Learning and Skills:

Our Way Ahead

## Equipping South Yorkshire People

## With The Knowledge And Skills

## They Need For The 21st Century

# *A First Consultation by the*

# *Learning and Skills Council South Yorkshire*

### June 2001

## Chairman’s Foreword

I am delighted to take up the challenge as Chairman of the Learning and Skills Council South Yorkshire and welcome you to our first consultation exercise.

The Learning and Skills Council was set up in April 2001 with a clear remit to help people in England to change their lives for the better through learning, against a backdrop of an economy increasingly based on knowledge, in which too many are hampered from achieving their potential by a lack of basic skills, outdated skills or who just see learning as not for them.

Our task is essentially about ensuring that the people of South Yorkshire are helped to gain the knowledge and skills they will need to develop, grow and prosper throughout their working lives in the 21st Century, coming to see learning throughout life as just a natural way of leading more rewarding and fulfilling lives.

Although many of the challenges apply right across England, here in South Yorkshire (due in large part to our industrial legacy) they remain particularly acute. Challenges include:

* Nearly a quarter of those aged between 16 and 60 years in South Yorkshire are hampered by poor reading, writing and numeracy skills, with wide variations within and between areas;
* One third of the South Yorkshire workforce have undertaken no formal learning in the past 3 to 6 years and 16% have undertaken none since leaving school;
* Too many local people work in low tech, low skill jobs in industries vulnerable to upheaval and too few have high level skills;
* Too few of our young people reach their full potential with too many dropping out of education at an early age;
* There is a waste of talent from many of our ethnic minority communities whose potential is not being fully realised.

This, our first consultation with the wider South Yorkshire audience, sets out our perceptions of the key issues facing South Yorkshire on the learning and skills agenda. As a newly formed organisation I have committed us to an open and transparent approach in developing our strategies and plans for the future and your input will help us to more effectively meet needs and better target resources.

Please take time to read it and respond. We welcome your views.

Doug Liversidge

Chairman, Learning and Skills Council South Yorkshire

## About the Learning and Skills Council South Yorkshire:

## Our role and remit

Established on 1 April 2001 under Section 1 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the LSC through its headquarters in Coventry and its English network of 47 sub-regional offices, is responsible to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment for:

* Identifying national and local learning and skill needs;
* Setting and implementing strategies and plans for meeting those needs;
* Driving up demand for learning and skills from individuals and employers;
* Advising the Government on the post–16 National Learning Targets;
* Securing progress towards the post–16 Targets (jointly with the Higher Education Funding Council for England on the Level 4 target);
* Planning, funding and securing higher standards in Further Education; school sixth forms (from 2002); workforce development; adult and community learning; work- based training for young people; Education Business Links for young people including all children of compulsory school age; and Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults on learning and skills.

From a national LSC budget of £6 billion for 2001/02 the LSC South Yorkshire has been allocated £130m for this work in our area, with additional funding coming from Objective One and other sources.

Each of the 47 arms of the LSC (including the arm covering South Yorkshire) has its own local Council drawn from people in the public and private sectors who bring with them an understanding and experience of the wide variety of interests in post 16 education and training, including those representing the consumers of the learning system – individuals and employers.

Over the coming year, Learning and Skills Council South Yorkshire will work closely with partners and stakeholders to develop strategies and plans that meet the needs of local learners and local employers.

# The Consultation Process

The main purpose of this consultation is to share ideas on the nature of the challenges we all face in South Yorkshire and to ask for your early views, advice and help in enabling us to shape sound, practical and sensible proposals for our first local strategic plan.

The document should be read in conjunction with the Learning and Skills Council South Yorkshire’s first Prospectus, which is being issued to the same mailing list by the end of June 2001. The Prospectus aims to commission activities supporting the South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Agenda.

Please take time to give us your considered response either through the response questionnaire attached or through one of the many events and workshops we intend to run across South Yorkshire in the coming weeks/months.

The document covers, under three themed headings the following key issues on which your views are sought:

Employer investment and workforce development

* Knowing what current and future skill needs are;
* Delivering the skills needed;
* Raising the level of skills in the workforce.

The Learning Agenda

* Encouraging, enabling and supporting young people to stay on in learning and raise their attainment;
* Increasing the demand for learning by adults;
* Improving the training infrastructure and raising capacity in local supply.

Widening participation and diversity

* Improving basic skills;
* Providing equal opportunity for all;
* Widening participation in learning;
* Bringing more people from disadvantaged groups into learning.

Under each key issue the document sets out what we perceive to be the main challenges facing South Yorkshire, some possible mainly early actions and it poses some specific questions.

We are also consulting on the broad vision for learning and skills and on the key measures of success that we should use.

You may wish to concentrate on the document as a whole or on separate sections that are of particular interest to your group or organisation.

Although we ask some specific questions please view the document from the following overall standpoint:

* Does the consultation document outline the key problems and issues that need to be tabled? If not, what have we missed or misinterpreted?
* Are the suggested actions and interventions the right ones; what others can you suggest?
* Is there anything else that needs to be addressed?

Please respond to the consultation by 31 July 2001 in one of the following ways:

* By completing and returning the response questionnaire attached
* In writing by post or e-mail to:

Ian Gardner, Corporate Planning Manager, Learning and Skills Council South Yorkshire, St. Mary’s Court, 55 St Mary’s Road, Sheffield S2 4AQ

E-mail: ian.gardner@lsc.gov.uk

Telephone: 0114 2015005

* By attending one of the many meetings we will be running over the consultation period

(We will be sending out notification of meetings but please phone Mark Johnson on 0114 2015012 if you would like advance details)

# Our Vision for Learning and Skills

Our proposed vision for South Yorkshire sits within Yorkshire Forward’s overall regional vision and the vision for the sub-region set out by the South Yorkshire Forum.

*“To build a balanced, diverse and sustainable high growth economy in South Yorkshire by 2010, recognised as a growing European Centre for high technology manufacturing and knowledge based services, and offering opportunities for the whole community”*

Some key elements of this are as follows:

Our vision on employment

* A substantially larger business base and a balanced knowledge-based mixed economy
* An increased GDP per capita to 80% of European average by 2007 and 85% by 2010
* Centres of Excellence across South Yorkshire linked to our two universities matched to key business sectors with particular emphasis on management excellence
* Graduates with core work skills from our universities who are able to develop careers without leaving the area to move on
* Employers in key growth sectors able to attract good quality local recruits

Our vision on skills

* Young people who all have access to ICT at school and increasingly at home
* Basic IT skills being commonplace both among young people and adults, with large and growing numbers possessing higher level IT skills
* At least 50% fewer local people lacking basic skills
* A world class learning and training infrastructure offering high quality learning and skills opportunities for all
* Overall workforce skill levels having risen sharply so that 75% possess formal qualifications

Our vision on learning

* More interesting and relevant educational experiences, linked into vocational courses and related to labour market opportunities
* Attainment and participation levels at least equal to the national average
* 50% of young people entering Higher Education and gaining high level work related skills
* Self managed and self reliant local people who use high quality advice, information and guidance, and pursue learning and skills opportunities
* A culture of self development through lifelong learning for employers, employees and others, with on-line learning playing a major part

Proposed key measures of success for the above statements are as follows:

* To reduce the number of adults in South Yorkshire with poor basic skills by 20% by 2005 and by 50% by 2010
* To reduce the number of adults in South Yorkshire with no recognised qualifications from 27% in 2000 to 15% by 2010
* To increase regular participation in learning by adults by 50% by 2010
* To increase those with NVQ Level 3 or equivalent qualifications from 40% in 2000 to 50% by 2005 and 60% by 2010
* 20% of the workforce to have IT skills at Level 2 by 2002 on the way to increasing the proportion of the workforce with ICT skills in South Yorkshire to 40% by 2010
* To increase those attaining 5 GCSEs at A to C (or equivalent) from 40% to 65% by 2010
* To increase participation by 16 to 19 year olds in full time education in South Yorkshire to at least the UK average by 2010
* To radically improve business use of ICT from 69% to 90% by 2010

Some further indicators of performance will include:

* Customer satisfaction measures
* Area Inspection findings
* Value for Money targets for 6th Form, Further Education and Work Based Learning provision
* Investors in People targets

## What do you think?

* Should we address additional issues in our vision?
* Should we include additional key measures of success?

Please answer question 1

## Employer Investment and Workforce Development

## Knowing what the current and future skill needs are

The challenges we face

* Too many local people are working with low tech skills in traditional industries vulnerable to upheaval
* The South Yorkshire Employer Survey 2000 showed that significant skill shortages currently exist in the area in craft and related and associate professional and technical occupations.
* A weakness identified by South Yorkshire employers locally, and by the National Skills Task Force nationally, is in the key transferable skills of the workforce
* Employer and Skills surveys in South Yorkshire for 2000 revealed that the following skills will be in demand by employers over the next 2 to 3 years:
	+ Practical skills (replacement demand for skilled manual workers)
	+ Management skills (in particular change management skills)
	+ Communication skills
	+ Customer service / care skills
	+ Computer literacy skills
		- Job growth, and therefore emerging skill needs, will lie in volume terms in the service sector, notably computing, finance, health and education, recreation and leisure
		- Although 78% of all jobs in the UK are in the emerging and strong sectors, such as electrical and optical equipment, communications, financial and business services, only 27% of South Yorkshire jobs are in these sectors (Source: Ernst and Young Business Strategies 1998)
		- A large proportion of the skills demand in the distribution, hotels and catering sector is for the development of particular key skills such as customer care, communication, literacy and numeracy and for direct training rather than merely assessment
		- South Yorkshire employers believe that “low numbers of applicants with the required skills” is the main reason why vacancies prove hard to fill

Potential early responses to the challenges

* Start by building sound long term working relationships with South Yorkshire employers, in conjunction with Business Link South Yorkshire, representative organisations, Yorkshire Forward, the Employment Service, Connexions, Trade Unions, Learning Partnerships and other agencies to develop sound information on the labour market and on skill trends
* Establish effective mechanisms for consulting and working with partners
* As a result, by March 2002 complete a systematic analysis of the learning and skill needs of employers and individuals in South Yorkshire and emerging skills gaps and use this to build our skills strategy. In particular we need to identify the skill needs of businesses in new and high technology growth sectors and equip individuals with the skills they need to take advantage of the new opportunities
* Gain a clear understanding of the way the labour market in South Yorkshire is changing and communicate this to local people so they can better understand and use it to influence their decisions on learning opportunities
* Using Objective One funding, identify the skill needs of businesses in new and high technology growth sectors and equip individuals with the skills required to take advantage of the new opportunities
* Develop employer and sector networks
* Target investment on higher level skill needs in the sectors forecast to grow in terms of employment and wealth creation

What do you think?

* Have we correctly identified the current skills situation in South Yorkshire?
* If not, what have we missed or misinterpreted?
* Do you agree or disagree with the actions proposed; what ideas do you have?
* Where do you believe we should all be pitching most effort to meet skill needs over the next three years?

Please answer question 2

## Employer Investment and Workforce Development

## Delivering the skills needed

 The challenges we face

* Some of the skills training in South Yorkshire supported from public funds whether delivered through the FE sector or private sector providers has little clearly apparent link to the skills and learning needed for existing and emerging jobs in the economy
* Current provision to support workforce development has been called haphazard and poorly resourced. Some employers say they need more off the job specialist skills training assistance rather than merely an on-the-job assessment of skills gained yet there is evidence of a shortage of trained tutors / trainers in providers with the specialist skills needed to meet employer off- the-job requirements
* To provide the skills needed for the 21st century, South Yorkshire needs a world class learning and training infrastructure.

Potential responses

* Carry out a comprehensive audit of the current learning and training infrastructure in South Yorkshire to clearly understand what provision exists and where there are significant gaps, to map it against known employer skill needs and to benchmark it against best in world standards
* Having identified gaps or weaknesses in learning/skills provision and capacity, including on line learning, take steps to fill them with high quality provision
* Develop mechanisms with partners to constantly update information on skill needs and ensure that changes take account of the views of learners and potential learners on what is needed
* Invest in e-learning infrastructure for employers, employees, trainees and others

What do you think?

* Do you agree with our comments and the actions proposed; what have we missed?
* We need sound ways of reaching learners and potential learners to ensure we take account of their views. Your ideas please?

Please answer question 3

## Employer Investment and Workforce Development

## Raising the level of skills in the workforce

The challenges we face

* There is a significant shortage of businesses in South Yorkshire with only 17 businesses per 1000 of the working age population against 27 per 1000 across the UK
* If the occupational structure of South Yorkshire mirrored the national picture there would be around 40,000 more people employed in managerial, professional and associate professional jobs
* 24% of all employees in South Yorkshire work in manufacturing (18% nationally) but in job terms this sector will offer ever fewer jobs for those with low level skills. All production sectors are predicted to suffer further job losses longer term due to technological advances needed for them to survive, grow and prosper
* South Yorkshire is significantly under represented in a wide range of service sectors
* Too many people work in South Yorkshire in low skilled jobs in sectors in decline (or which require substantial upskilling to grow) and too few of those unemployed have the skill sets needed to take up employment in new jobs
* Low levels of high order skills are cited by Yorkshire Forward as one reason for low levels of Foreign Direct Investment in South Yorkshire
* Few investors from high added value sectors (computing and finance) have moved into South Yorkshire and the level of highly skilled jobs in the area is low
* A sharply growing number of businesses use the internet for commercial purposes yet IT skills possessed by employees remain weak which is a real threat to future competitiveness
* 30% of all South Yorkshire employees have never used a personal computer yet the need to develop ICT skills is commonly cited by South Yorkshire employers as the greatest skills need of all
* 40% of the workforce in <10 employee businesses have never used a PC at work, compared with only 22% of >250 organisations
* Seven of the 10 largest occupational groups in the sub-region are in South Yorkshire’s list of the 10 projected fastest declining occupations
* 35% of South Yorkshire employees consider their skills to be out of date
* Nearly a quarter of all employees in < 10 employee businesses have no formal qualifications. Small businesses are less likely to invest in training, citing the need to keep costs down to stay competitive as a key factor
* 36% of South Yorkshire companies with hard to fill vacancies did not fund any training in 1999, among the companies surveyed half did not fund any training that year

Potential responses

* Make the development of ICT skills among the workforce one of our top priorities, including using European monies to set up e-learning centres in South Yorkshire companies
* Provide, using European funding, a large programme of support for South Yorkshire businesses with growth potential to help meet the costs of meeting key emerging workforce skill needs, including change management skills so they meet anticipated future business needs and improve their competitiveness
* Through European support, foster capacity in targeted sectors to anticipate change and adapt accordingly
* Help <10 employee businesses in growth sectors to meet training costs associated with growth, using matched European funding
* Gather and promote hard evidence of local employers directly benefiting from improved employee skills to convince other employers that systematic engagement in training and developing their workforce pays off
* Provide a comprehensive programme of starter business skills training for both lifestyle and potential high growth businesses

What do you think?

* There are many issues here; please help us to pick out those which you consider we should give top priority
* What are the actions we could best take to assist in the development of the South Yorkshire workforce?
* What do you think to the idea of using Objective One funding to support employers’ workforce development costs?

Please answer question 4

## The Learning Agenda

## Encouraging, enabling and supporting young people to stay on in learning and raise their attainment

The challenges we face

* For South Yorkshire, as for the rest of the UK, to compete, grow and prosper we need a continually developing highly skilled workforce
* With only 68% of 17 year olds in the UK participating in education (Source: OECD 1998) the UK lag behind all main industrialised nations except Greece, Turkey and Mexico
* The proportion of the 15,000 young people in South Yorkshire who annually complete compulsory education and attain 5 or more GCSEs Grades A to C is considerably below the national average. Only 38.5% compared to 49.2% for England as a whole (Source: Year 2000 LEA Performance Tables)
* In South Yorkshire, only 72% of 17 year olds are still participating in education or training compared to 74% for England as a whole. This figure itself masks some considerable variations across the sub-region
* The latest achievement statistics taken from the 1999 Autumn Labour Force Survey show that 74% of 19 year olds in the UK have attained an NVQ 2 or equivalent against a National Learning Target for 2002 of 85%. In South Yorkshire, based on 1998 data, we have reached around 67%, with significant cross area variations
* The Government has set a National Learning Target that by 2002 at least 60% of 21 year olds should have achieved an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent. In South Yorkshire by Autumn 1999 we reached just 40%
* Some employers have unrealistic expectations of the skill levels of young employees and lack basic interviewing skills

Potential responses

* Need to reduce non–participation immediately before and at the point of transfer from compulsory education
* Radically improve tracking and destination feedback so that learners have a clear picture of the likely benefits of alternative learning routes
* Work very closely with the Connexions Service to develop and improve careers advice available to young people and to ensure that impartial advice and guidance is at least equally focussed on the needs of the labour market as on individual preferences
* Customise support for young people in danger of exclusion
* Measure the extent to which education and training received by young people meets their needs and additionally the needs of the labour market
* Ensure the range of opportunities and design of programmes for young people reflects feedback from young people themselves
* Work closely with schools, colleges and private training providers to improve participation, attainment and standards, and to promote Education Maintenance Allowances and Connexions cards
* Education Business Partnerships will be required to work to clear, measurable targets which detail the activities being undertaken to continually develop close working and understanding between businesses and schools/colleges
* Develop links between secondary education, post 16 providers and employers to help achieve high levels of participation and prevent young people from leaving learning too early
* Work with the E-Learning Foundation and the South Yorkshire E-Learning Partnership on their computers into schools approach
* Develop more improved opportunities for work related learning
* Ensure that statutory entitlement to time off for study is fully understood by all young people aged 16 to 18 in South Yorkshire

What do you think?

* What targets should we set for participation and attainment?
* Have we understood the situation correctly? What other actions might we take?
* It can be difficult to gain access to the views of young people, to discover why a sizeable minority drop out of education or training at an early age. Do you have any ideas on how we can link up with them so their voice is heard?
* What is the single most effective action we could take?

Please answer question 5

## The Learning Agenda

## Increasing the demand for learning by adults

The challenges we face

* One third of the South Yorkshire workforce have undertaken no learning in the past 3 to 6 years and 16% have not undertaken any since leaving school
* In common with the rest of the UK, older workers will form a growing proportion of the South Yorkshire workforce yet this is the group least likely to have participated in learning or training since leaving school and least likely to receive training from their employer. More than four in ten adults in South Yorkshire over 50 have no qualifications at all
* There is evidence of a reluctance by many employers to invest in older workers – this is a national issue
* Lower skilled adults in South Yorkshire who missed out on the expansion of basic educational opportunities when they were young are among those in the workforce least likely to be involved in education and training through the workplace, and are therefore becoming increasingly limited in their future employment opportunities
* People with low or no qualifications in South Yorkshire tend to be concentrated in particular occupational groups. Over a quarter of those employed in clerical occupations, 38% in craft and skilled manual, 53% of semi skilled and 64% of unskilled workers have no formal qualifications
* Nearly a quarter of those working in <10 employee businesses have no qualifications, this is significantly higher than for larger sized businesses. Based on household survey data, employees in small businesses have generally less interest in learning
* A third of South Yorkshire managers had no formal job related training or education at all in 1999, according to the South Yorkshire Skills Survey 1999 and almost two thirds of those in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations were in the same position
* Thirty per cent of current South Yorkshire employees have never used a personal computer but the greatest demand for training is in computer skills. There are, however, inadequate levels of provision
* Many adults find it hard to access high quality information, advice and guidance on learning and skills

Potential responses

* Provide flexible delivery linked into up to date information on learning opportunities and well founded analyses of the current and future needs of the labour market
* Compile and publicise case study profiles to show examples and evidence of South Yorkshire people who have successfully obtained appropriate knowledge and skills which have demonstrably improved their employment prospects and quality of life
* Provide short, specific courses to attract many more South Yorkshire people into learning, giving adults a taste of achievement across a wide range of activities from using a computer and surfing the internet to basic literacy, numeracy and communication
* Coordinate and develop a strategy for on-line learning in South Yorkshire
* Commission market research to identify how we target non participating adults
* Change some employer attitudes to older workers
* Work with Local Learning Partnerships to strengthen and improve Lifelong Learning plans
* Coordinate and develop a strategy for on-line learning in South Yorkshire
* Work closely with UfI’s Learndirect network, colleges and training providers aiming to develop innovative ways to enable people to access high standard learning opportunities
* Work with UfI to support a comprehensive take up and use of information and communication technology by individuals, employees and within communities. Assist them to build up the Learndirect information and advice service in South Yorkshire
* Work closely with the local Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership (including the Employment Service) to develop high quality easily accessible services for South Yorkshire adults
* Work with Trade Unions to build on existing initiatives and partnerships, including developing the Union Learning Fund
* Work with the Employment Service to help promote learning among unemployed people

What do you think?

* We have set out a long list of possible actions aimed at encouraging more adults into learning; are there other, perhaps more direct, actions we could take?
* Should we concentrate our resources on the development of particular, perhaps new, ways of introducing adults into learning?

Please answer question 6

## The Learning Agenda

## Improving the training infrastructure and raising capacity in local supply

The challenges we face

* The LSC is responsible for identifying local skill needs, (both from a short through medium to long term perspective), and investing in quality provision to meet these needs. Currently there is no definitive view of the total provision available across South Yorkshire and the extent to which it meets current and future skill needs or customer requirements. There is a need to develop the definition of a world class education and training infrastructure and evaluate South Yorkshire’s provision in relation to it.
* There are inconsistent standards between deliverers of post 16 education and training across South Yorkshire
* The existing infrastructure needs to be more flexible, enabling new providers and types of provision to be brought on stream to address the needs of all learners, including the most disadvantaged and excluded

Potential responses

* In South Yorkshire we must build an education and training infrastructure that is, and is acknowledged as, world class. Using European funding the LSC will support work to:
	+ Define what a world class education and training infrastructure looks like
	+ Define where we in South Yorkshire stand against that standard and in particular identify key gaps in our strategic capability
	+ Direct policy, investment and other resources towards closing any gaps between the actual position and the model infrastructure
	+ Implement a process to audit, assess and measure current provision against the model so we get a clear picture of the current quality of learning and skills provision offered in South Yorkshire to enable us to understand where and in what ways standards need improving
* Take account of the findings of OFSTED and the Adult Learning Inspectorate through Area Inspections on the quality of existing provision and evidence of good and poor practice of individual providers. Introduce a common, thorough review procedure with FE Colleges and other providers
* Use the existing and planned Area Inspections of Post 16 provision to help build ambitious, integrated plans for each borough in South Yorkshire
* Build strong and productive relationships with the eight FE Colleges and two Universities and help FE colleges to develop proposals to become specialist centres of vocational excellence
* Develop future plans based on feedback from individual learners, Area Inspections and provider inspection reports on standards of provision
* Build Centres of Expertise in Further Education/other sectors
* Use the Learning Partnerships to provide an important vehicle for provider collaboration and quality improvement work
* Agree common tariff rates with the Employment Service rates for buying provision

What do you think?

* The views of both consumers as well as providers would be very welcome here.
* Do you agree with our broad ranging analysis of the current situation regarding delivery; are we under or overstating matters in your view?
* Any thoughts around how we define world class and where we find examples to study?
* What feedback mechanisms should be put in place?

Please answer question 7

## Widening Participation and Diversity

## Improving Basic skills

The challenges we face

* Nearly a quarter (23%) of all 16 to 60 year olds in South Yorkshire have low levels of numeracy and within this 15% have very low levels. The comparable low level national figure is 21%so this is a big issue both nationally and for South Yorkshire
* An even higher proportion of the South Yorkshire population (17%) have very low literacy levels compared to 15% nationally
* Half of all unskilled employees in South Yorkshire don’t have any NVQ level qualifications. Some groups have particularly low attainment levels
* These proportions vary widely within, and between, different geographic areas in South Yorkshire
* One in eight South Yorkshire employers identify low level literacy and numeracy skills in their workforce as a significant problem
* There are structural and persistent high levels of unemployment in areas of multiple deprivation across South Yorkshire which correlate to areas which have low levels of basic skills

Potential responses

* Consult with partners and providers on developing a basic skills strategy and prepare a Basic Skills Action Plan for South Yorkshire with the objective of reducing adults with poor basic skills by 50% by 2010 and 20% by 2005 and measure the continual progress
* Involve the voluntary and community sectors much more in helping to identify and assist those in greatest need of support
* Bring on stream lots of diverse basic skills provision in local communities
* Target support on areas in South Yorkshire which are in greatest need
* Ask local people how we can effectively help them and act on their wishes wherever possible
* Identify the adult population, in South Yorkshire, with basic literacy and numeracy needs, and target support on them. Measure how effective this support has been over time, to evaluate the approach, and determine if the number of adults, with these needs, has decreased

What do you think?

* Given how important it is that ever greater numbers of local people gain basic skills as a stepping stone to increasing attainment, we particularly ask for detailed and considered responses on how best the LSC can assist. New and creative ideas would be greatly welcomed.

## Please answer question 8Widening Participation and Diversity

## Providing Equal Opportunity for all

The challenges we face

* Those living in areas of multiple disadvantage are least likely to have higher level qualifications and more likely to have none at all. Former mining communities are noticeably affected
* People in ethnic minority groups participate in education and training at a significantly higher level in South Yorkshire than the general population (48% against 33%) and have higher attainment levels, yet have much poorer job prospects and much higher rates of unemployment, a significant under utilisation of the sub-region’s resources
* Members of ethnic minority community groups are more likely to be interested in learning new skills than the population as a whole
* Women are more likely never to have undertaken training or learning since leaving school than men (57% against 43%) and are significantly under represented in traditional sectors and in higher level occupations
* Women show more interest than men in entering training in the near future
* Boys and young men generally achieve less at school and in the labour market than girls and young women; a growing national as well as local issue
* Men are more likely to be self employed than women (a ratio of 12 men for every 4 women) yet businesses started by women have better survival rates

Potential responses

* Take positive action to address equal opportunities including piloting positive action measures
* Include in our initial set of local measures the improvement in levels of economic activity among ethnic minority communities
* Consult widely with South Yorkshire ethnic minority communities, and groups representing gender, disability and age diversity interests to prepare an equal opportunities strategy and action plan containing targets and performance indicators to tackle under representation and under achievement
* Help women to upgrade their skills and secure employment in growth sectors
* Develop relationships with all those involved in local equality networks and ensure they are included in partnership and networking arrangements
* Improve access to learning through encouraging more ethnic minority and other specialist providers to enter the market
* Help women to upgrade their skills and secure employment in growth sectors
* Promote the reconciliation of family and working life
* Stimulate cultural change towards gender roles and expectations
* Work with employers, via Business Link South Yorkshire, to address barriers to employment for people from ethnic minorities

What do you think?

* Setting out plans with targets and measurements is all well and good but please give us practical ideas on how we can both achieve and measure success
* What are the main barriers to progress towards the goal of attaining equal opportunity for all?

## Please answer question 9Widening Participation and Diversity

## Widening participation in learning

The challenges we face

* Part time employees, unskilled and manual workers, those in small businesses and those on low incomes receive the least employer support for training
* Interest in undertaking learning is lowest among older workers who are among the least well qualified in the workforce. Interest is also low among employees of small businesses
* There is a view that Information, Advice and Guidance services for adults in South Yorkshire are of variable quality and it is too hard for many adults to access them

Potential responses

* Develop a local participation strategy, involving a wide variety of partners
* Undertake a full market segmentation to fully understand the issues, constraints and expectations for the full range of learners
* Offer a wide variety of basic IT and basic practical skills training in readily accessible places to begin to engage more people in learning
* Work closely with key partners to share ideas and develop policy
* Work with the local IAG Partnerships to build a high quality information, advice and guidance service for adults in South Yorkshire
* Support more childcare training both to enable more single parents to have the opportunity to re enter learning and to meet a skill shortage
* Provide direct support to individual learners through Individual Learning Accounts
* Provide incentives to new and returning learners
* Promote the benefits of learning through a “Learning Pays” campaign

What do you think?

* Reaching, and getting the interest of, older workers in learning and skills development is notoriously difficult. Have you any useful experiences you could share to give insight?
* We mention incentives but what sort may prove most effective?
* Should there be a local freefone helpline number for learners/potential learners?

Please answer question 10

## Widening Participation and Diversity

## Bringing more people from disadvantaged groups into learning

The challenges we face

* The occupations sought by most unemployed people in South Yorkshire are in semi-skilled and unskilled manual yet these are occupations in which employment is declining.
* There is a need to change perceptions of the skills local people need to acquire to access jobs, and provide those skills in easily accessible ways and locations

Potential responses

* Use some of the LSC’s discretionary funds and Objective One monies to support activities related to changing perceptions by:
	+ Helping to build the capacity of people living in deprived neighbourhoods
	+ Bringing on the development of a wide range of community based learning opportunities including skills development for individuals
* Work with partners, particularly from the voluntary and community sectors, to target help where it is most needed
* Support more first rung provision to help the more disadvantaged. Work through providers to ensure that the wide ranging needs of more disadvantaged learners are met in helpful, flexible and innovative way
* Draw attention to the whole basic skills and social inclusion agenda by running a National Conference on the issues in South Yorkshire in autumn 2001
* Provide, in partnership with the Employment Service labour market entry programmes for those already long term unemployed
* Offer imaginative and attractive learning opportunities to draw in people unused to learning
* Work with the Employment Service (and the new agency for people of working age in due course) to identify and tackle the basic skill needs of all unemployed and inactive people in South Yorkshire receiving benefits to help plan provision and deliver the right strategies for getting people the skills and qualifications they need to get into work

What do you think?

* We talk about the need to change perceptions, but do you know of any existing successes we could use as examples of best practice which could provide insights into the way forward
* Links with the Employment Service are very important. Any thoughts on how these can best be developed for the benefit of the customer?

Please answer question 11