving collaboration and ensuring that learning is comprehensive and well planned. The standards agenda is driven by the need for providers to improve retention and achievement, the need for all providers to deliver teaching and learning which is judged by inspectors to be good and for learning to take place in a safe and supportive environment. Arrangements to raise the quality of provision will need to include the engagement of new providers.

Currently not all teachers and trainers are appropriately qualified and commitment to continuous professional development is variable. Many specialist teachers and trainers operate in isolation in small centres and lack the opportunity to learn from others in larger organisations and to share best practice.

Currently, there is limited feedback and user satisfaction data available from individual learners. Some providers seek feedback but there is no co-ordinated approach for all providers funded by the LSC. There is a similar gap in employer satisfaction data.

Learner health and safety is an integral and important part of high-quality provision. The primary duty of care for learner health and safety rests with providers. All LSC-funded providers must recognise and respond to their responsibility and accountability over for health and safety.

Actions
Continuous improvement

> Implement regular robust reviews that produce reliable judgments about provider performance to inform planning, funding and quality improvement activities

> Require providers to implement robust actions following Ofsted/ALI inspections and LSC provider performance reviews that are focused on driving improvement

> Identify and share good practice and implement robust actions in conjunction with partner organisations to address weaknesses in provision

> Review the work of learning providers embracing performance and progress across all aspects of learning delivery and the management of learning

> Work with individual providers to address any areas of concern, develop the 'safe learner' concept and to build on good practice in all aspects of provision

> Respond jointly with the two county councils to the Adult Learning Inspectorate report, helping to address issues raised

> Ensure that health and safety is a key element of the self-assessment, performance review and development planning process and offer guidance as appropriate

> Collaborate with partners, such as the Job Centre Plus (Employment Service), where we have mutual providers

> Encourage providers to become recognised as Investors in People and achieve the Basic Skills "Q" Mark

Standards fund

> Direct the use of standards funds to improve the quality of provision for learners, raise achievement standards and enhance the competence of provider staff

Learner Health and Safety

> Require providers to adopt appropriate learner supervision processes

> Support providers in the development of effective accident prevention, reporting and analysis

> Monitor provider health and safety according to identified levels of risk

Rewards/sanctions

> Take sanctions where necessary to protect the interests of learners

> Develop quality and value-for-money indicators based on, inter alia, the cost per achieved qualification

> Reward providers for excellence as new accreditations are developed

New providers

> Establish new providers where they add to the quality of learning provision

> Implement rigorous systems for engaging new providers

Equality of opportunity

> Work with providers, teachers and trainers to maintain specialist networks to promote best practice in diversity

> Support and encourage providers in the development of inclusive learning practice

> Require providers to produce annual disability statements that outline facilities, support and arrangements for people with disabilities as a condition of funding

> Monitor provider performance in relation to equality of opportunity and inclusive learning

> Agree targets with providers to improve participation, retention and achievement of under-represented groups

Provider staff

> Ensure that providers target resources appropriately at attracting, retaining and rewarding teaching/training staff

> Require providers to ensure that all trainers/lecturers are appropriately qualified, have access to training that contributes to the enhancement of teaching and learning and are supported in the development of the skills needed to respond to the wider needs of learners

> Monitor the qualifications of provider staff via the review process and require continuous professional development to be targeted on priority actions

> Analyse the learning needs of staff to identify skills/learning gaps and facilitate the sharing of good practice and collaboration between providers to promote skills development.

> Plan and operate an annual schedule of activities to support provider staff

Self-assessment

> Assess each provider's annual self-assessment report against criteria that demonstrate rigorous and robust actions to raise standards

> Require provider performance targets which set challenging goals for improvement

> Monitor the implementation of specified actions to address weaknesses and build on good practice

Centres of Vocational Excellence

> Encourage and support colleges to establish at least one Centre of Vocational Excellence by 2004 and work in collaboration to prepare submissions

Satisfaction feedback

> Require all providers to seek and use employer feedback to address areas of dissatisfaction

> Require all providers to seek and use learner feedback to continuously improve the quality of provision

> Extend the national learner survey at local level, with the additions of targeted questions to reflect our local need for specific intelligence

Objective Sixteen:
Establish clear progression routes from pre-entry and Level 1 to Level 4.

A lack of clarity about progression routes causes problems for learners, particularly for those who are entering learning and those seeking to gain qualifications above level 2. Current low participation rates at Level 3 result in low demand for higher education facilities. This means that full use is often not made of the opportunities that are available. Problems of rural isolation mean that learners are often not able to access different levels of provision. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are less likely to participate in learning post-16.

Actions
Progression pathways

> Map existing routes and identify gaps in levels of provision

> Work with the Learning Partnership and Connexions to enhance the existing database of learning opportunities and progression routes using website, CD-rom and written material

> Develop further links between adult and community learning and other education and training providers

> Work with partners and providers to establish clear links between qualifications, the current requirements of the learner's job and the progression routes that may be possible after completion

> Expand 'first step' learning opportunities and route learners through 'second step' stages to further learning

> Promote innovative collaborative approaches to progression routes using e-learning wherever relevant

Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

> Ensure that learners with additional needs have access to appropriate provision and support to enable them to progress and achieve their full potential

Higher education

> Support progression into HE both for young people and for mature entrants, working via associate FE colleges and local and regional higher education institutions and such initiatives as the Pearl and Aiming Higher projects

> Work with the University of Lincoln and Bishop Grosseteste College and others to achieve the Government target of getting 50% of people aged 18-30 into higher education, concentrating particularly on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds

> Encourage higher education and employers to value key skills in their selection processes

> Support the formation of bridges from apprenticeships to expanded foundation degrees and the use of ICT/distance learning

Resourcing the Strategies

The underlying assumption of this plan is that levels of funding will be maintained or increased over the period it covers. The level of budgets will directly influence the level of activity that can be supported under intended actions and some activities may be limited if additional funding is not available.

The Local Initiatives Fund (LIF) (supplemented by European Social Fund (ESF) grants) provides the main opportunity for the LSC to support innovative pilot activities outside the current scope of mainstream funding. Both of these funds can pump-prime activity and successful projects can then be incorporated into mainstream activity.

European Social Fund

ESF will become an increasingly important source of funding for activities to develop human resources, widen access to the labour market and to promote and develop employability. From 2002-2006, the LSC Lincolnshire and Rutland plans to use significant ESF grant and match funding to help meet the objectives and priorities for action outlined in this plan.

The bulk of the ESF grant will be delivered through co-financing under the Objective 3 programme in Lincolnshire and Rutland, although significant activity is also likely under the Objective 2 programme in Lincolnshire.

Co-financing aims to support a more strategic use of ESF, alongside UK public and other funds. Co-financing involves the management and planning of ESF at measure level, rather than project level; this will allow greater flexibility in the use of match funding and more scope to support innovative projects. The new

approach will also aim to fund activities not previously delivered and allow provision to be more responsive to local and community needs.

We aim to start co-financing under four measures of the Objective 3 programme from early 2002 with around £880,000 of ESF and another £1.1 million of match funding. For 2002, our priorities for ESF co-financing will include:

> Adult information and guidance

> Education business partnerships

> Innovative basic and key skills training

> Workforce development, particularly in key employment sectors

> Capacity building in all of these areas

For 2003 onwards, we will seek more ESF under the Objective 3 programme, working closely with partners (individual learners, learning providers, employers and the voluntary and community sectors) and other prospective Co-financing Organisations in Lincolnshire and Rutland.

A key aim will be to ensure that co-financing adds greater coherence to the use of LSC funds together with ESF, which will ensure that providers are well supported, with local and regional issues and priorities outlined in this plan being directly addressed.

From 2003, our broad priorities under the Objective 3 programme will be:

ESF Policy Field 1 - Active Labour Market Policies

> Enhanced Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for Adults, including the quality and provision of these services

> Projects that provide additional in-depth support for Year 10 and 11 pupils who are at risk of not

participating effectively in education and training

> Support for young people and adults who are unemployed and returners to the labour market to ensure that those facing disadvantage are able to overcome the barriers to training and employability

> Activities to address the theme of age diversity, thereby improving the employability of the mature workforce (over 50s) in particular

ESF Policy Field 2 - Equal Opportunities and Promoting Social Inclusion

> Ensure those sections of the workforce who may be disadvantaged due to rural isolation, learning difficulties and/or disability have access to Basic Skills provision. A key local challenge is to engage new learners in improving literacy and numeracy, given the high levels of need

> Target people facing multiple disadvantage in the labour market to help overcome barriers to learning and employment. Local priorities for action might involve capacity building to ensure that support is given to those groups and communities in greatest need

Co-financing will provide the opportunity for locally-delivered innovative projects targeting specific disadvantages in these areas, working closely with the voluntary and community sector to better target the most disadvantaged groups.

ESF Policy Field 3 - Lifelong Learning

> Raise individual levels of aspiration and develop support structures to tackle the barriers to participation, notably rural isolation. Activities should also aim to improve gateway and progression routes for learning, via

taught and vocational routes

> Innovative activities that will improve the capacity to deliver training - basic and key skills, pre-vocational and vocational training - as well as the actual delivery of training for people in employment, particularly those employed in key sectors in Lincolnshire and Rutland: agriculture, food and distribution, engineering/ manufacturing, tourism (including hospitality, finance and business services), care (including childcare) and construction

ESF Policy Field 4 - Entrepreneurship and Adaptability

> Actions which underpin workforce development in basic, key and vocational skills with a focus on the employment sectors identified under Policy Field 3. Particular emphasis will be given to employees of SMEs and those with little or no qualifications

> Identify emerging skills shortages and seek to fund projects that encourage companies to develop and implement training development plans. It will also seek to develop the skills base of companies, particularly SMEs, to enhance competitiveness

Policy Field 5 - Improving the Position of Women in the Labour Market

> A focus on innovative projects that provide easily accessible education and training for women. Particular issues to be addressed include those of isolation in rural and coastal areas and projects in sectors/occupations where women are under-represented

Monitoring and Evaluation

(i) Principles of the Process

Monitoring and evaluation are integral to both the strategic planning cycle and the development process, as are the themes of responsibility and accountability for the achievement of corporate objectives. Underpinning these is the commitment to measuring progress towards meeting corporate objectives through effective management structures, clear management roles, robust performance measurement processes and timely planning cycles.

(ii) Implementation of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan will be implemented through the Business Plans and the Operational Plans which will be produced on an annual basis. The Business Plan will identify priorities, actions and outcome measures and allocate the financial and staffing resources necessary to their achievement. The Business Plan will be delivered in turn through the Operational Plans which will be developed at team level throughout the Directorates. These will detail the actions and implementation timescales which will ensure the achievement of the team's and Directorate's objectives.

(iii) Identification of Management Information Needs

Information needs to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation will be identified, through consultation wherever possible. Common data sources will be used to ensure both consistency and valid comparisons. In addition data must be readily available and shared as widely as possible.

(iv) Development of Appropriate Performance Indicators and Targets

Performance indicators will be developed at all levels of the organisation including local Council, senior management, directorate and team. The indicators will be relevant, clearly defined, easy to understand, verifiable and timely.

Targets associated with local performance indicators will be used to measure progress towards the achievements of the strategic objectives and national targets. These local targets will be specific and measurable.

(v) Responsibility and Accountability

The organisational structure of the LSC Lincolnshire and Rutland has been reviewed to ensure the effective delivery of the Local Plan. The structure will allow performance measurement to be aligned to management roles. The roles will allow appropriate levels of responsibility and accountability to be defined and will ensure ownership of the hierarchy of objectives, targets, action plans and performance indicators.

Reporting Mechanisms

Reporting arrangements will be agreed and implemented at all levels. These will include internal and external reporting processes.

Internally, procedures will reflect the organisational structure and complement the levels of responsibility for performance. At the organisational level this will be through the Senior Management Team, supported by reports from and within the Directorates, and also through the Corporate Management Team where cross-organisational issues can be addressed. A significant part of the internal reporting process will be to identify and implement an effective reporting structure to local Council, to

show achievement against local and national objectives and targets. This will include monthly progress reports to the local Council.

Externally, progress reports for partners will be produced and discussed in appropriate forums, with consultation events arranged as required. The public will be informed of major initiatives and significant changes to previously published objectives.

(vii) Evaluation

Performance against the national objectives and national targets and the local targets will be assessed at the end of each year at all levels of the organisation and reported to the local Council. The evaluation will include data on and analysis of the delivery and achievement of agreed outcomes, highlighting areas of success and addressing, with reasons given, any areas of shortfall in performance.

The local Council will receive summary documentation to enable it to evaluate its performance and will publish an Annual Report. This yearly evaluation and Annual Report will inform the planning cycle for the next year and will also inform and update any revision to the Strategic Plan.