

# National Equality and Diversity Strategy

Widening Participation and Promoting Inclusion, 2001-2004

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Equality and Diversity... ...making it real Equality and Diversity... ...making it real



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# National Equality and Diversity Strategy: Widening Participation and Promoting Inclusion, 2001-2004

## Vision

1. The Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) vision is to create a learning society free from discrimination and prejudice, which encourages and helps all learners reach their full potential.

## Context

2. The LSC is an organisation with important duties to make learning more inclusive, to widen participation, identify and help stamp out unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for all learners. It will contribute to tackling social and economic disadvantage by removing barriers to post 16 education and training. The LSC's commitment to equality and diversity is absolute and central to its overall mission. It makes good business sense and will contribute towards creating a world-class workforce able to compete effectively in the 21st Century.

3. Government requires that, from the outset, equality of opportunity is integrated into the LSC's culture and operations. In achieving this the LSC is committed to making itself a national equality and diversity exemplar.

4. Meeting the diverse needs of individual learners and becoming a model employer will be the two cornerstones of the LSC equality and diversity strategy.

## The Law and Regulation

5. Legislation, regulation and strategy provide a framework within which the LSC will strive to deliver equality of opportunity for all learners, irrespective of their age, race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, whether or not they have a disability, learning difficulty or any other characteristic.

6. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 require public sector bodies to prepare equality schemes (action plans). The *Disability Discrimination Act* and the *Sex Discrimination Act* fully apply to the LSC. The *Human Rights Act 2000* also has significant implications in the learning context. The LSC will meet all regulatory and legal requirements and will be proactive in setting the standard and agenda for high quality education and training.

7. The LSC has a statutory duty (*Learning and Skills Act 2000:14*) to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- people from different racial groups
- men and women
- people with a disability and people without.

8. The *Learning and Skills Act 2000* requires the LSC to report annually to the secretary of state on:

- what equality arrangements it has made during the preceding year
- how effective the equality arrangements were
- equality and diversity plans for the following year.

9. The secretary of state's remit letter to the Learning and Skills Council highlights the LSC's duty to have due regard to the needs of the growing proportion of older people in the population.

## Delivery

10. The LSC will deliver equality of opportunity by:

- mainstreaming equality and diversity in all aspects of its work
- building effective partnerships with key national, regional and local organisations
- consulting with key partners, providers and learners.

11. These methods of working will be central to achieving four high level objectives:

- to develop the LSC as a champion of equality
- to embed equality and diversity into all policies, programmes and actions
- to develop the LSC as a model equality and diversity employer/organisation
- to report annually to the secretary of state on progress towards equality.

## High Level Objective One

12. *To develop the LSC as a champion of equality*

*The LSC will:*

- designate the Chair and the Chief Executive as Champions for Equality at LSC and organisation levels to promote and monitor the internal and external focus on the issue (*achieved 2001*)
- establish a Working Group at Council level with external representation to provide strategic support and steer for the LSC's equality and diversity work (*achieved 2001*)
- establish an equality and diversity staff team to support mainstreaming and implement policy (*achieved 2001*)
- ensure that the induction programmes for LSC members, the Chief Executive, Executive Directors, staff and local council members, and the staff development strategy, have a central focus on achieving equality and diversity (*in development*)
- ensure that arrangements for making appointments to the LSC are equality-proofed (*in development*)

- work with key statutory and non-statutory organisations and stakeholders to ensure that policy and practice is informed and guided by the best advice and guidance available (*achieved and ongoing*)
- consult actively with partners and stakeholders on the draft national equality and diversity policy and action plan and publish the agreed document (*achieved 2001/02*).

## High Level Objective Two

### 13. *Embed Equality and Diversity into all policies, programmes and actions*

#### *The Council will:*

#### Data

- create and use management information and business systems that gather all appropriate customer data (including individual starts, outcomes and destinations) supported by information from provider reviews and inspections, quality monitoring, etc; to ensure monitoring, evaluation and review of equal opportunities performance (*to be fully in place during 2003/4*)
- establish a pilot project in partnership with a group of local LSCs to develop and use equality and diversity impact measures as part of strategic planning and

delivery (achieved 2001). Assess the pilot and issue formal LSC guidance on developing and using equality and diversity impact measures (2002/3). Build this into the 2002/3 national strategic planning guidance (2002/3). Establish a national system of equality impact measures for race, sex, age and disability (*in place during 2002/3*)

- monitor and review progress on promoting equality by examining outcomes for underrepresented groups and make recommendations for action as necessary (*in line with reporting cycles 2001-2004*)

#### Funding

- work to keep funding systems under review to ensure they do not disadvantage any group of learners or potential learners (*2001 – 2003*)
- use development funding to help providers create innovative projects to widen participation, and improve retention and attainment amongst underrepresented groups (*ongoing*)
- access relevant EC funding programmes to support national development partnerships and encourage local LSCs to similarly lead partnerships to promote new equality initiatives (*2002-2004*).

## Guidance

- issue guidance to local LSCs on defining, consulting on and implementing their equality and diversity strategies and action plans (2002/3).

retention, to encourage people from under-represented groups to participate in and benefit from LSC programmes and initiatives (ongoing).

## Learners

- identify through continuing research, stakeholder consultation and customer feedback across all programme areas, key equality issues and barriers to successful participation, and strategies for positive change at national and local levels (ongoing)
- assess the impact of current and proposed LSC policies and programmes on potential learners, in particular, identifying and re-shaping those aspects of provision which may disadvantage particular groups of learners (ongoing)
- develop learning programmes and materials which take into account the different characteristics and needs of learners from different cultural and social backgrounds, and of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (2001-2004).

## High Level Objective Three

### 14. *To develop the Council as a model equality and diversity employer / organisation*

#### *The Council will*

- designate the Human Resource Director as the Management Board member responsible for the HR/employment equality and diversity policy (achieved 2001)
  - designate the Quality and Standards Director as the Management Board member responsible for the service delivery aspects of the Council's equality and diversity policy (achieved 2001)
  - prepare a written equality and diversity employment policy, which sets out a statement of the organisation's commitment to equality and diversity, and an action plan showing how it will achieve it (achieved 2001/2)
  - secure the commitment of senior management throughout the LSC to equality and diversity and take action to address equality issues (ongoing)
- work with providers and employers to help them adopt relevant standards, promote equality of opportunity and take systematic steps, including positive action, to widen participation and improve

- consult staff on the content of the equality and diversity policy (*achieved 2001*)
- communicate the policy to all staff, potential employees and stakeholders (*achieved 2001/2 and ongoing*)
- provide relevant training and staff development initiatives (*ongoing*)
- establish the profile of LSC staff by age, sex, ethnicity and disability and take steps to ensure that the LSC profile reflects the diversity of the population at large (*ongoing 2002/3 reviewed annually*)
- monitor against identified targets and goals to ensure that the policy is working in practice and prepare an annual report on progress (*ongoing*).

## High Level Objective Four

**15. To report annually to the Secretary of State on progress towards equality.**

***The Council will:***

- submit a report to the Secretary of State summarising the arrangements made to achieve equality and diversity in all the Council's work, progress and the main outcomes, barriers to achieving equality objectives, and plans for the year 2002/2003 including schemes to address age, race, sex, disability and other inequalities (*annually*).

## Notes

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## Notes

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