

The White Paper

The White Paper sets out an 'economic mission' for FE, says Mark Haysom, LSC Chief Executive.

The Further Education White Paper will, according to the LSC, accelerate the sector's successes in driving up the number and achievement of learners in post-16 education and training and give colleges and other providers a pivotal role in raising the nation's economic performance.

Mark Haysom, commenting on the White Paper, says the proposals are built on the foundations of recent successes, these include: more young people in learning than ever before; the LSC on course to exceed its 2006 target for the number of 19 year olds achieving Level 2; and more young people starting Apprenticeships. The White Paper, entitled *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* reflects the LSC's *agenda for change* transformation programme and heralds 'a real shift in the way FE is delivered' according to Mark.

The White Paper includes provisions to drive up the quality of teaching to reward colleges for success and to make the sector more responsive to the skills needs of individuals and employers. Mark continues: "It provides a focus for the learning and skills sector, as well as engagement with learners and employers. It will open up the market and allow excellent provision to be rewarded and poor provision to be cut out."

He adds: "Further Education and those who provide it are perhaps one of this nation's best-kept secrets." Setting out a new 'economic mission' for FE in delivering skills that underpin economic success and social justice, including a new entitlement to free tuition for learners aged 19-25 for their first Level 3 qualification, the White Paper's key proposals include:

- **A new standard to accredit CoVEs:** The LSC, Sector Skills Councils and other organisations will create a new standard for the next phase of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). This will see a greater focus on skills for employability to develop a world-class workforce, and will be trialed by the LSC in 2006 and rolled out later in the year.

Leading learning and skills

update

April 2006

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

- **The development of areas of specialisation within FE providers:** Capital funding will be allocated to support specialisation, particularly to develop National Skills Academies, CoVEs and sector networks. This will be encouraged within individual FE providers through the LSC's planning and funding powers. The LSC will continue to implement its policy of buying quality provision that reflects local needs.
- **Power of intervention passed to the LSC:** The LSC will enhance its role as commissioner of learning and skills, intervening robustly on behalf of customers to ensure high quality provision. The LSC will be given powers of intervention, transferred from the Secretary of State, to tackle failing and mediocre provision.
- **Measures to reinforce the 'demand-led' approach to skills delivery:** The rollout and expansion of LSC-run Train To Gain, the national employer training programme, is to be extended from September 2006 to give employers in three pathfinder regions the opportunity to meet their skill needs at Level 4 and above.
- **Subsidy of key qualifications:** A new 'Learning Account' will provide learners at Level 3 with subsidised technician, skilled trade and associate professional qualifications.
- **Regular reporting on learner opinions:** The LSC's annual *National Learner Satisfaction Survey* will provide regular opportunities for learners to feed back their level of satisfaction so that providers can take actions to improve services. A new National Learner Panel will increase the ability of learners to influence key policy.

eMandate rolls out

The LSC is continuing the rollout of the estates management statistics project, known as eMandate.

All colleges should have been contacted by IPD Occupiers, which is managing the project for the LSC and the Scottish and Welsh Funding Councils. A series of regional workshops has been arranged in May to inform colleges about the project, illustrate the benefits of collating and managing effective data resources and to clarify the process and requirements for compliance. The workshops will also provide a forum for swapping knowledge and experience. The workshops have been scheduled as follows: Coventry (2 May), Taunton (4 May), St Albans (8 May), Bradford (10 May), London (15 May), Nottingham (17 May), Droitwich, AoC Conference (19 May), Middlesbrough (24 May), Manchester (25 May) and West Malling, Kent (30 May). To book a place, log on to www.emandate.co.uk

Boosting efficiency in Apprenticeships

An effective practice guide for providers of the Apprenticeships programme is to be made available by the LSC.

The web-based guide is a practical, interactive tool, full of checklists and ideas to reduce red tape. It guides providers through the process of identifying and removing unnecessary administration to help reduce costs and allow trainers and assessors to spend more of their valuable time teaching and assessing. It looks at seven key stages of the Apprenticeships' administration process: The induction of learners; initial assessment; the requirements of the Individual Learner Record (ILR) and the Individual Learning Plan; reviews; achievement and training provider statements. Stephen Gardner, LSC Director of Work-based Learning, said: "This guide is only one stage; we are doing more. Through *agenda for change* we are simplifying the funding mechanism and streamlining data collections."

The guide was produced with the support of providers and employers. It follows a review of the amount of administration within Apprenticeships to identify possible areas of duplication, inconsistencies and areas of good practice. The requirements outline the minimum administration necessary to ensure apprentices are supported and government funds are used appropriately. The guide addresses concerns that the amount of administration detracts from the task of improving quality.

The guide does not replace formal contracts or funding agreements, nor is it a substitute for them. There are some restrictions on where improvements can be made because of the nature of some documents, for example the ILR. In tandem with the launch of the guide, a new email address for feedback will open. Providers are encouraged to send completed checklists, ideas and examples of savings they have made to lscbureaucracybusting@lsc.gov.uk. This feedback will be posted back to the website to benefit other providers.

Reducing Administration in Apprenticeships: Effective Practice Guide, is available from the LSC website at www.lsc.gov.uk. Hard copies can be obtained by calling the LSC publications enquiry line: **0870 900 6800**

LSC's new top team

The LSC has continued its reorganisation with the selection of a top management team of around 100 senior managers at national, regional and local level.

The team consists of the Chief Executive; five National Directors; 10 Regional Directors (including two for London); 45 Area Directors; 27 Regional Directors (Finance and Resources/Skills/Learning, Planning and Performance) and 11 Directors (National Office).

The LSC will comprise a National Office, nine regional offices, 148 Local Partnership Teams and 35 Economic Development Teams.

There are 25 vacancies in the top team which, following internal advertisement, are to be advertised externally. A full list of appointments is available on the LSC website: www.lsc.gov.uk

Listening to learners

The LSC's fourth National Learner Satisfaction Survey, for the year 2004/05, is to be published.

Conducted annually for the LSC by NOP Research Group, the survey is based on interviews with tens of thousands of learners receiving tuition or training through further education (FE), work-based learning (WBL) and adult and community learning (ACL) providers.

Previous surveys have shown high levels of satisfaction by learners with their learning experience.

The results for 2004/05 will be published in four parts, starting with a 'highlights' document summarising the key findings from the three main sectors of post-16 education and skills and followed by individual sector reports detailing the findings from FE, WBL and ACL.

Once published, the survey outcomes will be available on the LSC website. They will also be sent in hard copy to all providers, accompanied by a CD containing all findings.

Towards a common funding approach

The LSC has detailed the next steps to take forward a proposal from its *agenda for change* transformation programme to create a common funding approach across the LSC-funded post-16 sector from 2007/08.

This development follows consultation on technical proposals for funding reform, which generated over 200 responses from providers, representative bodies and other stakeholders. The outcome of the consultation, the next steps and arrangements for funding trials and modelling, together with a timetable towards implementation, are now set out in the LSC document, *agenda for change Funding Reform*.

Broad support for a common funding approach and simplifying the system came out of the consultation. However, differing views on the detailed technical proposals emerged. Respondents welcomed simplification as a general principle, but many argued for greater differentiation in funding to take account of the diversity of learners and provision.

The consultation outcome examines attitudes to key issues such as: the operation of the 'core' and 'commissioning' approach; the calculation of 'standard learner numbers'; the treatment of 'fully-funded' and 'co-funded' provision; and the calculation of the 'provider factor'. In agreeing the profile of provision and funding for each provider, the LSC will discuss with each provider how their delivery will match the LSC's national and regional priorities. The LSC will consider further how the core and commissioned approach will embed the principle of withdrawing funding from poor quality provision/providers.

The funding consultation expects the new approach to be introduced for Further Education and Work-Based Learning in 2007/08, with school sixth forms probably brought in from 2008/09. The current work has been endorsed in the recent FE White Paper, which calls for an integrated funding system to support delivery of 14–19 entitlement in school sixth forms, colleges and training providers, based on the approach in *agenda for change*.

The White Paper outlines how the LSC will review the *agenda for change* funding system to incorporate the demand-led approach for adult funding. This will ensure funding for providers is driven by the decisions of employers and learners, without creating new bureaucracy. Ray Dowd, the LSC's *agenda for change* Champion, said: "*agenda for change* remains a dynamic programme and will respond to the principles on funding in the White Paper. The LSC will set out our response for consultation with the sector."

Initial trialling with providers has highlighted a number of issues requiring further consultation. These will be published in a second technical consultation document and final proposals will go to the LSC Management Group by September 2006. A document detailing the final funding method to be used in 2007/08 will be published this autumn.

The document, *agenda for change Funding Reform*, is on the LSC website (www.lsc.gov.uk).

College saving

The LSC's dedicated procurement team looks set to save a total of **£78 million by March 2008, with all savings retained by institutions.**

The LSC Further Education Procurement Development Team began operations in November 2005. It works with the recently launched Centre for Procurement Performance (CPP) to support FE colleges in their procurement activities. The team will, for example, promote and facilitate collaboration on joint procurement agreements. The team will also:

- promote best procurement practices and assist with implementation;
- offer leadership and direction in sourcing, negotiating, contracting and e-procurement;
- offer education and training, for example, the funding of NVQ procurement training places for college staff involved in procurement;
- provide advice and support for procurement issues, such as EU legislation and tendering;
- networking and collaboration with peers and consortia to seek best in class contracts and frameworks; and
- research areas of spending to ensure procurement options are in line with colleges needs.

The team's objective is to build on the good procurement practice that exists in the sector and ensure that improvements are sustainable for long term efficiency gains and savings.

It has produced a step-by-step guide to good procurement practice and has held workshops with colleges to introduce its work to staff involved in purchasing. Members of the team were recruited from existing procurement roles within the LSC and have a wide range of procurement experience and knowledge. The team members are Ray Poxon (Senior FE Development Manager), Sam Rooker and Carla Honeybun (Development Managers) and Hayley Addison and Hannah Pratt (Procurement Officers).

Contact the team on **02476 82 3982** or email: fecollegeprocurement@lsc.gov.uk

Design award

The LSC, in association with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), has launched a new awards scheme, the RIBA/LSC Further Education Awards, to celebrate design excellence in the sector.

A trophy and a £5,000 first prize will be awarded to the RIBA architect who has designed an FE college judged to provide the most effective and innovative learning environment. The LSC and RIBA are inviting submissions from RIBA architects who have designed colleges in England that have been built in the last two years. Entries will be judged on their innovation, excellence, adaptability, atmosphere and 'feel good factor'. Chris Banks, LSC Chairman, said: "Anyone who teaches will tell you that their students are more responsive, attentive and enthusiastic in a bright, airy and stimulating 'state of the art' classroom. This award will recognise some of the best new buildings that are providing this kind of environment."

A second place prize of £2,000 will be awarded to entries of special merit and certificates will be given to highly commended entries. The deadline for submissions is Friday 2 June 2006 and short-listed nominees will be notified by 30 June. The awards will be presented at a special event at RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London on 8 November 2006. Over the past four years, the LSC has approved grants of just under £1 billion to support 524 building projects in the learning and skills sector, worth a total of nearly £3.2 billion. More than half of the estate has now been renewed. To get more information about the awards and download an entry form visit: http://www.architecture.com/go/Architecture/Debate/Forums_2050.html

Learning Visits

The LSC is supporting the DfES' programme of structured Learning Visits to 14–19 Pathfinder areas and Increased Flexibility Partnerships to demonstrate to strategic planners and practitioners what has and has not worked.

Planners and practitioners signing up to the programme can expect:

- an 'Introductory Learning Visit' giving an overview of all elements of the policy/practice;
- follow up service to answer particular queries; and
- introduction to the specific policy/practice together with 'Action Planning' in and for another area.

The DfES and LSC are encouraging the attendance of: Senior Local Authority officials; Senior LSC officials; FE College Principals/Vice-Principals; and representatives from schools' Senior Management Teams – Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher. Planners and practitioners interested in attending can book at www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/dsp_learning_visits.cfm?sid=9&pid=207&ctype=TEXT&ptype=Single

WorldSkills bid

The LSC is supporting the UK's bid for the 2011 WorldSkills Competition.

The biennial event is the highlight of the international vocational skills calendar and brings together young people from member countries to pit their skills against the best the world has to offer. The event is organised by international vocational training organisation, WorldSkills.

Hundreds of young people compete in 40 events ranging from engineering to beauty therapy and confectionery to stonemasonry. They battle it out against the clock and tackle common workplace challenges for Gold, Silver and Bronze medals.

The events aims to motivate young people, raise the profile of vocational skills and their contribution to productivity and economic success as well as transform national attitudes to skills.

The UK Government has pledged to cover half the cost of the event (£11 million) and the remainder will be raised from business sponsors and social partners. In January, a panel from WorldSkills visited London to assess its suitability to hold the event. Once through this stage, the bid will be put forward for consideration by the full WorldSkills Council. The final decision will be announced in May 2006 in Melbourne after presentations by candidate countries. For more information, visit the bid's website (<http://www.worldskillslondon2011.com/>).

Train To Gain

The roll out of Train To Gain, the LSC's new service for businesses, has created a network of Skills Brokers.

These specialist advisers are providing employers with a free skills brokerage service that offers advice on business needs, matches training needs with training providers, and ensures that training is delivered to meet the employer's needs. High standards will be ensured through a performance framework and competencies set by the LSC.

This will run alongside the existing business support service run by Regional Development Agencies, which provides Information, Diagnostic and Brokerage advice. Whilst skills brokerage is provided free to employers, elements of any training delivered will attract subsidised funding from Government, such as Skills for Life qualifications, first full Level 2 qualifications and Apprenticeships. Some training may also need to be paid for by the employer.

Train To Gain builds on and replaces the success of Employer Training Pilots that ran in 20 LSC areas across the country. It will be rolled-out to the remaining 27 LSC areas from August 2006. The service is prompted by the significant skills shortages that continue to have a negative impact on UK productivity and competitiveness, with 40 per cent of adults in the workforce lacking a basic Level 2 qualification. It is expected that by the end of 2010, over 500,000 learners will have achieved a first full Level 2 qualification through Train To Gain. A targeted programme of marketing and communications activity, led by LSC, supports the roll-out of Train To Gain.

This will take shape over the coming months as the LSC continues to work closely with its partners and stakeholders to establish and promote the service. For more information about Train To Gain visit www.traintogain.gov.uk

EMA Extension

From April 10, Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is available to those starting an LSC-funded Entry-to-Employment (E2E) programme or a course which leads to an Apprenticeship.

The extension will benefit up to 65,000 more young people, many of whom will see a considerable rise in their household income, removing the financial barriers that often stop people from continuing in learning. Since EMA does not affect other benefits, some low-income families will see their financial support increased to £90 a week compared with just £40 a week under the Minimum Training Allowance (MTA) which EMA will replace. Those who live away from their families, through no fault of their own, may qualify for Income Support which can be combined with EMA for a generous package of support of £74.50 at current rates.

Trevor Fellowes, Director of Learner Support at the LSC said: "EMA is making a real difference to young people across the country. The financial support EMA provides removes a barrier to learning that some young people face enabling them to continue with their education and improve their skills and job prospects. The EMA pilots demonstrated the positive effect it had on participation and achievement. The total national impact on participation was predicted to be around 4 per cent and we are well on course to meet that target."

Visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema

A Framework for Excellence

The next issue of LSC Update will include a report on *Framework for Excellence*, part of the LSC's response to the recent Further Education White Paper, which is scheduled to be published in May. It will set out how the LSC is changing its processes to recognise, support and raise levels of excellence in the FE sector to deliver against the Government's objectives over the next two to three years.

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 April 2006
Published by the Learning and Skills Council.

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.

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

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-060099

If you require this publication in an alternative format or language please contact the LSC Help Desk: 0870 900 6800