

Learning and Skills Council

Equality and Diversity Strategy 2004/07

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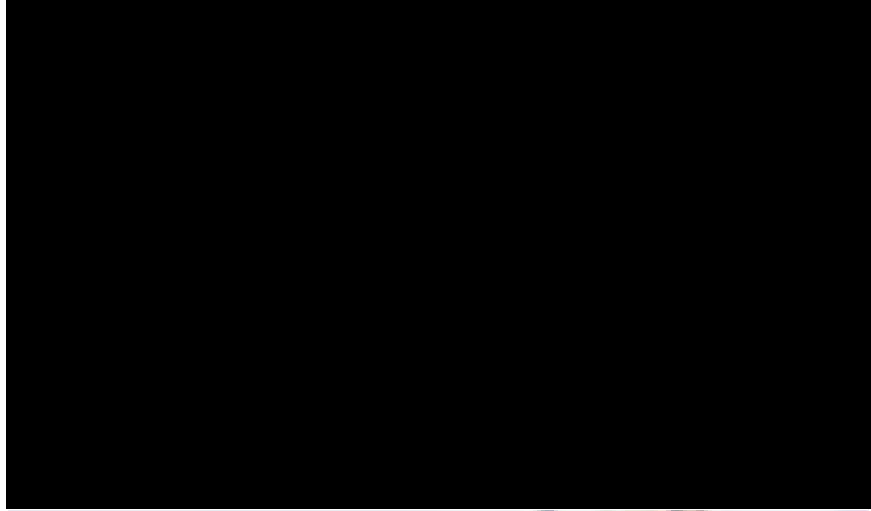


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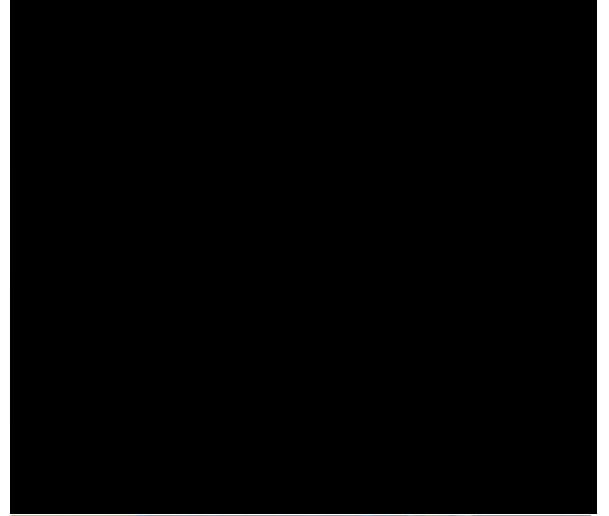


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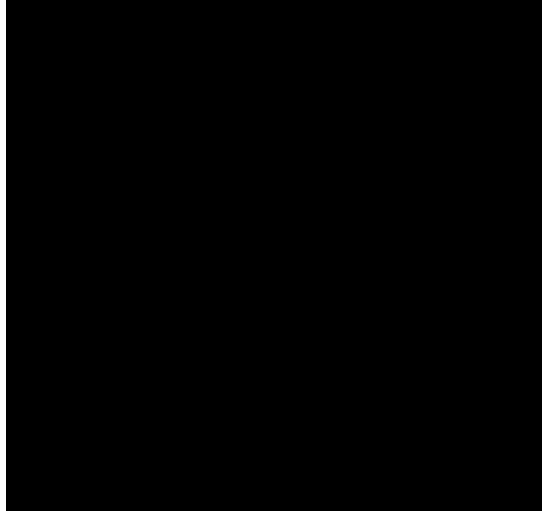


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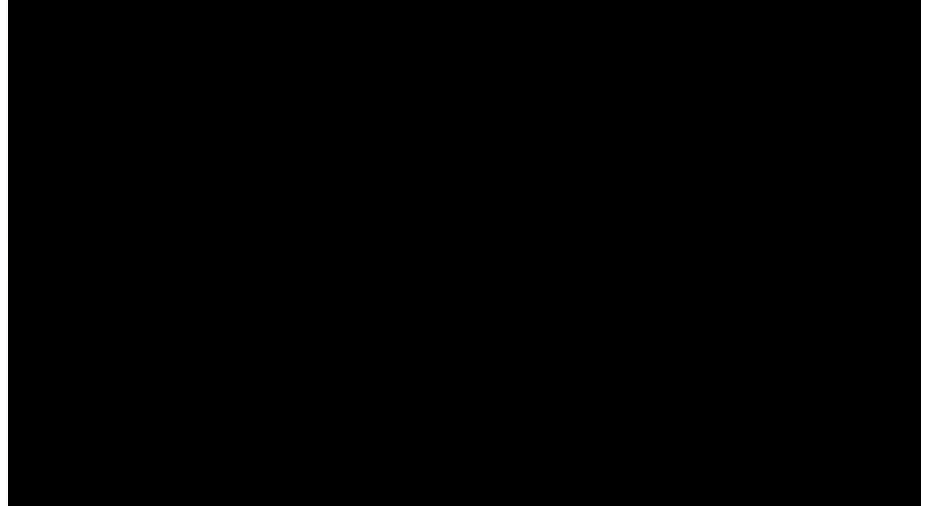
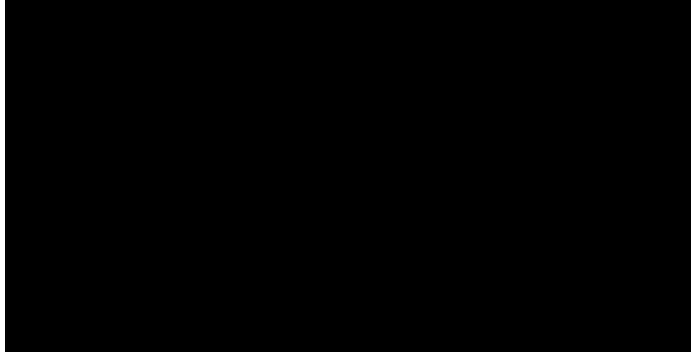


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Learning+Skills Council

What we believe

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. Our vision is that, by 2010, *'young people and adults in England will have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and be part of a truly competitive workforce'*.

We are sure that this vision can only be achieved through a strong commitment to equality and diversity. Crucially, we must make sure that the sector reaches out to groups of people who are not currently involved in learning, as well as working to enhance access to different types of learning. We must also improve learners' experience of the education and training they receive, and help them to progress in a way that is appropriate to their abilities and aspirations.

The LSC is an organisation with influence and we must use our leadership role effectively to achieve greater equality and diversity. Since our inception in 2001, we have done much good work in developing ourselves as champions of equality and diversity. We are keen to build on this progress and to take advantage of opportunities afforded by changes to the law. We are committed to ensuring that equality and diversity are at the heart of the organisation and, ultimately, that they are 'embedded' in everything we do.

What are our priorities?

We have identified six priority areas or 'strands' of work:

- 1. Leadership** – We will provide vision and strong leadership in the sector, and will make more positive use of planning and funding to achieve greater equality and diversity.
- 2. Reaching out to learners who are disengaged** – We will improve our approach to communicating with/reaching out to marginalised groups.
- 3. Supporting compliance** – We will use the strength of our remit and work in partnership, promoting equality of opportunity among our partners, and keeping them up-to-date with relevant legal developments.
- 4. Inclusive/Personalised Learning** – We will work to ensure that provision responds effectively to individual learners.
- 5. Working with employers** – We will work with employers to promote the business case for diversity and inclusion in the workforce.

- 6. Measuring outcomes** – We will measure impacts and outcomes in a way that identifies good practice in equality and diversity.

The above strands of activity are linked and mutually reinforcing.

Strand 1

Leadership

Our goals

- To lead the way by working with and supporting learning providers.
- To lead the way in planning and directing action at national, regional and local levels with partners.
- To lead the way as an employer of choice, providing opportunities for organisational learning in equality and diversity.
- To work effectively in partnership with key partners in the equalities fields.

What we are going to do

- We will provide **tools that support equality and diversity activity**. We will gather, publish and share good practice in equality and diversity; we will equip ourselves and learning providers with information and guidance on equality and diversity.
- We will carry out work to **optimise additional funding sources** for equality and diversity and influence funders to boost spending on equality and diversity activities, for example, European Social Funds.

- We will make sure that **all LSC strategies, policies and plans** are explicit about how they support the organisation's equality and diversity agenda.
- We will work to ensure that our **planning and funding** systems are marshalled effectively in support of the equality and diversity agenda.
- We will put equality and diversity at the heart of our **recruitment and staff development**. We will ensure that the working behaviour of our staff is in keeping with our commitment to 'embedding' equality and diversity.
- We will establish an **equality and diversity committee** with external representation and an **equality and diversity network** with internal representation to support the implementation of the equality and diversity strategy.
- We will **improve our partnership approach**. We will influence all our partners to give greater priority to equality and diversity in policies and programmes, and challenge them to address equality and diversity more explicitly.
- We will **improve our partnership behaviour**. We will listen, respond and give feedback to partners and stakeholders. We will be clear about the responsibilities that lie on either side of our partnerships, and about our constraints.

Strand 2

Reaching learners, including those who are disengaged

Our goals

- To communicate the benefits of learning to existing and disengaged groups in a way that makes sense to them, and to share this work with our partners.
- To work in partnership to identify and plan the engagement of new groups of young people and adult learners.
- To place consultation with existing and potential learners at the heart of local planning.

What we are going to do

- We will develop **ways of communicating** that appeals to groups of existing and potential learners, including those learners facing multiple disadvantage.
- We will use **Strategic Area Reviews** to ensure that provision meets the needs of specific groups in local areas, particularly those that are disengaged.
- We will identify **priorities and impact measures** for equality and diversity in consultation with local partners and providers. We will continue to develop the process of setting priorities in line with stakeholder feedback.
- We will **consult with learners and potential learners** that are difficult to engage, and we will disseminate our findings widely.
- We will use planning and funding to encourage **inter-community working and partnership building** with relevant organisations from the Voluntary and Community Sector – particularly for the purpose of learner engagement.
- We will work in partnership with organisations providing information, advice and guidance to existing and potential learners to improve access to learning.

Strand 3

Supporting compliance

Our goals

- To work in partnership to ensure that changes to the law have the impact that they should have in the sector.
- To support providers' efforts to meet legal requirements, in line with our duty to promote equality of opportunity and in a way that reflects our commitment to partnership and trust.

What we are going to do

- We will **meet our own legal responsibilities** as laid out in the *Learning and Skills Act 2000 (sections 13 and 14)*, the Remit Letter and the Grant Letters, and other relevant legislation.
- We will work in partnership to **develop an assessment framework** for equality and diversity standards.

- We will work in partnership to **communicate legal developments** and their implications to learning providers and colleagues.
- We will use planning and funding to **encourage all providers to prioritise equality and diversity**. This shift will be reflected in providers' development plans and self-assessments. Ultimately, a failure to align with the LSC's duty to promote equality of opportunity will impact on learning providers' contractual arrangements.

Strand 4

(Inclusive)/Personalised Learning – a commitment to treating learners as individuals

Our goals

- To confirm that the phrase Inclusive Learning, increasingly known as Personalised Learning, **relates to all learners**, not just those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- To tailor the learning environment to the requirements of individual learners – using an understanding of assessment, learning styles and motivations.
- To give practitioners the tools and support they need to meet the needs of individual learners.

What we are going to do

- We will develop **toolkits** for practitioners across the sector – outlining approaches to teaching and supporting learners' needs. We will work with *Success for All* Theme leaders, to draw on existing work and share outcomes.
- We will **ensure that inclusive practice is shared widely** across the sector, in line with our commitment to share practice (see Strand 1 of this strategy).
- We will synthesise previous research undertaken into removing 'barriers to learning' as well as undertaking new research into **individuals' barriers** to engaging in learning.
- We will monitor the results of **learner surveys**, using them as one way to gauge how provision is serving the individual learner.

Strand 5

Working with employers

Our goals

- To help employers, including learning providers, the public, private and voluntary sectors and Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and large organisations, understand the business benefits of employing a diverse workforce.
- To work with employers in line with current strategic initiatives, such as the Skills Strategy to address skill shortages and the under representation of certain groups within the workforce.
- To look critically at the participation, retention and achievement records of work-based learning programmes to address any inequalities regarding age, gender, ethnicity or disability.

What we are going to do

- We will work in partnership with the Sector Skills Councils, the Sector Skills Development Agency and other key employer organisations such as the CBI, British Chambers of Commerce and the TUC to **articulate and disseminate the 'business case'** for equality and diversity in the workforce, including to SMEs.
- We will work with employers that take on publicly-funded learners, and build on our record of working with employers through, for example, the LSC **Employer Training Pilots**.
- We will encourage providers and employers to work with **Union and Learning Representatives** to support access to learning for employees, including part time and low skilled workers.
- We will carry out work with employers to better understand and overcome the barriers they face in **recruiting and developing a diverse workforce**.
- We will work with our equality partners to **understand the barriers faced by learners** to accessing and succeeding in Work Based Learning programmes, such as Entry to Employment and Apprenticeship programmes.
- We will carry out work with our partners to **understand the effects of stereotyping** in work based learning and employment for different groups of people.

Strand 6

Measuring outcomes

Our goals

- To ensure that reliable, valid and relevant data is available to monitor performance and inform the subsequent planning and funding of learning.
- To identify when and how we have been most effective – so we can plan and fund appropriately as we go forward.
- To ensure that all measurement takes place within existing resource margins and does not create an unreasonable bureaucratic burden.

What we are going to do

- We will work in partnership to identify and publish **evidence of the social and economic benefits of equality and diversity**. We will use our communication with the Government to maximise the impact of this work, by arguing for a greater budget allocation for equality and diversity.
- We will **report annually to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills** in a way that emphasises *outcomes* rather than processes.
- We will **publish diversity data annually**. We will communicate the available information in accessible formats.
- We will consult local partners and providers to **understand the existing barriers to the collection of accurate data**. Management information colleagues will devise measures that can overcome these barriers.
- We will use **Equality and Diversity Impact Measures** and the **LSC Workforce Development** targets to monitor and measure change.
- We will work in **partnership with the Bureaucracy Task Force** to make sure that providers do not experience an increased level of bureaucracy.
- We will **encourage learning providers to gather information**, such as on the diversity of staff and learners in response to the recommendations of the **Commission for Black Staff in Further Education** and the **Race Relations (Amendment) Act**.
- We will **monitor impacts at the level of the individual learner**, to test whether our funding and planning systems are achieving the intended outcomes for individuals.

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Learning and Skills Council Equality and Diversity Committee

Chair of Committee

Shirley Cramer Chief Executive, Dyslexia Institute

Members

David Barker Business Development Manager, REED in Partnership (North East and Yorkshire)

Jeremy Crook Director, Black Training and Enterprise Group

Nicola Dandrige Head of Equality, Thompsons Solicitors

Patrick Grattan Chief Executive, Third Age Employment Network

Amir Kabal Chief Executive, East Staffordshire Racial Equality Council

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Yvonne Thompson Managing Director, ASAP Communications

Hilary Wiseman Head of Diversity, HSBC Bank

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Caroline Slocock Chief Executive, Equal Opportunities Commission

Susan Pember Director Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, Department for Education and Skills

Kit Roberts Director of Equality and Diversity, Learning and Skills Council

Alison Kakoura Secretary, Learning and Skills Council