

Learning and Skills Council

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Local Strategic Plan 2002-2005



> Consultation process

This plan is the result of many meetings and debates by the senior management team of the Learning and Skills Council for Suffolk (Suffolk LSC), Local LSC Members (see below) and our key partners. It has been the subject of a public consultation process.

During October 2001, we held a series of consultation workshops around the county at which participants were invited to comment on the first draft of our strategic plan. Over 150 people attended these workshops and represented providers of education, training and work based learning, voluntary organisations and other specialist agencies, and businesses. The events were held in Lowestoft, Ipswich and Brandon. The last of the three events was hosted by the Strategic Learning Partnership.

In addition, the consultation draft plan was sent out to over 600 businesses and organisations in the county, as well as some regional partners and agencies, with an invitation to submit a written response. We received 20 written replies and this feedback, together with that which came out from the workshop discussion groups, was summarised in a consultation report. A copy of the consultation summary report was sent to all those who attended one of the events, those who submitted a written response, and those who expressed an interest in receiving a copy. The consultation report contains a list of all workshop delegates and those who submitted a written response.

Through this process, a considerable amount of practical and sensible feedback was received, many of which we were able to implement immediately and this plan reflects the suggestions that were made.

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> Chairman's foreword

The creation of the Learning and Skills Council for Suffolk (LSC) presents the county with a major opportunity to develop the skills and qualifications of its people to standards which rival the best in the world. By bringing together the funding responsibility for Further Education, 6th Forms, Work Based Learning and Adult and Community Learning, it becomes possible for the first time to harness the collective budget in ways which will help people, businesses and the local economy to develop to their full potential.

As a group of committed and professional members my Council is excited by this opportunity and is determined to use it to the full to unlock the ideas and resources that exist in the LSC and partner organisations to tackle the stretching agenda before us.

This plan sets out the key issues which will need to be addressed over the next three years and the actions which flow from them. It is a challenging plan which will require people and businesses to see education, training and lifelong learning in a much more positive light than previously if it is to be achieved. As such, it has at its heart a shift in culture so that people take more control of their own learning, employers invest appropriately in the skills they need to improve their competitiveness, and education and training suppliers deliver the high quality provision which both require.

Success will result in:

- A significant increase in the number of young people and adults engaging in structured learning in the county. We are aiming for 3,500 more 16-18 year old learners by 2004. The target for increasing adult learners, to be set in 2002, will be equally stretching.
- Increased numbers of young people and adults achieving qualifications at level 2 and level 3. We are aiming for 9% more young people getting a level 2 qualification and an even larger increase (13%) achieving a level 3 qualification. For adults we are aiming for an additional 26,000 people qualified to level 3.
- 10,000 people across the county with increased literacy and numeracy skills.
- More employers providing learning and training opportunities for their staff. We aim to increase the percentage of the Suffolk workforce who receive training from 31% to 40%.
- Fewer employers reporting skills shortages. We aim to reduce the number of employers reporting hard to fill vacancies from 24% to 20%.

Achievement of these targets will have a profound and beneficial effect on the lives of people and businesses in Suffolk. Better educated and skilled people will help businesses to improve their competitiveness and grow, to the benefit of the local economy. That is the prize for which we will be striving.



Tony Preston
Chairman

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> Executive summary

The LSC's mission is to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training which puts learners first. Our vision is that, by 2010, young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world.

In Suffolk, the trend in increasing demand for higher level occupations and skills, and decline in more traditional industries, combined with falling unemployment is leading to greater levels of skills shortages and skills gaps in the workforce. Jobs are forecast to grow faster than the growth in population, with little latent capacity in the labour market that can be utilised. We are, however, aware of the high proportion of people, many of whom are actively engaged in employment, who are held back by poor levels of basic skills.

We conclude, therefore that while continuing to ensure young people leaving school and college are equipped with the skills and knowledge required by employers, there has to be a strong drive to upskill the existing workforce and at the same time give added support to those who have difficulty for whatever reason in being part of an inclusive society. The responsibility for all this has to be a shared one between the LSC, individuals and employers.

The rate of change being experienced in Suffolk is likely to grow and requires bold, often radical, measures by the LSC and its partners if the opportunities available to the county are to be realised.

- Education and training service delivery need to grow in line with employment and population expansion projections.
- Delivery needs to match increasing lifelong learning demands and place the needs of the learner first.
- Service delivery needs incremental restructuring to respond to sectoral changes and achieve quality improvements.
- Our strategy needs to strike a balance between helping to realise opportunities for employment growth and enhancing wealth creation, and dealing with issues arising amongst deprived groups and in depressed areas.

We have identified the following aims and objectives as being the key responses to these priorities.

Aim One: Participation strategy

To help individuals achieve their full potential through active participation in learning throughout life.

- To get more young people to continue/remain in learning and to achieve to higher levels.
- To attract more adults back into learning and improve retention levels.
- To enable young people and adults to become better informed, make better choices about their futures and thus take more responsibility for their learning actions.
- To ensure equality of access to participation in all forms of learning.

Aim Two: Skills strategy

To enhance the role of the workplace and employers in raising Suffolk's skill base.

- Speed up the flow of information, improve response rates and, building on existing intelligence, develop a deeper and more accurate understanding of skills needs and labour market trends.
- Raise skills and qualifications levels in the workforce.
- Increase employer investment in people, especially SMEs.
- Tackle barriers to skills and labour supply.

Aim Three: Learning strategy

To create a truly responsive learning infrastructure.

- Increase relevance and responsiveness of learning opportunities in response to the needs of businesses and individuals.
- Improve the quality of the learning experience at the point of delivery to among the best in the country.
- Create a more flexible and dynamic network of learning suppliers in which partnership delivery grows and unhealthy competition is removed.
- To promote the inclusion of skills development within social, regenerative and economic development initiatives.

Our first strategic plan sets the framework for developing education, training and learning up to further education level for those aged over 16 in Suffolk for the next three years and beyond. As such it will affect the lives and prosperity of individuals, the competitive position of our local businesses, and the strength of our local economy. It is vital, therefore, that the plan is achieved, or preferably exceeded, in ways which bring real benefits to Suffolk. To do this will require the full and active engagement of all partners in terms of both working with us in areas where collaborative delivery is necessary as well as ensuring that key actions are embedded in the plans of the different agencies. We know that there is a marked will to do this, something which gives me confidence that together we will succeed. The next three years will be challenging and, we are sure, exciting. We anticipate that they will go down as a turning point in the way in which learning is valued and practised in Suffolk.

> 1. The national perspective

As a country, we are less productive than most of our competitor nations, one of the reasons being that we lack the skills and qualifications needed in our current and emerging workforce to meet the requirements of the modern-day and developing,

competitive global economy. This must be addressed as a matter of urgency if we are to create the wealth and levels of employment for all in an economy which also allows us to enjoy a high quality of life.

As a consequence the LSC's mission is:

- > to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training which puts learners first; and
- > our vision is that, by 2010, young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world

This means being amongst the top ten nations in the developed world.

National objectives and targets for 2004

This mission and vision will not be achieved if we just continue to improve our levels and standards of education and training as we have been doing in recent years. We need to stretch ourselves much more and accordingly the following national objectives and targets have been set for the next three years.

National targets

Key Objectives	Targets for 2004
1	Extend participation in education, learning and training
	80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 75%) Set baseline and target for adults in next year's plan
2	Increase engagement of employers in workforce development
	Develop measure of employer engagement in next year's plan
3	Raise achievement of young people
	85% at level 2 by age 19 (2000: 75%) 55% at level 3 by age 19 (2000: 51%)
4	Raise achievement of adults
	Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults % of adults at Level 2: target to be set in next year's plan 52% of adults at level 3 (2000: 47%)
5	Raise quality of education and training and user satisfaction
	Set baselines and targets in next year's plan

These objectives and targets have won widespread support across the country and they therefore provide much of the framework for our local plan.

> 2. Suffolk's targets

Contributing to national targets

We have drawn heavily on work which has been done nationally to ascertain where Suffolk stands currently against national targets and the added contribution we need to make over the next three

years if the national goals are to be achieved. Whilst this process has been far from perfect, we have set the current baselines and our targets for 2004/05 as follows:

National Targets for 2004		SUFFOLK		
		Achievement 2000	Local target for 2004	Extra numbers required by 2004
1a	80% of young people aged 16-18 in structured learning	18,531 (79%)	20,990 (83%)	2,459
1b	% of adults and employers engaged in learning	baseline and target to be set		
2	Increase engagement of employers in workforce development	measure and target to be set		
3a	85% of young people (age 19) reaching NVQ Level 2 or equivalent	6,387 (82%)	6,969 (86%)	582
3b	55% of young people (age 19) reaching NVQ Level 3 or equivalent	3,497 (45%)	3,976 (49%)	479
4a	Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 (nationally)	10,000		
4b	% of adult workforce achieving NVQ level 2 or equivalent	baseline and target to be set		
4c	52% of adult workforce achieving NVQ level 3 or equivalent	121,000	146,839	25,839
5	Raise quality and effectiveness of education and training	baseline and target to be set		

Source: LSC national office, Coventry; 2001

Contributing to regional targets

In addition to responding to the national agenda it is important for us to respond to key regional targets with the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) Skills Strategy for the East of England. EEDA's three regional skills targets are to:

- Achieve the national learning targets.
- Reduce skills shortages and skills gaps across the region.
- Increase the number of employees receiving both on and off job training.

Accordingly, as local targets, by 2004/05 we will:

- Reduce the percentage of employers reporting skills shortages to 20% (1999 baseline: 24% of all employers in Suffolk with existing vacancies had one or more that was hard-to-fill due to skills shortages).
- Increase the percentage of the Suffolk workforce who received training in the previous year to 40% (2001 baseline 31%).

Supplementary local goals – equality and diversity

Equality and diversity is such an important area, it is the subject of a separate strategy which contains the full range of data, analysis of key issues and planned actions and should be read alongside this plan.

We have identified in the equality and diversity strategy the following areas in which we shall be measuring progress towards our equal opportunities goals. As with the national targets (above) we do not have consistent data sets for many equality issues on which to base global targets. We have therefore set separate goals for participation by school, college and private training provider.

In each of the three key areas (ethnicity, sex and disability) goals have been set to achieve equal representation, or substantially narrow the gap between the measured participation levels of the group in question and the average of the community as a whole. Issues of equality of access and opportunity are dealt with in the separate equality and diversity strategy document.

* Individual Learner Record/Individual Student Record

Equality and diversity goals for Suffolk

Our goals will be finessed in the Summer of 2002 once we have access to robust data; some will be available through research being conducted in Spring 2002 and due to report in May 2002; a further set of data will be available through improved ILR/ISR*, improved local access and reporting facilities.

Ethnicity

In the meantime, our analysis of young people aged 16-18 from minority ethnic groups (MEG) showed a clear under-representation as illustrated in the table below.

	Total all trainees	MEG trainees	Goal 2004
Increase participation of minority ethnic group (MEG) 16-18 year olds on WBL*	2657	56	134

* WBL – work based learning

Gender: women

There are many occupational areas in which numbers of men and women are reasonably well balanced in so far as participation is concerned. However, of particular note was the low level of participation of women in construction, engineering and manufacturing in work based learning.

	Total all trainees*	Female trainees	Goal 2004
Increase participation by female trainees in construction, engineering & manufacturing WBL	1157	38	60

* in construction, engineering and manufacturing

Gender: men

We shall undertake further analysis once more accurate data is available and we are in a position to define a clear target and set our baseline and goal.

Disability

Due to a lack of a standard definition of 'disability' it will be impossible to undertake a comparison of participation between WBL and FE* and so separate goals will be set until such time as a clear definition is given and applied consistently across all post-16 learning.

We are currently unable to access disability data for participants on programmes. However, once we have access to the data, we will set appropriate goals for improvement with numbers to be achieved.

* Further Education

> 3. Suffolk in context

This chapter presents a synopsis of some of the key economic and social data and trends in Suffolk. A fuller overview of Suffolk is available and can be supplied on request.

The chapter concludes with the identification of a number of key issues which this strategy must address if it is to have a positive impact on the economic and social picture in Suffolk.

Population

The total population of Suffolk is about 680,000. The county is mainly rural with three main urban centres. Nearly one third of Suffolk residents live in the urban centres of Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St. Edmunds, while just over a quarter live in small towns. Just under half the population lives in small communities dispersed across a large number of small settlements. Approximately 86% of the county's parishes have populations less than 1,000; over 25% have populations less than 100.

- The estimated population of working age is 339,250 with 81% in employment.
- Over the next three years, it is forecast that the population will grow by 2% and that the number of young people aged 16 to 24 will grow by 4%.
- Economic activity has increased by 3% in the last five years.

The population of Suffolk is forecast to grow by 27,500 between 2000 and 2010 and the population of working age will increase by 12,300 during the same period.

Deprivation

It is generally believed that Suffolk is a wealthy county with little in the way of social or economic problems. However, the facts belie the perception. From the DETR (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions) Deprivation Indicators 2000, there are six wards in the county (Harbour, Kirkley, Normanston and St Margarets in Waveney; Gainsborough and Town in Ipswich) that fall into the most deprived 1,000 wards in England.

- A quarter of the county's wards are in the top 10% most deprived wards nationally for access to facilities.
- Nine wards (three in Ipswich, three in Waveney and three in St Edmundsbury) are in the top 10% most deprived wards nationally for education, skills and training.
- Waveney has five (including the top four) wards in the top 10% most deprived wards in the country.

Employment by occupation

Employment opportunities are forecast to rise at a faster rate than the growth in population, leading to a tighter labour market and increasing skills and labour shortages. The nature of employment is forecast to change with an estimated increase in higher level jobs of over 11,000 compared to an increase of around 6,000 intermediate jobs and a similar number of lower order jobs; almost half of all new jobs created in the coming years will be in higher order occupations. This clearly has major implications for providers of learning.

	EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION – SUFFOLK			
	Level 2000 (000s)	Level 2010 (000s)	Change (000s)	% change
Managers & Administrators	53.5	56.5	3.0	5.61
Professional Occupations	29.4	32.7	3.3	11.22
Associate Professional & Technical	31.1	36.2	5.1	16.40
Clerical & Secretarial	47.0	48.6	1.6	3.40
Craft & Related	43.4	43.3	-0.1	-0.23
Personal & Protective	26.8	31.7	4.9	18.28
Sales	24.7	29.6	4.9	19.84
Plant & Machine Operatives	35.1	35.2	0.1	0.28
Other Occupations	27.1	28.4	1.3	4.80
Total	318.1	342.2	24.1	7.58

Source: Business Strategies, March 2000

Employment by industry

As well as change in the occupational structure of the county, there are also forecast changes to the industrial structure. The table below shows projected growth/decline in employment by sector between 2000 and 2010.

The largest employment growth areas are likely to be advanced services (banking and finance, insurance, professional services and other business services) and transport and distribution. There is also forecast growth in the hospitality sector (hotels, catering and leisure).

Declining sectors	Employment 2000	Employment forecast 2010	Growth	Employment change (000s)
Advanced manufacturing	14.7	12.9	-12%	-1.8
Food manufacturing	2.1	10.5	-13%	-1.6
Total	26.8	23.4	-13%	-3.4
Growth sectors				
Advanced services	37.6	48.2	+28%	10.6
Computing services	6.8	8.2	+21%	1.4
Pharmaceuticals	2.8	2.9	+4%	0.1
Distribution and transport	45.4	55.9	+4%	10.5
Telecommunications	8.1	8.6	+6%	0.5
Total	100.7	123.8	+23%	23.1

Source: LEFM (Not all sectors are shown)

Skills shortages

There is forecast to be an increase in demand for managers, professionals and those with higher level supervisory and team leadership skills. There are currently an estimated 114,000 people in management, professional and associate professional occupations in Suffolk — approximately 36% of the workforce. The forecast demand for 2010 is 125,000 (37% of the 2010 projected workforce) which, on face value looks like a requirement for an additional 11,000 people to be trained up over the next ten years. In real terms, however, taking account of natural wastage as people retire, leave their occupation for another reason, or migrate from the area, the estimated number of additional managers and professionals required is nearer 13,000. This calls for an average increase, therefore, of 1,300 people per year.

On top of this, it is estimated that there will be a requirement for a further 5,000 skilled technicians in engineering, construction and 'other' occupations.

The most recent survey conducted in Suffolk indicates that the most frequent hard-to-fill vacancies occur in intermediate and lower level occupations (craftspeople, sales occupations, personal service occupations, and plant and machine operators) although associate professionals and technicians, and professionals are also hard to recruit.

- 8% of Suffolk employers had a vacancy in 1999; half of recruiting employers had a hard-to-fill vacancy.
- 24% of employers had higher occupation vacancies that were hard to fill.
- 52% had vacancies for intermediate occupations that were hard to fill.
- 34% had vacancies for lower occupations that were hard to fill.

We can anticipate that as demand for higher level skills within occupational levels grows, and the labour market tightens, there will undoubtedly be a growth in reported skills gaps and shortages and hard-to-fill vacancies unless there is a growth in training interventions.

Learning activity

From the 2001 Suffolk Learning Partnership survey, only 31% of the Suffolk workforce had participated in any training or learning activity (excluding full-time education) in the previous twelve months.

The picture is, however, much better for young people aged 16-18, 79% of whom were actively participating in structured learning in 2000. This compares with the national target of 80% by the year 2004, a target we have set to exceed.

Participation in education at age 16 and 17 (in Suffolk in 1999/00) breaks down broadly into two-thirds remaining in full-time education: one fifth studying at a college of FE, and getting on for half (45%) going on into sixth forms. A further 13% of young people participate in government training schemes or some other form of part-time education (almost entirely undertaken at colleges of FE). 'Staying on' rates are highest for young people aged 16, and show a slight, but natural decline at age 17 and 18.

While it may appear that there is not much to do to close the gap, in effect when participation levels are already high, it becomes increasingly difficult to make inroads into the few who are not participating. However, raising levels of participation is as much to do with retaining the young people who choose to engage with learning post-16, as encouraging more young people to participate in the first place, principles which are enshrined in our plan.

Learning provision

While there are a number of rural learning centres, and colleges and training providers do provide rural outreach services, the issue of access to learning is problematic for a lot of people, not helped in places by poor or lack of public transport.

As well as addressing the issue of how individuals access learning opportunities, we need also to take a closer look at the nature of learning on offer and being taken up. While apparent imbalances between labour market need and learner participation are slight, it is important that individuals are given a balanced view of the skills needed in the labour market in order for them to make informed choices concerning learning.

The county has thirty three schools with sixth forms and four colleges of further education; Suffolk LSC contracts additionally with forty two training providers who deliver work based learning.

Based on recent Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and Ofsted inspections and the review of provider performance undertaken locally, we are assured that almost all our providers offer a satisfactory or higher quality of provision. There are very few areas or providers that have been categorised as less than satisfactory. Equally, however, there are very few that have been identified as 'excellent'.

We shall work with training providers across the county to raise the quality of provision as well as the range and the ways and places in which it can be accessed. This will include working closely with Adult and Community Learning (ACL) who currently deliver 33,500 sessions of learning a year and thus offer excellent opportunities for widening participation and for referral to more structured and accredited provision. ACL have over two hundred different rural outreach facilities, sixty-seven of which are owned by the Suffolk County Council and can be modified using the ACL capital fund. The facilities offer not only outreach for existing learners, but opportunities to engage new learners who are our target audience for widening participation and raising levels of basic skills. We share similar goals to create a learning society.

Conclusion

The trend in increasing demand for higher level occupations and skills, and decline in more traditional industries, combined with falling unemployment is leading to greater levels of skills shortages and skills gaps in the workforce. Jobs are forecast to grow faster than the growth in population, with little latent capacity in the labour market that can be utilised. The natural conclusion from this is that, while continuing to ensure young people leaving school and college are equipped with the skills and knowledge required by employers, there has to be a strong drive to upskill the existing workforce and at the same time give added support to those who have difficulty for whatever reason in being part of an inclusive society. The responsibility for all this has to be a shared one between the LSC, individuals and employers.

Taking the plan forward

The rate of change already being experienced in Suffolk is likely to grow and requires bold, often radical, measures by the LSC and its partners if the opportunities available to the county are to be realised.

- Education and training service delivery need to grow in line with employment and population expansion projections.
- Delivery needs to match increasing lifelong learning demands and place the needs of the learner first.
- Service delivery needs incremental restructuring to respond to sectoral changes and achieve quality improvements.
- Our strategy needs to strike a balance between helping to realise opportunities for employment growth and enhancing wealth creation, and dealing with issues arising amongst deprived groups and in depressed areas.

The following chapter sets out the aims, objectives and strategic actions that we have identified in response to these priorities.

> 4. Our strategic aims

Participation strategy

To help individuals achieve their full potential through active participation in learning throughout life

Skills strategy

To strengthen the role of the workplace and employers in raising Suffolk's skill base

Learning strategy

To create a truly responsive, high quality learning infrastructure

Participation strategy

Aim: To help individuals achieve their full potential through active participation in learning throughout life.

This section sets out our plans to 'put individual learners at the heart of the system.' It defines strategies for bringing more people into learning, especially from groups that are currently under-represented; it considers equal opportunities issues including disability and defines action to improve participation by age, gender, ethnicity or geographical area.

Objectives

- 1.1 To get more young people to continue/remain in learning and to achieve to higher levels.
- 1.2 To attract more adults back into learning and improve retention levels.
- 1.3 To enable young people and adults to become better informed, make better choices about their futures and thus take more responsibility for their learning actions.
- 1.4 To ensure equality of access to participation in all forms of learning.

Objective 1.1

To encourage more young people to continue/remain in learning, and to achieve to higher levels.

Proposed actions

- > Build on existing good links with the Connexions service to ensure complementary plans and actions.
- > Establish a network of outreach workers/mentors/community and voluntary sector workers/peer group 'buddies' in order to support disengaged young people back into learning.
- > Target other groups of 'non-learning' young people in partnership with Connexions to encourage them into appropriate forms of provision.
- > Investigate the reasons for early leaving and 'drop out' and develop strategies to address these.
- > Together with the Suffolk Learning Partnership, develop a 'Learning Entitlement' to help young people better understand what they are entitled to, and can expect from their learning programme, and thus take more control of their individual learning agendas.
- > Develop more self-confidence, initiative and enterprise in young people through, for example, Outward Bound courses, Young Enterprise and Millennium Volunteers.
- > Encourage a widening of vocational options pre-16 and related links post-16 up to foundation degree level, for those for whom this is appropriate.

- > Generate employer sponsorship/scholarship 'compacts' which offer young people incentives to aspire to higher levels such as guaranteed job interviews, work experience and support through further study.
- > Require providers to develop strategies to set and achieve higher retention figures. This will include refinement of 'early warning' systems so that potential early leavers can be identified where there's evidence (for example) of:
 - habitual lateness or poor attendance.
 - poor attitude.
 - poor motivation.
 - falling scores and/or assignment completion (etc.).

and remedial action can be taken.

Objective 1.2

To attract more adults back into learning and improve retention levels.

Proposed actions

- > Extend and develop the customer feedback process and customer satisfaction surveys in order to find out what our customers want, what their expectations are and how close we are to satisfying them. Feedback from customers will form a key input to the continuous improvement of provision.
- > Use the experience of the 'bite size' and repeat these on a regular basis to stimulate interest in learning and progression to other opportunities.
- > Encourage appropriate providers to run a coherent programme of summer, week-end and Saturday schools with the objective of encouraging more people to take up more learning.
- > Work with partners who have access to non-learners to encourage them to promote training and learning.
- > Undertake a stock-take of learning locations and ensure that provision is distributed or accessible across the county so that location, or lack of local access to provision, is not a barrier to learning.
- > Engage more adult learners from deprived and hard to reach areas by developing the knowledge and capability of providers and partners.
- > Work with partners, e.g. University for Industry (Ufi) and Learndirect to widen access to learning especially by those living in remote locations.
- > Work with employers to identify those with facilities that could be used as learning locations (with particular but not exclusive focus on rural areas).
- > Increase the number of Trade Union learning representatives in the workplace to generate more positive approaches to training and skills development.
- > Publicise role models and successful case studies to change adult perceptions of learning.
- > Increase availability of childcare support for learners who need it.

- > Maximise the use of Adult and Community Learning (leisure learning) and other community-based learning to appeal to traditional non-learners and encourage progression to vocational learning.
- > Provide support for ACL projects including: management information systems; individual learner records; investing capital to upgrade premises; and self assessment.
- > Implement the new Family Learning Programme.
- > Promote new-style Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) when available as a financial incentive to encourage more people to return to learn.
- > Encourage and promote non-traditional routes back into learning.

Objective 1.3

To enable young people and adults to become better informed, make better choices about their futures and thus take more responsibility for their learning actions.

Proposed actions

- > Work closely with Connexions, the Information, Advice and Guidance network, schools and colleges to provide them with better and more accessible information about skill and labour market trends, needs and opportunities to help inform career choice decisions.
- > Continue to provide, and expand, an adult guidance service (GAINS) geared particularly to those not currently in paid employment, those reviewing their career options, those working below their potential, and those wishing to return the labour market after a career break.
- > Give young people and adults the skills to seek out and identify sources of information.
- > Further develop successful arrangements for providing work experience for young people in schools so as to widen their experience and understanding of the labour market and the careers it can provide.
- > Maximise use of the Teacher Placement Scheme which helps teachers improve their understanding of aspects of employment in ways which then support curriculum development and delivery.
- > Ensure that career action plans and/or individual development plans are an integral part of all guidance interviews and encourage employers to clarify career goals and provide a better foundation for lifelong learning.
- > Establish a regular series of training workshops (Open College Network [OCN] accredited) to improve skills in undertaking appraisal interviews.

Objective 1.4

To ensure equality of opportunity.

A separate Equality and Diversity strategy has been agreed and should be read in conjunction with this plan. A brief summary of the strategy is given in chapter five and the supplementary goals are given in chapter two.

Priorities for action that have been identified include

- > Increasing participation in work-based learning and FE college provision by black males who are under-represented by comparison with other groups in Suffolk.
- > Encouraging the achievement to higher levels by all trainees from minority ethnic groups.
- > Encouraging young men and women to consider non-stereotypical occupations and careers.
- > Helping more young people with physical and learning disabilities to participate in work-based learning.
- > Encouraging more employers to offer training opportunities for all employees.

> Skills strategy

Aim: To enhance the role of the workplace and employers in raising Suffolk's skill base.

While the participation strategy focused on the needs of individuals, the skills strategy concentrates on the needs of employers and skills in the workforce. Many of the issues are seemingly the same or very similar – the need to raise levels of basic skills, provision of information, raising levels of participation and achievement etc. – but the methods we employ to achieve our goals will be very different.

A Workforce Development Plan is in development following publication of the Cabinet Office's 2001 report on workforce development.

A separate strategy for basic skills has been drafted in conjunction with the Suffolk Learning Partnership, County Basic Skills Group. The Better Basic Skills plan (2001-2004) is a stand-alone document and should be read alongside this plan.

Objectives

- 2.1 Speed up the flow of information, improve response rates and, building on existing intelligence, develop a deeper and more accurate understanding of skills needs and labour market trends.
- 2.2 Raise skills and qualifications levels in the workforce.
- 2.3 Increase employer investment in people, especially SMEs.
- 2.4 Tackle barriers to skills and labour supply.

Objective 2.1

To speed up the flow of information, improve response rates and, building on existing intelligence, develop a deeper and more accurate understanding of skills needs and labour market trends.

Proposed actions

- > Work with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), the East of England Development Agency (EEDA), the Suffolk Development Agency (SDA), the Small Business Service (SBS), the Learning Partnership and other key partners to reach a shared understanding of skills needs in Suffolk (present and future), broken down as much as possible into very local areas.
- > Establish a number of sector-based forums, one purpose of which will be to gather information concerning sector-specific skills needs. We will start with three forums covering shipping/transport/distribution, engineering and ICT and increase the number in the first three years.
- > Work with relevant agencies to bring to fruition the Suffolk Observatory with the purpose of establishing a central source of robust and relevant skills and labour market information that can be used by all in order to better plan for business competitiveness, economic development and learning provision. As envisaged, this will be under the auspices of the Suffolk Development Agency.

- > Disseminate widely the information we gather locally as well as that collected by our partners in order to aid better business planning and to inform the business of partners such as the Suffolk Education Business Partnership (EBP), Connexions, schools, colleges etc. who require such information in order to deliver services and learning provision, and guide individuals to an appropriate course of action.

Objective 2.2

To raise skills, qualifications and competence levels in the workforce.

Proposed actions

- > Promote the increased take up of more training leading to higher qualifications. This will involve escalating a focus on the adult national targets as a part of lifelong learning promotion, generating more employer involvement in mainstream LSC programmes and maximising use of the Local Initiative Fund and Workforce Development budget in supporting skills development in priority sectors.
- > Establish a network of Management Development suppliers who collaboratively deliver flexible, high quality provision which is appropriately accredited and meets employers needs. Such accreditation could result in greater use of, for example, the Open College Network (OCN) and its ability to recognise units of delivery.
- > Respond to feedback from, and intelligence supplied by the sector networks and support the development and execution of action plans.
- > Develop provision to accredit existing skills, experience and prior learning supported by action plans which increase level 3 achievement.
- > Identify existing forms of non-accredited learning and encourage movement to qualification outcomes which had lead to level 3 standard.
- > Assist with/subsidise the cost of assessment of qualifications in priority sector areas including basic skills.
- > Deliver the basic skills strategy. (A brief summary of the aims of the basic skills strategy is outlined in chapter five.) The delivery plan describes how actions for the first two years (to 2004) will translate into achievements against the local target of 10,000 people improving their basic skills.

Objective 2.3

To increase employer investment in people, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Proposed actions

- > Provide a new service in training needs analysis (TNA) which will help businesses, especially SMEs, to map the skills in their workforces against their business plan requirements in order to produce action plans to fill gaps.
- > Promote the tools for SMEs to benchmark training and development activities against others in their sector.

- > Increase take up and achievement of the Investors in People standard and meet the national target. This will continue to require close working with the Small Business Service to ensure unity of purpose and actions and delivery of workshops to help employers to make progress.
- > Encourage employers to promote (and contribute to) the revised Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) as a means of promoting lifelong learning.
- > Build training capacity in employers and increase participation in learning through the encouragement of more company Trade Union learning representatives.
- > Encourage employers to participate in/offer employee development programmes in order to become learning organisations.
- > Encourage more key workers in companies to champion learning, and to see that learning is reflected in business and training plans, especially in SMEs.
- > Encourage employers to actively promote the right to reasonable paid time off for study or training for young employees aged 16 or 17 who are not qualified to level 2. We will build this into other work we do with employers and use discretionary funding for any initiative as an incentive to encourage commitment to continue the education and training of young employees.
- > Run best practice human resource (HR) workshops for companies who have recently committed to becoming an Investor in People, and to those who are considering committing themselves. These workshops will also be used to promote lifelong learning messages to participating companies, and the services which the LSC can supply.

Objective 2.4

To tackle barriers to skills and labour supply.

Proposed actions

- > Target employers likely to employ those lacking basic skills and encourage them to access remedial services which can be delivered flexibly and accessed at the workplace and/or home.
- > Increase training supply in childcare to enhance supply of affordable and high quality provision which allows parents to achieve their desired potential in the workplace.
- > Support and encourage the development and greater take-up of flexible and distance learning. Learndirect and locally developed provision will provide a strong foundation for this.
- > Encourage employers to see that family-friendly policies can help to overcome skill and labour supply problems as can involvement with 'Welfare to Work' programmes.

> Learning strategy

Aim: To create a truly responsive, high quality learning infrastructure.

This strategy builds on the other two (but also feeds back into them) identifying how we will facilitate and co-ordinate education and training provision which meets local employers' and learners' needs. It shows how we will ensure quality, using inspection evidence, performance, completion and destination data and personal feedback.

In addition to issues of quality and raising standards, we shall also be looking at supply and demand, access and availability and a range of other matters designed to simplify choosing and finding the most appropriate course of learning for individuals and employers, thereby maximising retention, achievement and labour market significance.

Objectives

- 3.1 Increase relevance and responsiveness of learning opportunities to meet the needs of businesses and individuals.
- 3.2 Improve the quality of the learning experience at the point of delivery to among the best in the country.
- 3.3 Create a more flexible and dynamic network of learning suppliers in which partnership delivery grows and unhealthy competition is removed.
- 3.4 To promote the inclusion of skills development within social, regenerative and economic development initiatives.

Objective 3.1

Increase the relevance and responsiveness of learning opportunities to meet the needs of businesses and individuals.

Proposed actions

- > Support the case for increased local higher education provision. This is vital if we are to have a complete ladder of opportunities in Suffolk to allow individuals and businesses to develop to their full potential.
- > Support the development of the New Technology Institute, especially in respect of the provision of external outreach services.
- > Equip providers with comprehensive information about skills and labour market needs and ensure that providers respond to this through the contract planning and negotiation processes.
- > Require all providers to undertake individual progress reviews for learners, customer satisfaction surveys and surveys of leavers, and to build outcomes from these into action plans for continuous improvement. Results should also be fed into evaluation arrangements which should include an assessment of the relevance of the student's destination to the study undertaken.
- > Require all providers to build work-readiness skills into all learning delivery.

- > Encourage employers sponsoring provision for their own employees (day release etc.) to take an interest in obtaining learner feedback and to discuss any remedial action required with the provider in question.
- > Work with Sector Skills Councils and local sector groups to develop and encourage provision that is pertinent to the economy.

Objective 3.2

Improve the quality of the learning experience at the point of delivery to among the best in the country.

Proposed actions

- > Progress the local Quality Improvement (QI) strategy outlined in chapter six and achieve the targets set.
- > Encourage greater take-up of professional teaching and training qualifications and develop practitioner skills and qualifications in the further education sector, work-based learning, adult and community learning and the skills for supporting and tutoring on-line learning. This will improve the quality of teaching and learning and should impact on retention and achievement.
- > Work with inspection bodies (OfSTED and the Adult Learning Inspectorate [ALI]) to ensure that learning providers' development plans support continuous improvement and are achieved. A moderating group has been established to consider all development plans and to share good practise. We will ensure that plans are learner-centred and are evaluated through learner feedback.
- > Use the Provider Review Process as the basis for setting continuous improvement targets in key areas.
- > Work with the Suffolk Learning Partnership to widely disseminate inspection (OfSTED and ALI) outcomes, explore ways of addressing common weaknesses, including benchmarking and exploiting best practise, and drive up standards.
- > Undertake a review of the relevance and coherence of post-16 provision in Suffolk.
- > Increase professionalism and realism in self-assessment process by providers and ensure that such assessments are actively reflected in development plans.

Objective 3.3

Create a more flexible and dynamic network of learning suppliers in which partnership delivery grows.

Proposed actions

- > Use the outcomes from the relevance and coherence exercise to identify areas in which the learning supply infrastructure needs to change and to work in support of achieving such change.
- > Work with the Suffolk Learning Partnership to address issues of supply incoherence/competition/failure and to help identify ways forward which will carry provider support.
- > Facilitate development of more – and appropriate – flexible forms of learning and support capacity building (e.g. in developing tutor skills) to help embed such innovation.
- > Use the existing learning infrastructure as much as possible to grow learner numbers whilst recognising the need at times to bring in new providers and to support development of new sites when required.
- > Encourage all providers to further develop their links with businesses in order to ensure a greater responsiveness to needs and to exploit opportunities for employers to contribute to learning agendas.

Objective 3.4

To promote the inclusion of skills development within social regeneration and economic development initiatives.

Proposed actions

- > Continue to ensure that the LSC's membership of the Suffolk Development Agency and the positioning of the Suffolk Learning Partnership as a sub-group of that agency, are used to full effect in ensuring that skill needs arising from economic development priorities are reflected in our programmes.
- > Support the development of local strategic partnerships and ensure the skills agenda is fully recognised.
- > Use the Local Initiative Fund (LIF) to target areas and issues of identified special need.
- > Work with local social regeneration partnerships to ensure delivery of skills requirements.

> 5. Supplementary strategies

In addition to this plan a suite of plans has been developed that deal specifically with key areas. The strategies summarised below have been developed in close working with partner organisations and are multi-agency owned and delivered.

These strategies cover:

- Equality and diversity.
- Basic skills.
- Workforce development.

In addition to delivery aspects of this plan, there are a range of cross-cutting themes that cover the whole business and inform our policy making.

Each of the following themes has a separate action plan that explains and describes the policies and strategies connected with the theme, and the actions we will undertake in furtherance of our aims. What follows is merely a brief outline of the issues.

Equality and diversity

LSCs are tasked with promoting equality of opportunity between people from different racial groups, between men and women, and between people with a disability and people without. However, equality and diversity goes much further than the three statutory areas. There are a number of issues that can make participation and achievement much harder for some people than others. Ensuring individuals have access to services and provision and are encouraged and helped to participate and achieve, is a high priority.

We will work closely with practitioners in specialist areas, organisations expert in the field of working with minority groups, groups with special needs, and those who have become sidelined or excluded from mainstream participation. These organisations, and others as we expand our network, will continue to be the core of our delivery mechanism as well as a source of advice concerning needs and solutions.

In delivering our equal opportunities plan, we shall take into account issues such as age, area of residence, level and type of occupation, and level of basic skills. We shall also bear in mind the need to negate sexual stereotyping that has historically determined that this or that job is a 'man's job' or 'woman's work'.

Priorities and goals for our equality and diversity strategy are given in chapter two.

Basic skills

The Suffolk economy has progressed in recent years with increasing pace as quality systems, licensing, communication and new technology requirements have been introduced. This puts many people in need of better basic skills at risk of becoming marginalized at work and in society. Innovative approaches to reveal the issues and offer free, attractive and repeatable learning opportunities for this large group of people are now called for. The task should not be underestimated – no modern economy in the world has been able to make more than a marginal improvement to date.

Three levels of need are identified. The aim is to progress learners in each category to the next highest category – accepting that huge jumps are unlikely to be made in relation to the pattern of provision that is felt to be marketable and acceptable to the learner. This incremental approach does give the opportunity of moving the 'low

literacy/numeracy' group, who represent over 50% of the total need, above the threshold, thus making room for others from even lower literacy and numeracy levels to receive support. In tackling the 'low' group we must instil some additional lifelong learning skills (including key skills) to avoid, as far as possible, the likelihood of their regression in the future as our economic and social expectations of literacy and numeracy essentials grow over time.

To some extent the plan is experimental and further research and evaluation must be built in. It is a 'push-me, pull-you' model where the 'push' is marketing, the capacity of tutors and courses; and the 'pull' is individual and organisational demand for learning. Push and pull should attempt to ratchet each other up to a level over time that may need to be as much as 30 times greater than that offered now in Suffolk. This will require significant multi-agency investment and management within a coherent framework for action.

The strategy and plan is the first 3 year framework. It should become accepted as the single key reference point for the many organisations involved and interested in improving Adult Basic Skills in Suffolk. Naturally the knowledge and energy represented by the County Basic Skills Group will embrace the expected new national Basic Skills Agency initiatives, standards and programmes as so far evidenced in this plan, by reference to nationally set targets, the National Brokerage Scheme, the Quality Kite marking system and a national promotional campaign which started in Autumn 2001.

A delivery plan describes how actions for the first two years (to 2004) will translate into achievements against the local target of 10,000 people improving their basic skills; participation levels are also included and broken down into yearly targets. The delivery plan should be read in conjunction with this strategic plan for more detail.

Workforce development

Workforce development aims to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of those in work, those seeking work or those about to enter the labour market for the first time. This is a broad definition encompassing much of what the Learning and Skills Council has been set up to achieve.

The LSC has the opportunity to develop a coherent approach and to maximise the use of formula and non-formula funding to ensure learning relates to employers needs and the needs of the economy and to increase employer investment in learning. At the local level, it will also be able to use the Local Initiative Fund and access additional funding through mechanisms such as the Single Regeneration Budget, European Social Fund (ESF) and the New Deal for Communities.

The workforce development plan assesses the issues and sets out the key actions required within a vision which must be achieved if Suffolk is to achieve its full potential and provide the sorts of jobs and learning opportunities required by a growing population which has increasingly high expectations arising from the achievement of more and higher level qualifications, as well as providing for the needs of those who suffer some sort of disadvantage.

The key messages in the strategy are equally applicable to individuals, employers, education and training suppliers, and those responsible for economic development and regeneration and service provision.

> 6. How we will deliver the plan

Alongside the three strategies summarised above, there are a number of thematic issues that impact on all activity and cut across all delivery.

As well as our approach to working with others, in order to manage our delivery and ensure best performance, we shall be mindful of the manner in which we structure ourselves, develop our staff and measure our performance with a view to continuous improvement.

Corporate governance

Suffolk LSC is advised in all areas of its work by its Local Council. The council consists of 14 members plus the Chairman and the Executive Director. Council members are appointed by the National Council and approved by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

The National Council satisfies itself that there is an appropriate gender and ethnic mix and that the appointment process is governed by the seven principles of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Council members are expected to adhere to the seven principles of public office as outlined by the Nolan Committee's Standards in Public Life.

The Council meets in alternate months. Notice of the meeting, the agenda and supporting papers and the minutes of the previous meeting are issued seven days prior to the meeting.

The Council Clerk records those in attendance and apologies and takes the minutes. The minutes are agreed by the Chairman and are then available to the public (with the exception of confidential items) a week after the meeting.

To further assist in our work all Council members also serve on sub-groups of the main Council. They are: Strategy and Partnership Development; Quality Assurance and Contract Compliance; Adult Training and Workforce Development; and 16 to 19 Provision. These sub-groups meet in months prior to full council meetings and matters arising are raised with the full Council if necessary.

The Suffolk LSC has documented procedures and is subject to audit by its own internal audit section. Our external auditors are The National Audit Office.

Equal opportunities

In our internal recruitment and training and development practices for staff, in the way we plan our work and make contracting decisions, in our dealings with other organisations and the way we conduct our business, we shall endeavour to have equality of opportunity at the forefront of our thinking.

This philosophy is developed in the Equality and Diversity strategy and will be put into practice through annual equality and diversity plans. The Suffolk LSC has recruited an Equality and Diversity Manager to spearhead the policy and work with local partner organisations to deliver and monitor our plans.

All Suffolk LSC staff and Council members will receive equality and diversity training at an appropriate level to ensure that they are equipped to carry out their responsibilities in this area.

Partnership

Suffolk Learning and Skills Council is committed to working in partnership with other agencies and organisations in the county and the region throughout its areas of activity.

Whilst Suffolk Learning and Skills Council is a new organisation with a new remit, it has the benefit of operating in Suffolk which has a long history of partnerships. We will build on this firm base and strive to establish a reputation for collaboration and partnership.

Suffolk LSC's key partners are:

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA). EEDA has identified that competitive businesses and organisations are of vital importance to achieving prosperity for the East of England. Suffolk LSC will work with EEDA to equip the workforce with the vocational and generic skills that will make businesses competitive.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). These represent sectoral interests and it will be important for Suffolk LSC to engage with SSCs representing sectors that impact on the local economy.

Local Authorities. The Suffolk LSC will work closely with county and district councils in their roles as key drivers of the Local Strategic Partnerships.

Local Strategic Partnerships. Local Strategic Partnerships are the government's chosen vehicle for co-ordinating the response of key agencies to the needs and concerns of local communities. In Suffolk strategic partnerships are being established coterminous with county and district authority boundaries. Suffolk LSC will be represented on each of the partnerships.

Suffolk County Council Education Department/Local Education Authority (LEA). There is one LEA in Suffolk with coterminous boundaries to the Suffolk LSC. The LEA carries responsibility for ACL and delivery of IAG, and delivers on funding obligations for 6th forms. We are fortunate to have a single body with whom we increasingly share common goals, objectives and ideals as evidenced (for example) in the County Learning Plan. The SCC LEA draws formula funds as an FE delivery agent for Basic Skills.

The Suffolk Learning Partnership (SLP). The SLP is a strategic body focussing on developing collaboration between all those involved in post-16 and adult learning in Suffolk. The Suffolk LSC and the SLP have formed a strong working relationship, each organisation working in support of the others aims and objectives.

Suffolk Development Agency (SDA). The Suffolk LSC has representation at board and management group level as well as participation on most of the working groups and sub-groups to forward the work of economic development in the county.

The Connexions Service. Another important strategic and operational partner. Staff from each organisation will work closely to develop provision and learning opportunities that are appropriate to the needs of young people.

The Small Business Service (SBS). The local contract for the delivery of many workforce development services to small and medium sized enterprises is held by Business Link Suffolk. This organisation is a key partner in the process of engaging employers to improve the skills of the workforce.

The Employment Service (ES). The ES is another key partner in providing learning opportunities for adults returning to employment. Suffolk LSC and the ES will work collaboratively to ensure our plans and activities are complementary.

Voluntary and Community Sectors. The LSC is a signatory to the Suffolk Compact, facilitated by the Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations (SAVO). Under this compact we commit to working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector to maximise collaboration on planning and operations/service delivery in tackling the agenda of social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all.

Further education colleges, high schools and private training providers. Key partners who together deliver all post-16 learning and training in the county.

Quality and standards

Driving up the quality of the learning experience through raising standards of learning supply is one of the LSC's highest priorities. Our ability to achieve economic and social goals depends on it, as do the challenging targets which have been set for raising participation and attainment.

As part of this process, we recognise the need for more sensitive approaches for less able and hard to help groups. Learners from these groups need cushioning in the early stages of their learning experience, backed up by flexible learning programmes which ensure positive attitudes to learning and encourage progression from non-qualificatory learning to that which is recognised; from one level to the next. There must be a mix of appropriate provision, both academic and vocational, at all levels.

For all learners the ultimate goal must be to encourage completion of a programme of learning to full qualification standard.

This is the platform for lifelong learning which will encourage progression and contribute to the government's target of half young people under the age of thirty going onto higher education.

Local processes, principally those relating to provider performance reviews and quality improvement, serve to reinforce that regime within an overall goal:

'To continuously strive for excellence in the supply of education, training and learning in Suffolk for those post-16 to achieve world class standards'.

This goal is at the heart of the local Quality Improvement plan.

Implications

Achievement of this goal requires a fundamental change of approach by the Suffolk LSC since simply doing 'more of the same' will not produce the results required with the urgency called for.

This will require us to:

- Stretch suppliers to set ambitious self-improvement targets and to monitor their own progress rigorously.
- See 'satisfactory' as only the minimum standard, with good and excellent assessment increasingly becoming the norm.
- Focus our support, including standards funding, on those areas which will make a real difference, defining the improvements we expect to see achieved from such investment, and ensuring as much as possible that they are achieved.
- Analyse overall supplier performance as part of our annual planning processes and determining the priorities which will govern our support actions for the forthcoming year.

Our strategy

The process for raising quality and standards will be driven by our quality improvement plan which will set longer-term goals and more immediate priorities.

This plan which will be reviewed at least twice a year draws heavily upon outcomes from:

- The common inspection framework.
- The provider review process.
- Quality improvement projects.
- Case studies.
- Comparative performance data, especially for recruitment, retention, achievement and learner satisfaction.

The plan will set targets for improvement to be agreed with providers and included within their own self assessment and development plans. Standards Funding will provide a key resource to support the improvement process, especially for providers with unsatisfactory inspection grades.

The immediate improvement priorities we have determined are:

- > To achieve high quality self-assessment reports and development plans for all providers by September 2002.
- > To focus and set targets within provider plans on improving leadership and management, continuous improvement and equality and diversity, all considered to need special attention and likely to have the greatest impact on the overall quality of the learning experience. We are aiming to achieve a 50% improvement in assessments in these areas within the first eighteen months of this plan.
- > To remedy the position of those providers currently causing concern within the first two years of this plan and to develop support strategies for others who may become so categorised.

Much of this work is already in train for most providers, but much more needs to be done especially in the areas of Adult and Community Education and with community-based providers being brought on through co-financing/local initiative funding etc. to deal with hard to help groups.

Health and safety

It is our policy to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all our employees, trainees on all government funded programmes, contractors and other persons who may be affected by our operations, as outlined in the full health and safety strategy and procedure documents and in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

The policy will be applied equally and fairly and without exception.

The policy aims to provide and maintain places of work and equipment which are safe by operation (systems of work) and free from risks to health, and also to provide suitable arrangements for the welfare of employees in compliance with Health, Safety and Welfare provisions. In respect of learners on government funded programmes the Suffolk LSC will comply with the Provider Good Practice Guide and any systems deemed necessary that are supplied by the Learning and Skills Council (Coventry).

It is the policy of the Suffolk LSC to encourage the development of all our providers by the provision of training as identified through the providers' quality review process.

From provider reviews undertaken to date, the critical area for development in health and safety has been identified as accident management which includes issues such as:

- Lack of identification of causes of accidents and identification of remedial actions.
- Concerns over learner supervision at work placement and at training providers' premises including identification of a responsible person, and the actual supervision of the learner/student.
- Lack of robust systems between provider and host employer; the pre-placement check is not thorough.

Actions are already in hand to improve performance in this area, work which will have a beneficial effect on the whole approach to health and safety by providers.

Particular sectors in which there is a vulnerability in health and safety are equine studies, construction, engineering, agriculture and land management. These are high risk areas and organisations attracting high risk assessment will be regarded as a priority for assistance in helping to resolve problems.

Improvements in health and safety performance will be stimulated by action plans to be agreed annually with all providers. The local LSC has expert resources available to support and oversee this process. Progress will be monitored as part of the provider review process which will require improvement targets to be set.

All necessary information, training and supervision will be provided to ensure the implementation of this policy and achievement of the goals.

The Suffolk LSC will conform, where appropriate, to the requirements of the current environmental legislation and regulations and co-operate with the national and local government authorities charged with the responsibility for the regulations and monitoring of environmental aspects.

Management and employees are required to observe and comply with current Health, Safety and Environment Legislation within the work place and its activities, and to do all that is reasonable or practicable to avoid and/or reduce Health and Safety Risks.

The policy will be reviewed annually and revised if necessary.

Capacity building

Through contractual and non-contractual influences, we will secure responsiveness, flexibility and efficiency.

Building capacity will rely strongly on close, long-term relationships with providers, often encouraging collaborative approaches. A particular challenge for us as we assume responsibility for co-ordinating school, college and other 16 –19 provision, will be to deliver the right combination of quality, flexibility and choice.

Additionally, key proposals from the Green Paper: 'Meeting individual talents and aspirations at 14-19' include issues such as:

- Increasing choice and flexibility.
- Introducing new pathways.
- Raising standards.
- Reducing and removing barriers.
- Improving information and guidance.
- Performance indicators.
- Parity of esteem.
- Widening participation in HE.

Proposals are under consultation at the time of writing, but it is anticipated that further papers will be introduced early in 2002 which will set out aspects of the proposals for 14-19 education and training which can be introduced without the need for primary legislation.

We shall develop plans for encouraging some providers to develop specialist strengths within centres or networks of excellence, and to co-ordinate effectively with higher education institutions.

A recent broad-brush analysis of the range of provision in Suffolk shows that, in the main, provision is reasonably well matched against the shape of the local labour market. There are a few areas of concern, two of the greatest being the low level of engineering and construction students and trainees, which are well below requirement of the labour market. Further and more detailed analysis is required, however, which we will undertake as an early priority.

The implications for learning providers are immense if they are to achieve the learning outcomes that employers are demanding. It is no longer sufficient to ensure learners are equipped with the appropriate practical skills, theory and underpinning knowledge; integral to all learning experiences must be the notion of developing the whole person. Not only that, but the learning experience should be designed so that individuals and employers continue to come back for more.

In order to achieve the goal of increased and broadened participation in learning, one of the first things that we need to address is the barrier to participation caused by learning not being available at a place and at a time convenient to the potential learner. Partners will work together to encourage widening participation through a more integrated and coherent countrywide provision. Improvements will be made to the IT learning infrastructure as well as consideration for those for whom IT is itself a barrier to learning.

Marketing

Marketing activity is undertaken at two levels: product and corporate.

In promoting our programmes, as well as the production of brochures and other printed information, we shall engage with suppliers and work collaboratively with them to raise awareness of the various products and services available to young people, adults and businesses. We shall support the Connexions service through careers events and other joint activities, and careers teachers in schools through the provision of printed information. Our printed materials will be appropriate to the client group and promote best practice in equal opportunities. We shall ensure that information is distributed as widely as possible, using a range of other partners and agencies to help us. We shall take advice from our partners and specialist agencies concerning the production of our literature and information in other formats.

Corporate marketing will be designed to raise awareness of the work of the Learning and Skills Council and will mainly take the form of public meetings and consultation events at which businesses and individual members of the public are invited to comment on our plans. There will also be an annual public meeting at which we present our performance for the year.

Marketing activity, whether product or corporate, will be measured and evaluated for value for money and response.

Resourcing the plan

The experience of the staff we inherited and the complementary skills of new staff provide a solid foundation on which to build as we establish a new way of working. All staff will be given adequate and appropriate training and the materials and other resources they require in order to fulfil their roles and achieve our aims and targets. Through the professionalism and expertise of our staff, we aim to gain the support and confidence of our customers, partners and other stakeholders.

We shall commit to achieving the Investor in People standard.

We shall optimise funding available to deliver projects and programmes of learning in the county through bidding for European funds and maximising effectiveness through match funding and leverage. Local discretionary budget spend will complement and support activity funded through other sources.

Through regular review of performance and evaluation of our projects and programmes, we will ensure that all funds, mainstream, European and discretionary, are targeted at areas of priority and are wisely spent. Where appropriate, evaluation exercises will include a cost-per-outcome measure.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this plan will be undertaken at four levels.

The first level will be at delivery level. In addition to provider performance reviews and regular management information, we shall undertake a range of surveys to gather learner feedback. We shall also monitor the extent to which recommendations and improvements are being implemented by providers.

The second level of evaluation will be at programme level. By aggregating the various data, statistics and survey findings by major programme area, we shall be able to determine the extent to which each of the programme areas is making a contribution to the key strategic objectives.

Third level evaluation will bring together all activities contributing to one of the three main strategic aims in order to report qualitatively on the impact made towards achieving our aims.

The fourth stage will be a summary of our findings and our assessment of the in-year progress we have made towards delivering our strategic plan.

Council officers will undertake evaluation at delivery and programme level. Evaluating the overall impact of the strategic plan will be the responsibility of the Suffolk Council.

In addition to the process-driven evaluation described above we will, through public consultation, seek the views of local stakeholders of the impact of our plans and actions.

All evaluation outcomes will be used to influence and inform delivery improvements as well as processes and procedures.

> 7. From strategy into action

Achievement of the targets set out in this plan requires a differentiated approach given the different starting positions for each. It is envisaged that progress will be made as follows for each of the three years covered by this plan.

2002/03

- > Continue to raise participation levels by young people (milestone 80%) and related NVQ 2 level attainments (milestone 83%).
- > Increase activity to boost NVQ level 3 attainments by young people (milestone 46%).
- > Start to develop increased capacity to achieve basic skills target and maximise scope for progress within existing capacity (milestone 2,500 reduction in numbers).
- > Enhance focus on NVQ level 3 adult target (milestone 7,000 extra numbers).

2003/04

- > With continued particular attention to disengaged young people, make further progress towards targets for participation (milestone 82%) and NVQ level 2 achievement (milestone 84%).
- > Build further on enhanced NVQ level 3 activity for young people (milestone 47%).
- > Fully utilise expanded capacity for adult basic skills achievement and develop further as necessary (milestone 3,500 reduction in numbers).
- > Continue to escalate NVQ level 3 activity for adults (milestone 9,000 extra numbers).

2004/05

- > Anticipate year 2010 target for youth participation (possibly as high as 95%) and make further progress (target 83%). Achieve young attainment target for NVQ level 2 (86%).
- > Achieve young NVQ level 3 attainment target (49%).
- > Achieve adult basic skills target (10,000 reduction in numbers).
- > Achieve NVQ 3 target for adults (10,000 extra numbers).

> Conclusion

The importance of this first strategic plan is not to be understated. It sets the framework for developing education, training and learning up to further education level for those aged over 16 in Suffolk for the next three years and possibly beyond. As such it will affect the lives and prosperity of individuals, the competitive position of our local businesses, and the strength of our local economy. It is vital, therefore, that the plan is achieved, or preferably exceeded, in ways which bring real benefits to Suffolk. To do this will require the full and active engagement of all partners in terms of both working with us in areas where collaborative delivery is necessary as well as ensuring that key actions are embedded in the plans of the different agencies. I know that there is a marked will to do this, something which gives me confidence that together we will succeed. The next three years will be challenging and, I am sure, exciting. I hope that they will go down as a turning point in the way in which learning is valued and practised in Suffolk.



Mike Bax
Executive Director

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YMCA Training (Lowestoft)
YMCA Training (Stowmarket)

	Objective 1.1	Objective 1.2	Objective 1.3	Objective 1.4	Objective 2.1		Objective 2.2	Objective 2.3	Objective 2.4	Objective 3.1	Objective 3.2	Objective 3.3	Objective 3.4
LSC National Targets for 2004	To encourage more young people to continue/remain in learning and to achieve to higher levels	To attract more adults back into learning and improve retention levels	To enable young people and adults to become better informed, make better choices about their futures and thus take more responsibility for their learning actions	To ensure equality of opportunity	To speed up the flow of information, improve response rates, building on existing intelligence, develop a deeper and more accurate understanding of skills needs and labour market trends		To raise skills, qualifications and competence levels in the workforce	To increase employer investment in people, especially SMEs	To tackle barriers to skills and labour supply	Increase the relevance and responsiveness of learning opportunities in response to the needs of businesses and individuals	Improve the quality of the learning experience at the point of delivery to among the best in the country	Create a more flexible and dynamic network of learning suppliers in which partnership delivery grows and unhealthy competition is removed	To promote the inclusion of skills development within social, regenerative and economic development initiatives
80% of young people in structured learning	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓			
% of adults and employers engaged in learning (target to be set)		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Increase engagement of employers in workforce development							✓	✓		✓	✓		
85% of young people (age 19) reaching NVQ level 2 or equivalent	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		
55% of young people (age 19) reaching NVQ level 3 or equivalent	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		
Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 (nationally) (target to be set)	✓			✓			✓		✓				
% of adult workforce achieving NVQ level 2 or equivalent (target to be set)		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
52% of adult workforce achieving NVQ level 3 or equivalent		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Raise quality and effectiveness of education and training										✓	✓	✓	
Contributing to regional targets													
Reduce the % of businesses reporting skills shortages			✓		✓					✓			✓
Increase the % of the Suffolk workforce who receive training to 50%			✓	✓			✓	✓					