

Planning for success

Radical changes to the LSC's planning and funding processes will create a new framework for a simpler and more responsive planning process to benefit providers and help to drive up quality across the sector.

The changes are detailed in the LSC's recently published *Planning for Success – a framework for planning and quality*. They place quality at the heart of planning and better reflect the distinctive contribution each provider makes to meeting the needs of learners, employers and local communities.

Providers performing well can expect a 'light touch' relationship with the LSC, with support and action focused more effectively where it is needed. The document also reinforces the LSC's commitment to end funding for provision that is of a consistently poor quality.

Mark Haysom, LSC Chief Executive, said: "These proposals were first set out in our *agenda for change* Prospectus and have been developed in consultation with providers. We aim to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach, ensuring that we are working effectively with all providers and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) to support and sustain improvements in quality.

"Many colleges and training providers already deliver high-quality provision, but we want to work with the sector to accelerate improvement, address any issues of under-performance and support providers in continuing to build a reputation for consistently delivering high-quality education and training."

The changes reflect the importance of driving up quality in the *agenda for change* Prospectus and were reinforced in the Foster Review on the future of Further Education colleges, together with the need for a wider view of quality that takes account of the relevance of provision to the needs of learners, employers and the community. *Planning for Success* clarifies the performance levels required of all providers and begins to set out a clear process for those that consistently fail to reach this level.

l
e
a
g
e
n
t
c

February 2006

The Newsletter for Partners and Stakeholders
of the Learning and Skills Council

Mark added: "Ultimately, we need to ensure that learners and employers have access to high quality learning and training opportunities that meet their needs. *Planning for Success* sets out how we will work with all providers that receive funding from us, helping them plan as effectively as possible to achieve this goal in their own local communities."

Planning for Success – a framework for planning and quality is available on the LSC website (www.lsc.gov.uk)

EMA Extension

Just a few weeks remain until 10 April when Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is extended to young people on the LSC-funded Entry to Employment and Programme Led Pathways.

EMA will be made available to a further 65,000 young people under the extension, replacing the existing Minimum Training Allowance (MTA) they currently receive. They will get the same package of financial support that has already helped nearly 300,000 young people in full-time education at a school or college. Preparation for the extension has continued apace. The last quarter of 2005 concentrated on nine regional events to help Learning Providers and local LSCs prepare for the extension. In January and February this year, conferences have been held in Birmingham, London and Leeds for other partners and organisations working with young people, providing an overview of the extension policy and implementation plans.

In another development, it has been announced that a payment of £70 per EMA learner towards administrative costs is being awarded to Learning Providers with ten or more EMA learners.

Trevor Fellowes, Head of Learner Support at the LSC, said: "The extension of EMA to these additional young people will benefit many low-income families who will see a substantial increase in the financial support they are eligible for. The maximum weekly amount available under the extension of EMA to the young person's household is £88 compared to just £40 under the MTA."

The move towards a single system of financial support across schools, colleges and among certain training programmes will create a level playing field for EMA.

Hunt for new National Director of Learning

Melanie Hunt has been appointed the LSC's new National Director of Learning, responsible for overseeing the LSC's approach to adult and young people's learning, quality assurance and assessment, learner support, equality and diversity and policy innovation and development.

Melanie, who previously held the post of the LSC's Director of Young People's Learning, succeeds Caroline Neville, who has become the LSC's Regional Director for the East of England.

Melanie said: "I am keen to build on my experience of working with partners in local authorities, Connexions and the learning and skills sector so that we can, together, deliver on the challenging 14–19 agenda. We must continue to increase the numbers of young people who are participating in learning and training and who achieve Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19. A key part of this will be to ensure that our arrangements for learner and learning support are aligned, to ensure provision meets needs and enables learners to develop their potential."

LSC Chief Executive, Mark Haysom, said: "I am delighted that Melanie has been appointed to this role. She will be instrumental in driving forward the LSC's 14–19 agenda and is committed to providing a range of high quality learning opportunities for everyone."

Previously, Melanie was Director of Strategy and Standards for LSC Sussex and also worked for the Further Education Funding Council inspectorate. She also held a variety of roles in FE colleges, including Assistant Principal in a south coast college, and worked as an education officer with a local education authority in Sussex.

A qualified teacher with a background in teaching 14–19 students, Melanie is a graduate of St Catherine's College, Oxford, and gained a post-graduate qualification at the University of Nottingham.

Indicative funding for 2006/07

School sixth forms, Further Education colleges and Work-Based Learning providers have been given more details of the LSC's funding rate arrangements for 2006/07.

The additional information is contained in a new publication setting out indicative funding rates for the next academic year. This was made available to the sector in January and follows the publication by the LSC last October of two *Priorities for Success* documents, which outlined details of the proposed funding arrangements across the sector for both 2006/07 and 2007/08.

The LSC has made the extra information in the new publication available as early as possible to help schools, colleges and providers plan their provision for the next academic year and assist their funding discussions which are now underway with local LSCs.

Funding rates set out in the document for 2006/07 are:

- **School sixth forms:** Funding rates for each qualification will be increased by the Minimum Funding Guarantee of 3.4 per cent announced last December by the Secretary of State.
- **Further Education:** Funding rates of Learning Aims studied by young people aged 16 to 18 will be increased by the Minimum Funding Guarantee of 3.4 per cent. Funding rates of Learning Aims studied by adults aged 19 and over will be increased by 2.5 per cent.
- **Apprenticeships:** Funding rates for learners starting their Apprenticeship when aged 16 to 18 will be increased by 2.5 per cent.
- **Entry to Employment:** Funding rates for this programme will also rise by 2.5 per cent.
- **Train to Gain (the National Employer Training Programme):** This is being launched this April and will operate in the existing 20 local LSCs where Employer Training Pilots are currently running and will become available for the rest of the country from August. Details of the funding arrangements for this programme will be published separately.

The new document covers funding rates and not funding allocations, details of which will be published separately.

Policy Requirements for Planning: Indicative funding rates 2006/07 is available from the documents section of the LSC website under Subject Listing and Funding Learning at www.lsc.gov.uk. For additional hard copies call the LSC Help Desk **0870 900 6800**.

Change Champion appointed

Ray Dowd, currently Principal and Chief Executive of Wirral Metropolitan College, has been appointed the LSC's *agenda for change* Champion.

With 25 years experience in the sector, Ray has spoken of his bold ambitions for *agenda for change*, the dynamic programme for the reform of Further Education. He said: "I want to see our sector proud, confident, trusted and valued nationally and regionally as well as locally; recognised for its vision and ability to contribute to the success of learners, employers and our country. I believe that the post-16 education sector is on the cusp of a tremendously exciting period and my role as the *agenda for change* Champion will enable us as a sector to influence current thinking on the Further Education reform agenda."

Ray has managed the recovery of Wirral Metropolitan College from a once failing institution to one that is now thriving, with strong financial management, increasing student numbers and a significantly improved inspection profile.

Mark Haysom, LSC Chief Executive, said: "It was important for us to appoint someone from within the Further Education sector, and someone with significant leadership skills who can influence at every level within, and outside, the sector. Ray ticks all the boxes and I am delighted that he will be working with us. I really believe that 2006 is the year for Further Education, the time for action is now, and *agenda for change* is the trigger that I believe will allow the sector to contribute significantly to this country's economic and social prosperity."

Ray chairs the Association of Colleges' (AoC) 'Higher Education in Further Education' steering group, representing colleges at a national level, and also chairs CENTRA, a North West FE professional development body. He is also the former President of the Association of Colleges Management (ACM) and a board member of the AoC.

Welcoming Ray's appointment, which takes effect in March, Chris Banks, LSC Chairman, said: "I know he will help us enormously in turning the *agenda for change* vision into a reality."

Provider Gateway

The LSC's innovative 'one-stop-shop' web portal for Learning Providers, the Provider Gateway, is being extended through February and March to state-funded schools with sixth forms, Work-Based Learning (WBL) providers and Local Authorities.

The Gateway is a key tool for delivering the New Measures for Success programme, the new set of measures designed to properly recognise learners' achievements and gauge the success of providers. It has a crucial role in driving up standards and improving quality in post-16 education and training.

The secure portal enables information on the performance of learners and providers to be uploaded and downloaded. It provides a single, accurate and readily accessible source of information for providers and the inspectorates that makes it easier to make fair and accurate comparisons between different Learning Providers across the sector.

A partnership between the LSC, Ofsted, the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and providers, the Gateway was launched last August when it was made available to all LSC-funded and independent colleges covering around 3.2 million learners, inspectorates and the LSC.

The creation of new software has opened access to the Gateway, enabling all state-funded schools with sixth forms and all LSC-funded WBL providers, as well as Local Authorities, to gain access to data that will help measure learners' progress.

The Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT) system contains reports tracking the Value Added (VA) to the achievement of 16–19 learners by school sixth forms and the Distance Travelled (DT) by each young learner compared with their previous level of achievement. The VA measure covers graded Level 3 qualifications and DT concerns qualifications at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

Roger Marriott, LSC Director of Evaluation and Strategic Development, said: "The Provider Gateway is another step towards a self-regulating, high quality learning and skills sector that meets the needs of all learners."

Planning has begun to extend Gateway access to other LSC-funded providers, such as Adult and Community Learning and Jobcentre Plus. It will include all LSC-funded providers by this summer.

More information on the New Measures, the Gateway, VA and DT can be found on the New Measures of Success area of the LSC website (www.lsc.gov.uk/nms). Frequently asked questions about the Gateway are also available on the website.

Bright future for ICT training

Fresh agreement has been reached on the future of ICT user training between e-Skills, the LSC and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

The new agreement sees confirmation of the key role of iTQ (the new ICT User NVQ) in IT user training, as already detailed in the Sector Skills Agreement.

In order to achieve the target of 750,000 learners starting the new NVQ by 2008 a number of initiatives have been agreed. These include aligning LSC ICT User funding behind iTQ and its contributory qualifications, supporting eSkills' ambitions to integrate iTQ with the e-Skills Passport, and piloting iTQ under Framework for Achievement.

A letter detailing this agreement is being sent to providers by LSC regional and local offices. The LSC will be working to build on the success of the iTQ pilot and to grow its capacity delivery.

iTQ Champions have been appointed in each LSC region to help promote the qualification, supported by an iTQ team at National Office.

Further information is available from Marianne Lennon (marianne.lennon@lsc.gov.uk or **02476 823352**).

STARs take the lead in sharing skills

The STAR Awards, which recognise and reward the inspirational people within learning and skills is spreading word of the good practice of its winners throughout the sector as the scheme moves into its third year.

Sharing the success of the STARs is key to improvement of quality and delivery of education within the sector as a whole.

This year the LSC is once again supporting the Awards and your help is needed to identify the STARs of 2006 who may be able to share their skills and expertise with others within the sector.

Involvement in the STAR Awards does not only raise the profile of individual nominees, but it opens many doors to relationships with business and educational organisations, which in turn will benefit learners and institutions.

Some of last year's winners are already speaking at events and sharing knowledge. David Dyble, winner of the Work-Based Learning Trainer of the Year category, attended the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) annual conference to speak about his work with learners and local employers, as well as to explain how he incorporates qualifications into his learning programmes.

Offender Tutor winner, Steve Brown, was asked to share his approach and techniques with the Skills for Life team at HMP Dartmoor. The team read about his win in the Times Educational Supplement, and was keen to learn from Steve's success at HMP Manchester.

Winner of the Award for Outstanding Leadership, Clive Weston, has also been put forward to be involved in the Centre of Excellence in Leadership Coaching and Mentoring programme after being identified as an ideal candidate due to his wealth of expertise, vision and leadership skills.

Clive has spearheaded work to build relationships in the construction industry at local, national and international levels, and is regarded as a truly inspirational figure by staff and learners at Accrington and Rossendale College in Lancashire.

The STAR Awards are working with all of the 2005 winners to help spread good practice. This will also raise the profile of the inspiring, yet unsung heroes of learning and skills, who are key to encouraging learners to achieve their potential.

Nominations for the STARs of 2006 are now open. To nominate your STARs, for further information or to become involved in good practice sharing visit www.dfes.gov.uk/starawards or call the helpline on 0800 652 0528.

Chris Banks on bright start to 2006

Chairman of the Learning and Skills Council, Chris Banks' first speech of 2006 focused on the LSC's number one priority for this year, ensuring that all 14–19 year olds have access to high quality and relevant learning.

He stated: "We have the chance to give every young person the best possible start in life and to create a system where traditional barriers are pulled down and where providers and employers collaborate to deliver the best possible learning opportunities for all."

"This can be achieved through a ruthless drive towards our common goal, a relentless focus on collaboration and with a renewed determination to work with employers."

Chris made his comments at the North East Regional Conference in Gateshead entitled Sheding Light on the 14–19 Agenda on Friday 20 January.

Addressing an audience of 500 Learning Providers (including colleges, secondary schools, Connexions and Local Authorities), he spoke about the contribution of employers to the 14–19 agenda from his perspective as Chairman of the LSC.

A copy of his speech is available at www.lsc.gov.uk

Designs on Further Education

The LSC is collaborating with RIBA (the Royal Institute of British Architects) on a new competition that will celebrate excellent design in Further Education Colleges.

The competition will reward the architects of recently opened colleges, who have demonstrated that they understand the impact of design on learning environments.

The competition will be launched at a forthcoming RIBA/ LSC conference: *Design for Effective Learning Experience – what makes FE different*, which is taking place on Tuesday 21 March at the RIBA offices in London.

The conference will look at the opportunities and realities facing colleges in the 21st Century as they respond to changing demands from students and colleges.

Chris Banks, Chair of the LSC, and Barry Shearman MP, Chair of the Education and Skills Select committee, will both be addressing the conference which will provide an opportunity to share ideas and promote an ongoing dialogue between college professionals and architects.

The LSC is committed to investing in FE colleges to ensure that the UK has modern and flexible buildings that inspire and support both teachers and students.

Over the past four years, the LSC has approved grants of just under one billion pounds to support 524 building projects in the learning and skills sector, worth a total of nearly £3.2 billion.

To find out more about the conference and register, visit the RIBA website at: www.architecture.com or email chloe.sadler@inst.riba.org.

LSC Update is published monthly and is available in hard copy and online versions. It can be downloaded from our website (www.lsc.gov.uk) through the Documents section of our national home page by selecting Series on the menu bar.

We value your views, so please let us have your comments on the content and style, or any ideas on how you think we could improve LSC Update at lscupdate@lsc.gov.uk.

© LSC February 2006

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial educational or training purposes, on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented. Publication enquiries: 0870 900 6800.

This publication is available in electronic form on the Learning and Skills Council website: www.lsc.gov.uk

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-060097