

Learning and Skills Council

Quality Improvement Strategy

2003/06

FOREWORD

In *Success for All* the Government signalled its commitment to the reform and improvement of further education and training. The commitment is backed by the largest ever investment in raising standards and transforming local delivery in learning and skills provision. Total planned funding for the learning and skills sector will increase by 19% in real terms between 2002/03 and 2005/06. This represents over £1 billion of new money.

The Learning and Skills Council shares this commitment. We seek to develop new and productive ways of working with all providers in order to help them raise standards, build on strengths, eliminate weaknesses and increase and widen participation. In particular, we want providers to be our partners with whom we establish new and better ways of planning and funding education and training.

Success for All sets out an exciting vision for the future. The action needed to make this vision a reality is the basis for our quality improvement strategy. This document sets out what that strategy is. Its implementation will be part of our relentless drive to secure provision of excellence for all learners. The interests of learners lie at the heart of all we do.

[Signed by CE]

Introduction

In November 2002, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published *Success for All* which sets out a radical programme of reform for the post-16 learning and skills sector.

The reforms proposed in *Success for All* are to improve the quality and raise standards across the learning and skills sector. For these reforms to be effective, they must be underpinned by a clear framework of action. Responsibility for implementing this action does not lie with the LSC alone or solely with providers. It is one we all share. It calls for a new sense of partnership between the LSC, providers, employers and local communities. We must all strive together to give learners education and training of excellence which matches the best in the world.

The mission of the LSC is to raise participation and achievement through high quality education and training which put learners first.

Our Quality Improvement Strategy is based on five key principles:

- the experience, aspirations and success of learners are at the heart of what we do
- colleges and other providers have primary responsibility for the quality of their own provision
- LSC interventions will be in inverse proportion to the success of a provider
- we will work closely with our partners to develop, implement and evaluate the strategy
- our ways of working with providers must be based on relationships of trust and a shared commitment to learners.

The Quality Improvement Strategy is a high level statement of our approach to improving quality and raising standards in the Learning and Skills sector. Providers, partners and stakeholders will find the details of implementation in circulars and guidance to which the strategy refers, and in the plans published by local Learning and Skills Councils.

I am grateful to all those who took part in planning seminars and responded to the consultation draft of this strategy and the consultation circulars on *Success for All*. I am confident that the implementation of our Quality Improvement Strategy will lead to success for all those who seek to enrich their lives through learning.

[signed by Avril Willis]

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Our Vision of Excellence in Education and Training

1 The LSC's vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England will have the knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world. We want to create a learning society, free from discrimination and prejudice, which encourages and helps all learners reach their full potential.

2 We will achieve this through excellent education and training provision. Excellence means that all learners can access a range of attractive and relevant learning opportunities, are enabled to make the best choice of learning opportunity and are well taught and supported, in order to achieve their learning goals.

3 14-19 year old learners will have greater choice and higher standards of education and training, with progression routes to higher education and employment. Parents and guardians should be confident that their children have access to a range of excellent academic and vocational programmes.

4 Adult learners from all sectors of the community should have access to excellent provision for improving basic skills, for training for work and learning for personal development.

5 The national workforce should be equipped with higher level skills and skill shortages reduced or eliminated. Employers will have a more productive engagement with a transformed and responsive network of colleges and other providers committed to meeting regional and sub-regional skill needs. Employers should be confident that their providers are meeting their needs and have high quality, appropriate and relevant provision.

6 The professionalism of further education teachers and trainers will be improved and all providers will have strong leadership and management.

7 Destructive competition between providers should be replaced by a focus on the needs of learners, communities and employers within a better planned and more collaborative environment.

8 Excellence also means that the burdens of bureaucracy should be reduced in order to empower providers to improve services and meet their targets, rather than account for every little action they take.

Success for All

9 *Success for All* is a radical and ambitious reform and investment strategy which has attracted overwhelming support from providers, employers and learners. The four main themes of *Success for All* are:

- **Meeting needs, improving choice** by improving the responsiveness and quality of provision in each area to meet learner, employer and community needs
- **Putting teaching, training and learning at the heart of what we do** by identifying and disseminating best practice, which will guide learning and training programmes
- **Developing the leaders, teachers, lecturers, trainers and support staff of the future** including setting new targets for full and part-time college teachers to be qualified, and developing strong leadership and management through a new Centre for Excellence in Leadership
- **Developing a framework for quality and success** by establishing a new planning, funding and accountability system, based on greater partnership and trust, including three year funding agreements.

10 The LSC will work closely with the DfES to implement *Success for All* through a jointly chaired programme board. The DfES will lead on the themes: *putting teaching, training and learning at the heart of what we do* and *developing the leaders, teachers, lecturers, trainers and support staff of the future*.

11 The DfES Standards Unit will introduce a coherent approach to best practice, identifying how effective teaching, training and learning is currently delivered in the distinct and also diverse environments within post-16 education and training.

12 The Standards Unit will lead on the development of the leaders, teachers, trainers and support staff of the future by improving leadership and management, increasing the proportion of qualified teachers and trainers and making teaching and training more attractive as careers.

13 We will work with the Centre for Excellence in Leadership to develop succession processes and assist in planning suitable development programmes for the diverse range of leaders and managers in the learning and skills sector, and for quality improvement staff in providers and support organisations, including staff in the LSC.

14 The LSC leads on the other 2 *Success for All* themes: *meeting needs, improving choice* and *developing a framework for quality and success*. The next section sets out our general aims for the quality improvement strategy. These are:

- **local patterns of provision are developed to meet learner, employer and community needs**

- **excellent providers are recognised, rewarded and share their good practice**
- **the quality of provision across the learning and skills sector improves and becomes consistently strong**
- **the weakest providers achieve at least minimum levels of performance**
- **the capacity and capability of the LSC are improved to deliver *Success for All* and the Quality Improvement Strategy.**

15 The first aim describes how we will *meet needs and improve choice*. The middle three aims describe how we will implement the *framework for quality and success*. The last aim underpins the others, and describes how we will develop the capacity and capability of the LSC to deliver the Quality Improvement Strategy.

16 The principles of the *Success for All* reforms will apply equally to school sixth forms as part of an integrated learning and skills sector. However, because schools are already subject to whole school reforms, they will be applied in different ways.

17 Strategic Area Reviews cover all LSC funded learning in an area including sixth form provision of all types. Sixth form provision, like the rest of post-16 provision, will be assessed against the priorities of learners, employers and local communities, its contribution to wider targets and policies and measures of its quality and success. Sixth forms will be covered by the *whole school* arrangements for standards and accountability.

What is the current position?

18 The quality of provision in the learning and skills sector is variable. Some provision can justifiably be seen as excellent and meets the highest national and indeed world class standards. At the other extreme, some provision is poor and does not meet the needs of learners, local communities or employers.

19 Area wide inspections have revealed an overall lack of strategic planning and co-ordination of 16-19 provision, substantial variations in the quality of education provision and standards of achievement, and the need for increased collaboration among providers to increase learners' choices and widen participation. By 2005, all LSCs will have carried out Strategic Area Reviews (StARs) and be implementing the results in Local Strategic Plans to improve the quality of provision.

20 In the first performance review in Spring 2001, only 2% of learners were in FE providers which satisfied the criteria of excellence. Our target for Spring 2006 is that at least 12% of learners will be in FE providers which satisfy the criteria of excellence.

21 Across all providers, success rates vary widely. In 2000/01, 59% of qualifications started in FE sector colleges were achieved and 56% in FE provision within local adult education institutions. There was substantial variation in success rates between colleges. For example, success rates in the middle 50% of FE colleges ranged from 53% to 64% and for FE provision in local adult education institutions the middle 50% ranged from 44% to 69%.

22 Our target for 2006 is that *average* success rates will have increased substantially to 72%¹ (colleges), 48% (work based learning providers) and 67% (FE provision made by local adult education institutions).

23 *Success for All* proposed floor targets for minimum levels of success rates and we have consulted widely on setting the level of floor targets. Challenging floor targets have been set for long and short qualifications by type of college and other providers of FE, and 2 floor targets (by areas of learning) for WBL providers.

24 Maintaining 2000/01 as the base year, one fifth of FE sector colleges were below either one or both floor targets and one third of local adult education institutions (FE provision) were similarly below one or both floor targets. In 2001/02 within work based learning, only 36% of learners achieved a modern apprenticeship framework or an NVQ, and two thirds of providers were below one or both floor targets. Our national target for 2006 is that *all* FE and 90% of WBL providers will have improved sufficiently to exceed or meet the relevant floor targets.

25 The LSC is still a relatively new organisation. The great majority of its staff have been drawn from the organisations it replaced and which had a very different remit and role. Expertise in, and context knowledge of the constituent parts of the learning and skills sector are spread unevenly across the LSC network. By 2005 we will have completed the reshaping programme and developed the LSC in order to meet the highest standards of practice in all that we do, and in delivering *Success for All*. The national office will monitor the progress of local offices in achieving their objectives to raise quality, and provide support where appropriate.

Achieving our aims

26 Our general aims are that:

- local patterns of provision are developed to meet learner, employer and community needs
- excellent providers are recognised, rewarded and share their good practice
- the quality of provision across the learning and skills sector improves and becomes consistently strong

¹ To be informed by analysis of college 3 year development plans which will provide up to date data.

- the weakest providers achieve at least minimum levels of performance
- the capacity and capability of the LSC are improved to deliver *Success for All* and the Quality Improvement Strategy.

Aim 1: Local patterns of provision are developed to meet learner, employer and community needs

27 Learners should be entitled to high quality, relevant and rich programmes of learning which lead to outcomes which they value and are valued by wider society. The principles which should underpin the organisation of provision to deliver learner entitlements include:

- quality
- distinct 16-19 provision
- diversity to ensure curriculum breadth
- learner choice
- affordability, value for money and cost effectiveness.

28 We have published guidance to establish a consistent process for Strategic Area Reviews. Please see the web link: <http://www.successforall.gov.uk/contentList.cfm?contSectionId=3> . We have established 9 pioneers which will undertake a formative evaluation of the process. Every local area will have completed a Strategic Area Review by March 2005. Outcomes will be reflected in Local Strategic Plans. The need for further reviews will be determined as policies develop and economic circumstances change.

29 We are asking all providers to be clear about their educational and training missions, to focus on their strengths, and to review their mission by April 2004.

30 We will develop collaborative arrangements between providers through effective working relationships with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and other key stakeholders. We will continue to give practical expression to such relationships through curriculum initiatives supported by the 14-16 flexibility fund and through the development and implementation of the post area wide inspection action plans.

31 The Government has set a target that 50% of 18-30 year olds participate in higher education by 2010. To contribute to this target, we will work with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to implement the Aim Higher: Partnership for Progression (Aim Higher:P4P) initiative. In 2004/05 and 2005/06, we will target Aim Higher: P4P funding to improve learner success rates at level 3, in areas where there has been historically low participation in higher education.

32 Excellent information, advice and guidance services are essential to empower learners to make the best choice of learning opportunity. We will establish action research projects to explore new ways of working involving the LSC, schools, colleges, the Connexions services and adult information, advice and guidance partnerships.

33 Successive initiatives to widen adult participation in structured learning have had relatively little impact. We have published a consultation draft of our Widening Adult Participation Strategy and will establish our strategy by autumn 2003. We will work closely with local authorities and other partners to improve the quality of adult learning planning processes by identifying and disseminating the most effective practice.

34 We will expand the provision made by strong and excellent providers to meet local needs. New providers, which have the capacity to meet the standards we expect for our learners, will be encouraged. Where appropriate, we will support mergers and strategic alliances to create strong providers. We will cease to fund provision which has no reasonable prospect of meeting minimum standards.

35 Some area wide inspections have identified the need for changes in the way learning for 16-19 year olds is organised, and for the creation of distinct provision. Where appropriate, we will work with partners to develop proposals for new sixth form colleges, sixth form centres in colleges or new school sixth forms. Reorganisation proposals will be developed on a case by case basis, in the light of the available evidence.

36 We will work with Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Sector Skills Councils and providers to implement the Government's Skills Strategy. We will expect providers' 3 year development plans to set out the actions they will take to meet skills needs, linking clearly with LSC Local Strategic Plans and the Frameworks for Regional Employment Skills Action (FRESAs). Colleges and other FE providers are required to set targets to improve employer engagement within their 3 year development plans.

37 We will extend the successful Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) network from 155 to 400 CoVEs by 2006, and encourage their work with higher education on the development and delivery of Foundation Degrees and on skills and knowledge transfer to business.

38 We are currently exploring new ways of planning and co-ordinating adult skills funding between LLSCs and RDAs. We established 4 pilots in April 2003 in the NE, SE, East and NW. Jobcentre Plus will also become involved from April 2004. These pilots explore opportunities for partners to better plan and align funds in order to increase employer demand for skills, improve the responsiveness of provision to business needs and equip adults with relevant skills and competencies within a coherent framework of education and training opportunities.

Aim 2: Excellent providers are recognised, rewarded and share their good practice

39 We will implement premium funding rates for excellent colleges and other FE providers from 2004/05, develop lighter touch performance monitoring arrangements for Learning and Skills Beacons in 2003/04 and fund Learning and Skills Beacons and CoVEs to support dissemination activities. We anticipate that by 2005/06, 12% of learners will be in colleges and FE providers which achieve premium rate funding. We will also work with the DfES to review and extend the arrangements for Learning and Skills Beacons across the sector.

40 We will support the inspectorates in their review of the Common Inspection Framework. In particular, we will support the development of inspections based on an analysis of risk such that the weight and frequency of inspections are appropriate to their intended purpose. Together with the Adult Learning Inspectorate we will investigate scheduling inspections to address LSC concerns and priorities, and focusing inspection on particular aspects of a provider's work. A joint ALI/LSC working group will be established to clarify and strengthen the role of the link inspector within the Quality Improvement Strategy.

41 We have set targets for improvements in inspection grades. By the end of the inspection cycle, we anticipate that the proportion of top grades (1 and 2) for leadership and management and areas of learning will have increased by 3 percentage points in colleges and 6 percentage points in work based learning.

42 Good, indeed, outstanding, practice can often be identified within colleges and other providers which do not have the status of Learning and Skills Beacons. We will support the identification of good and outstanding practice by working closely with the Standards Unit, Inspectorates, the Centre for Excellence in Leadership and other key partners to disseminate good practice through local and regional networks and partnerships. The Standards Unit will lead on good practice in teaching and the curriculum, the Centre for Excellence in Leadership on leadership and management and the LSC on organisation development including quality assurance, self assessment and development planning.

43 We will maximise opportunities to learn from excellent and good practice by publishing new good practice guides, reports and information packs and by creating an easily searchable good practice area within the LSC's website. The LSC's website will contain links to the database of good practice identified in the course of inspection being developed by the Adult Learning Inspectorate.

44 Further opportunities to identify and learn from good practice arise in the development projects funded by the LSC through the Local Intervention and Development Fund and through development funding associated with

the Level 2/3 Targets project, 14-19 flexibility, modern apprenticeships and Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships. We will encourage action research approaches to development projects in order to support professional development, generate good practice case studies, build capacity for continuous improvement and evaluate the impact of development funding.

45 In 2002/03, we piloted light touch audit arrangements with 20 colleges regarded as having robust and reliable management information systems. We have now extended light touch audit to over 90 colleges.

Aim 3: The quality of provision across the learning and skills sector improves and becomes consistently strong

46 We will secure improvements in national success rates by supporting and challenging providers which are in the performance review categories *acceptable* or *some concerns* to improve. We will do this by requiring providers to set targets for success rates in 3 year development plans which are challenging but achievable.

47 Our targets are that overall success rates in the country will show major improvement: in colleges success rates will have risen to 72%¹, in 2005/06 from 59% in 2000/01: in FE provision made by local adult education institutions, success rates will have risen to 67% in 2005/06, from 56% in 2000/01, and in Work Based Learning success rates will have improved to 48% in 2005/06, from 36% in 2001/02.

48 Providers are required to produce 3 year development plans for agreement by their local LSC, built around 3 goals:

- to increase customer focus
- to deliver consistently high quality teaching and promote effective learning
- to develop the capability of their workforce.

49 Progress towards the goals will be expressed in the form of headline targets. Development plans, for colleges and other providers of FE, for example, will contain headline targets for:

- learner numbers
- employer engagement
- success rates
- professional qualifications for teachers, lecturers and trainers.

50 A further target is that by 2006, 90% of full time and 60% of part time teachers in colleges will hold a professional teaching qualification.

¹ To be informed by analysis of college 3-year development plans which will provide up to date data

51 Detailed guidance for 3 year development plans for colleges and for other providers are contained in <http://3dp.lsc.gov.uk/guidance.cfm>. We will work in partnership with Ufi/learnirect, specialist colleges for learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, adult learning providers and higher education institutions with FE provision to agree suitable measures and targets where they do not already exist.

52 We have created incentives and actions for colleges and other providers through the funding mechanism. From 2004/05, colleges and FE providers which are not in the performance review category *serious concerns* will receive either standard or premium funding; FE providers in serious concerns will receive an inflation only increase in funding. Targeted support will also be available, where it is appropriate.

53 In many providers, success rates vary widely between different parts of their provision. To achieve our third aim, local LSC quality managers, supported by Quality Link Advisers, will ensure that the providers in the performance review categories *strong*, *acceptable* and *some concerns* have development plans which demonstrate how the providers will improve performance in those areas of provision where success rates are relatively low.

54 Progress will be monitored through the performance review process, and appropriate actions taken. Actions will vary according to local need, but will generally take the form of consultancy, sharing and embedding good practice, especially on improving completion and achievement rates, twinning and benchmarking arrangements, action research and support for post inspection action planning. We will also spend £10 million on 'retention agents' to raise the retention rates of 16-18 year olds on level 2 programmes.

55 We will support the improvement efforts of providers through the LSC funded *Support for Success* programme to be delivered by the Learning and Skills Development Agency. The programme will provide for information and advice help lines and information packs, regional quality improvement networks, the creation of an extended consultancy resource, action research projects and training for curriculum team leaders. The programme will have a strong regional dimension, driven by local LSCs. By 2004, all providers will have access to local and regional quality improvement networks to identify and share good practice.

56 The breadth and depth of benchmarking data which are available to assist providers in their self-assessment and 3 year development planning will be extended to include additional benchmarking data:

- for college performance, for example by area of learning
- for work based learning performance, by learning programme type, area of learning and type of provider
- for the proportion of the teaching workforce in colleges holding professional teaching qualifications.

57 We will provide support to colleges and providers in their efforts to use management information and benchmarking data for improvement purposes. In particular, we will support providers in their use of benchmarking data on success rates.

58 We will promote health and safety by a new strategic emphasis on outcomes for learners through our 'safe learner' initiative. This implies an innovative and more rigorous approach to provider self assessment of health and safety. With our partners, we will explore ways of creating provider health and safety networks to share good practice. Our over-riding responsibility is to the learner. Where any shortcomings are identified on health and safety, we will take immediate action to protect the learner's safety and welfare.

59 The DfES leads on the development of an overall departmental strategy for e-learning and on policy development for post 16 e-learning. The LSC will work with the DfES to develop a transformational programme to ensure the sector can get the maximum benefit from the huge investment being made in ICT and on line content. Together we will identify gaps in the provision of interactive online and other e-learning materials to support teaching and learning. In partnership with the DfES, we will take forward the college online proposals by initiating a major programme of materials development and create a portal 'National Learning Network Online' for all post 16 providers to gain access to existing and new high quality learning materials, support and advice. We will continue our programmes of staff development for teachers to ensure that they can use the e-learning materials effectively and provide them with the tools and skills to produce and share their own high quality materials where appropriate.

60 We expect providers to respond to feedback from learners. We will make widely available the methodology we use in our National Learner Satisfaction Survey to support them in this process. Colleges and providers which use the national learner survey methodology can benchmark their own findings against national data, in order to identify priorities for improvement.

Aim 4: The weakest providers achieve at least minimum levels of performance

61 Providers whose success rates are below the floor target will need to show how they will meet or exceed floor targets in their 3 year development plans. Progress towards meeting or exceeding floor targets for success rates will be monitored closely by local LSC staff. If necessary, the LSC will intervene. Interventions will be in inverse proportion to the progress being made by a provider. At one end of the spectrum, interventions will take the form of the support programme outlined above; at the other end, we will cease to fund provision which has no reasonable prospect of meeting floor targets.

62 The milestones we will use to assess the achievement of this objective are that:

- by 2005/06, all FE and 90% of work based learning providers will have improved success rates sufficiently to exceed or meet floor targets
- the proportions of learners in colleges and WBL providers in the performance review category serious concerns are reduced by 3 and 2.5 percentage points, respectively, by Spring 2006, compared with Spring 2002
- the proportion of unsatisfactory inspection grades for colleges is reduced by 3 percentage points by the end of the inspection cycle (2004/05) compared with 2001/02
- the proportion of unsatisfactory inspection grades for WBL providers is reduced by 6 percentage points by the end of the inspection cycle (2004/05) compared with 2001/02.

Aim 5: The capacity and capability of the LSC are improved to deliver *Success for All* and the Quality Improvement Strategy

63 We will reshape the LSC and ensure that our staffing profile changes to reflect the responsibilities set out in *Success for All* and the Quality Improvement Strategy. Reshaping will involve reducing the overall number of posts, creating a more efficient organisation by automating and streamlining processes, upskilling existing employees, recruiting specialist and professional expertise from our partner organisations and developing more strategic partnerships with providers to deliver our joint agenda.

64 We have already refined and streamlined our performance review process. We have undertaken further work to improve the consistency of performance review assessments by strengthening moderation arrangements and introducing a procedure to resolve disputed assessments. We will continue to review the process.

65 A training and development programme for staff to deliver the LSC's improvement responsibilities is being implemented in 2003. Short-term secondments, staff exchanges and work shadowing between the LSC and providers will be encouraged. Our specific goal is that LSC staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding both to help providers improve quality and to make judgements on the progress which providers are making. We will also develop a toolkit for LSC staff which will provide a single guide and access point to relevant research, guidance, procedures and other relevant quality improvement documentation.

66 A Standards Unit Regional Network will advise on local action to deliver new approaches to teaching and learning and associated staff development for teachers and trainers. We will work closely with this network through our regional networks for LSC quality improvement staff.

67 We have strengthened the two-way communication process between local LSCs and the national office through the introduction of the Quality Link Adviser role. We will also establish specialist networks for LSC staff to share good practice in the different sectors of provision which we fund.

68 To ensure that our strategy is based on robust evidence, we will work with the Success for All Research Working Group to research effective practice both here and abroad and undertake reviews of existing research, focusing on the implications of this research for policy and practice. We will monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Quality Improvement Strategy and undertake longer term strategic research to inform its future development. We will also identify and disseminate good practice in the quality improvement work of the LSC and publish reports and guides.

69 We will develop the quality improvement element of the LSC's website to support the improvement efforts of providers and the LSC itself. The new 'investing in excellence and good practice' pages will contain easily searchable case studies, reports, guides and tools.

New measures of success

70 We recognise that our framework for quality and success is not yet complete. More work is needed to develop a national system of measures of success that is clear, consistent and focused on learner achievement.

71 To recognise the value of learner achievements and enable better comparisons to be made within and between different types of provider, we will work with the DfES, the Inspectorates and other partners to develop a national system of performance measures that is clear, consistent and focused on learner achievement. This work has already begun, with advice from key partners, and we will publish proposals for consultation by November 2003. We will work with key partners to explore ways of comparing distance travelled, or value added, in different types of provision and explore with the DfES ways of measuring value for money across different types of provider and provision

72 Ways of recognising and recording learners' achievements in non-accredited Adult and Community Learning and other provision such as learndirect have been developed and will be piloted in 2003/04. We will also conduct a feasibility study on the collection of learner destination data and, subject to the outcomes of the study, investigate the use of this data as a measure of success.

Sector specific strategies

73 There are over 4000 providers in the learning and skills sector in 5 broad categories: colleges, adult and community learning providers, work based learning providers, school sixth forms and learndirect. Different categories of provider have distinct histories, strengths and weaknesses. Within the general approach of the Quality Improvement Strategy, we have developed intervention and support strategies tailored to different categories of provider.

Colleges

74 Learner success rates in colleges improved dramatically in 2001/02. Much of the improvement was associated with the implementation of Curriculum 2000 and will not recur. The occurrence of unsatisfactory inspection grades 4 and 5 has reduced, but so has the occurrence of inspection grades 1 and 2. The overall picture is of rising standards, but continuing variations in quality, both between and within colleges.

75 To address the issue of internal variations in quality, we have designed a consultancy based support programme for colleges in the Performance Review categories satisfactory and some concerns, which will support colleges efforts to raise standards. The consultancy is delivered through the team of specialists recruited and quality assured by the Learning and Skills Development Agency through the LSC funded Support for Success programme.

76 We will identify the *strong* colleges which have the potential to become excellent. Supported by national office staff, local LSC quality managers will work with these colleges to identify actions within their 3 year development plan and appropriate to the circumstances of each college. Our target is that by Spring 2006, the proportion of learners in colleges which satisfy the criteria of excellence will have increased to 12%, from 2% in 2001.

77 We will challenge and support the weakest colleges to improve through our Intervention Strategy backed by a dedicated element of the LID fund. If necessary, we shall make full use of our intervention powers which extend from the provision of additional senior management support, to the appointment of additional governors and, in the most extreme cases, to a proposal to the Secretary of State for the closure of a college.

78 In many colleges in serious concerns, the primary issue relates to financial health. We will support colleges in the weakest category of financial health – category 'C' – through an independent assessment of their organisation, systems and processes. This review will be conducted by experienced specialists. It will identify how the college should address the underlying causes of poor financial health.

79 **Post 16 provision in schools:** The Council requires assurance that all of the provision it funds across the post 16 sector is of a good quality. However, there are a number of factors which influence the approach to the quality assurance of post 16 provision in schools.

80 The Council's duty overlaps with the responsibilities of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and school governing bodies. The Council's approach to assuring the quality of post 16 provision in schools, therefore is to recognise and build on existing arrangements. To minimise the bureaucratic burden on schools, it is neither feasible or desirable to introduce an additional layer of monitoring and intervention on schools – instead we will work with local authorities. A Memorandum of Understanding has been developed with the Local Government Associate (LGA). The Council will collect some information on schools' performance, including attainment and inspection outcomes. We are working with the LGA in developing practice following 14-19 area inspections.

Work based learning

81 Learner success rates in work based learning are low by comparison with other types of provision, although improvements are being made. Inspection grades are improving as well, but from a low base. Over 40% of grades for leadership and management are unsatisfactory (grades 4 and 5); over a third of inspection grades for areas of learning are unsatisfactory.

82 We will revise the guidance on self-assessment and development planning and continue to make consultancy support available to those providers who are not able to prepare rigorous and self-critical self-assessment reports and/or effective development plans.

83 The LSC will provide training for all WBL providers on the tools and techniques for improving retention and achievement and on the Common Inspection Framework and its interpretation.

84 We will provide specific training for all providers and appropriate LSC staff on initial assessment and the delivery of literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes and raise awareness of new national standards and core curricula.

85 The LSC will encourage all providers' staff to work towards an appropriate qualification.

86 We will focus our provision on high quality providers and will terminate the contracts of those providers where standards are unacceptably low and where there is no reasonable prospect of improvement.

Adult and community learning

87 Inspections of adult and community learning by the Adult Learning Inspectorate have shown that much teaching and learning is satisfactory and some is good. They have often concluded, however, that there is inadequate provision overall. Grades awarded for leadership and management are often poor. Weaknesses in the provision and management of information and in quality assurance arrangements often contribute to the poor grades. The LSC's performance review system does not yet yield information about the quality of the provision. It is being extended to include adult and community learning from the end of 2003.

88 To strengthen provision that is satisfactory and further strengthen good provision we will implement a wide ranging programme of activities. We will develop specific guidance on the three year development plans and promote its efficacy as a quality improvement tool. We will issue guidance on how the plans link with self-assessment reports.

89 We will commission a comprehensive guide to the training opportunities, training organisations, consultancy resources, support networks and agencies that promote improvement in ACL and make it available to providers and LSC staff.

90 We will build on the regional demonstration projects to run training events and create case studies of quality improvement in ACL. Also, we will prepare a national, regional and local training programme designed to address weaknesses in quality assurance, self-assessment and the management of contracted provision. We will publish guidance on target setting and performance monitoring tailored to ACL providers. We will promote new systems for recognising and rewarding achievements in non-accredited adult learning provision.

91 During autumn 2003, we will evaluate and review the current arrangements and agree the shape of future support programmes.

Ufi/learndirect

92 A recent review of learndirect provision has identified a number of issues concerning the quality of provision offered to learners including the effective planning and monitoring of learning, raising the standards in the provision of on-line learner support and the use of learner feedback. Many learning centres have focused on learner numbers without necessarily addressing the issues around the quality of learner provision.

93 Since the ALI inspection of Ufi learndirect provision started in January 2002, 6 of the 27 hubs inspected have been declared inadequate. 4 of these hubs were inspected in the first few months of the inspection programme.

94 As a result of the initial inspection outcomes, a Memorandum of Agreement was drawn up in the summer of 2002. This clarified the

responsibilities of local LSCs and Ufi Ltd with respect to quality issues and general management aspects. Ufi Ltd is responsible for the improvement of the quality of provision if found unsatisfactory. Local LSCs are responsible for monitoring provision and can offer assistance, including financial support, where necessary to hubs. Local LSCs can, if appropriate, terminate a contract for the supply of the service.

95 As a result of the change over of Ufi funding which will be implemented in Autumn 2004, the LSC is piloting refinements to the arrangements for the performance review process which will be necessary to monitor and improve the quality of provision.

Specialist colleges for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

96 Inspections of specialist colleges for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have shown that some teaching and learning is satisfactory, but much needs to be improved. Inspectors have often concluded that there is inadequate provision overall. Grades awarded for leadership and management are often poor. The LSC's performance review system does not yet include these colleges/providers but will in the future.

97 In the immediate future, self-assessment reports and three year development plans will contribute to the creation of agreed agendas for improvement. The LSC will develop a framework for improving satisfactory provision and commission projects that help providers improve in areas of identified need.

98 The LSC will increase specialist colleges' familiarity with good practices by making arrangements which assist their integration into local networks in order to help them improve performance.

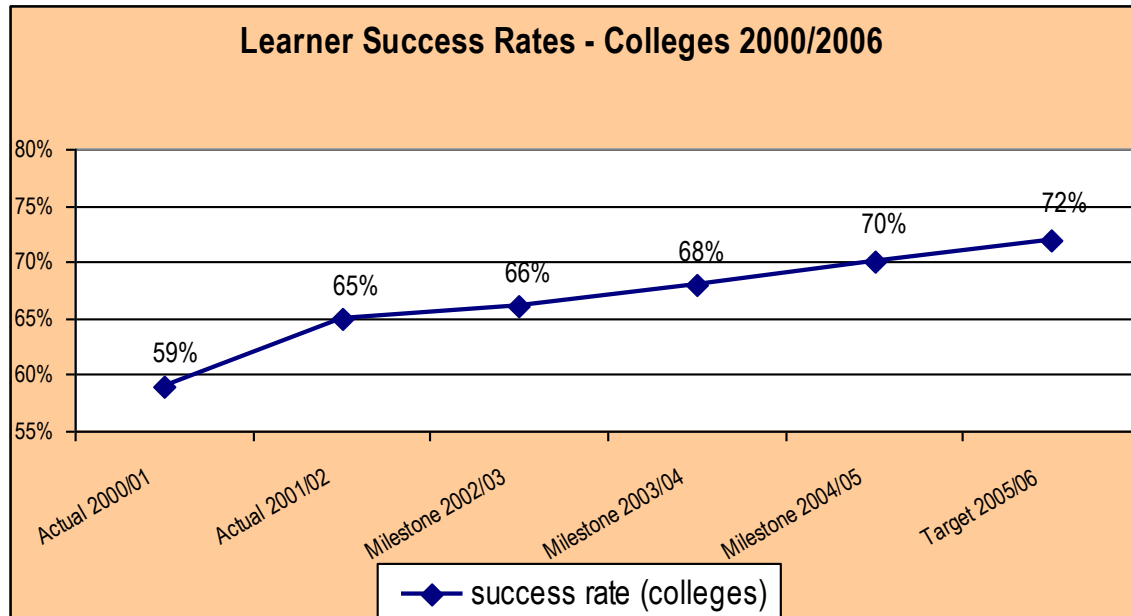
99 To strengthen the provision that is satisfactory or better, we will help colleges to improve their self-assessment processes and the rigour of their reports through the creation of a team of consultants and advisers. We will prepare colleges for the introduction of twice yearly performance reviews. We will integrate colleges into regional and local quality improvement networks and support local quality improvement networks organised by the colleges.

100 We will intervene when provision is poor. If it remains so over a period, we will make alternative arrangements.

Targets and Milestones

101 Key national targets for improvements in success rates and milestones for performance review, inspection and learner satisfaction are set out below. Work is being undertaken to assess the current performance of Ufi/learndirect hubs and targets and milestones will be set.

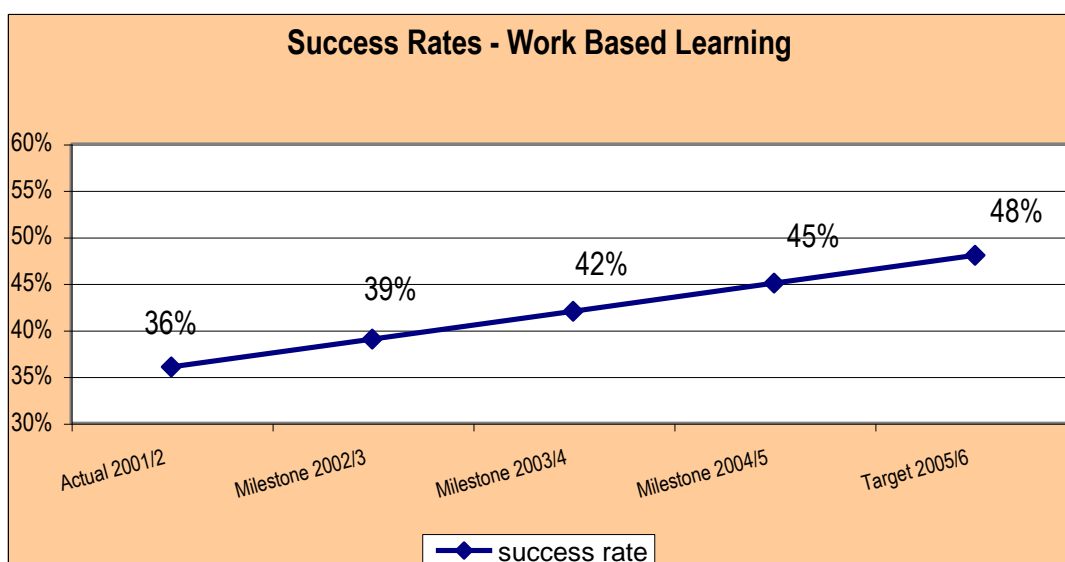
102 The national target for improvements in success rates in colleges is an increase of 13 percentage points by 2005/06 compared with 2000/01. The measure of success rates in colleges is qualifications achieved as a proportion of qualifications started, excluding internal transfers. Milestones and targets are set out in the graph below:



NOTE: 72% to be informed by analysis of college 3-year development plans which will provide up to date data.

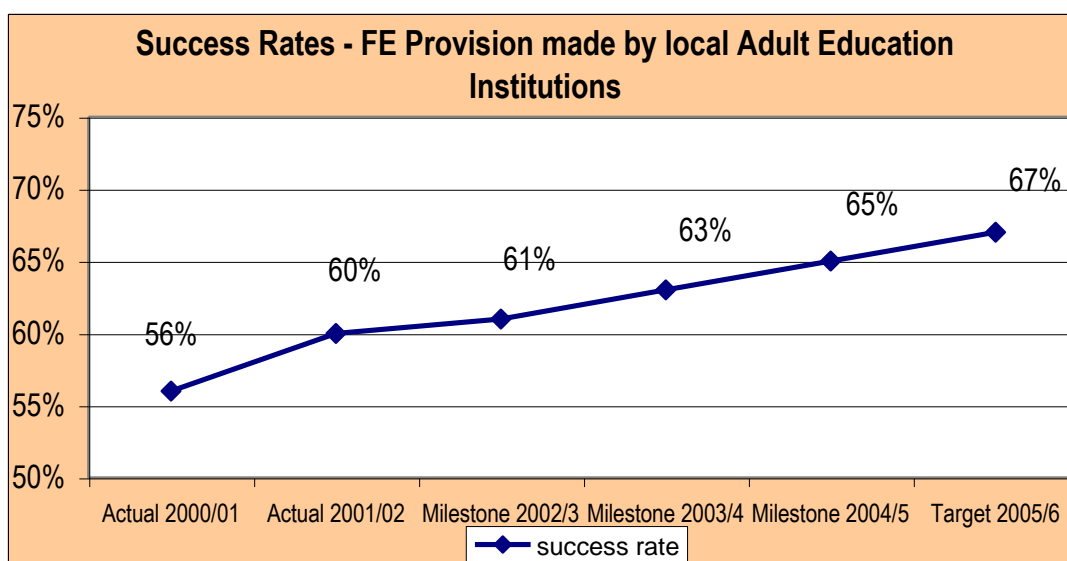
103 By meeting this target, learners in colleges in 2005/06 will be achieving over half a million more of their qualification aims, (compared with 2000/01) without assuming any additional increase in participation.

104 The national target for improvements in success rates in work based learning is 12 percentage points by 2005/06 compared with 2001/02. The measure of success rates in work based learning is the proportion of learners who have achieved a modern apprenticeship framework or a full NVQ, by the time they leave their programme. Targets and milestones are set out in the graph below.



105 Compared with 2001/02, by meeting this target, work based learners will be achieving around 25 thousand NVQs and frameworks in 2005/06, without assuming any additional increase in participation.

106 The equivalent target for improvements in success rates in FE provision made by local Adult Education Institutions is 11 percentage points by 2005/06 compared with 2000/01. The measure is qualifications achieved as a proportion of qualification started, excluding internal transfers. Baselines and milestones are set out in the graph below.



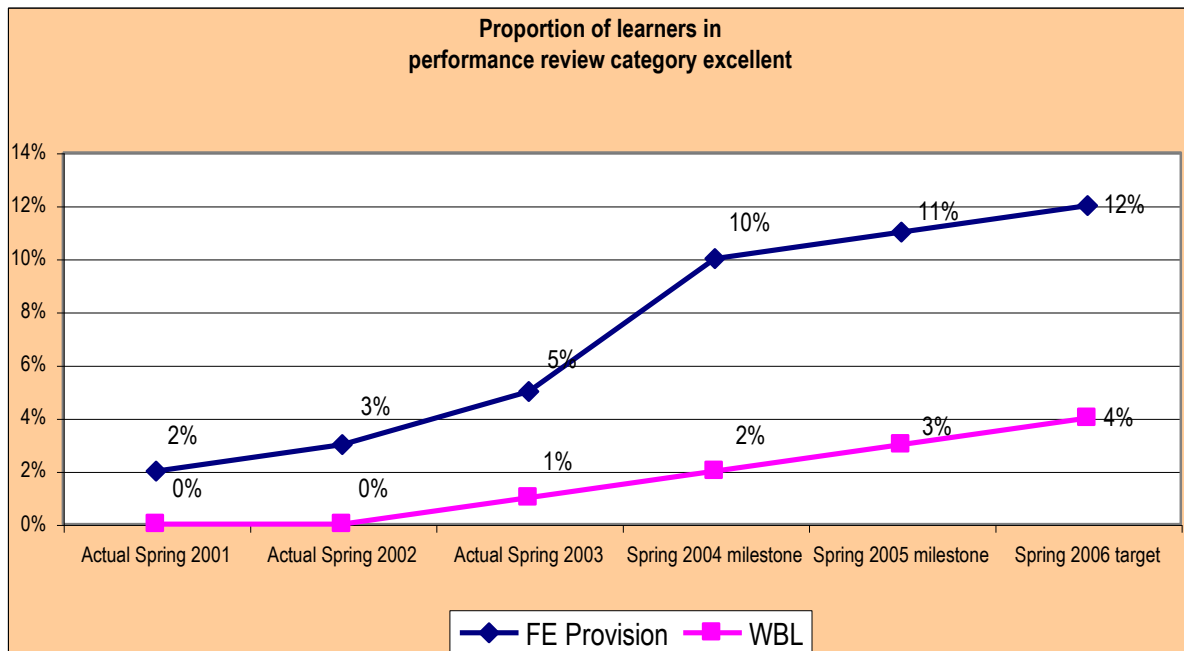
107 By meeting this target, learners in FE provision made by Local Adult Education Institutions in 2005/06 will be achieving around 50 thousand more of their qualification aims (compared with 2000/01), without assuming any additional increase in participation.

Performance Review

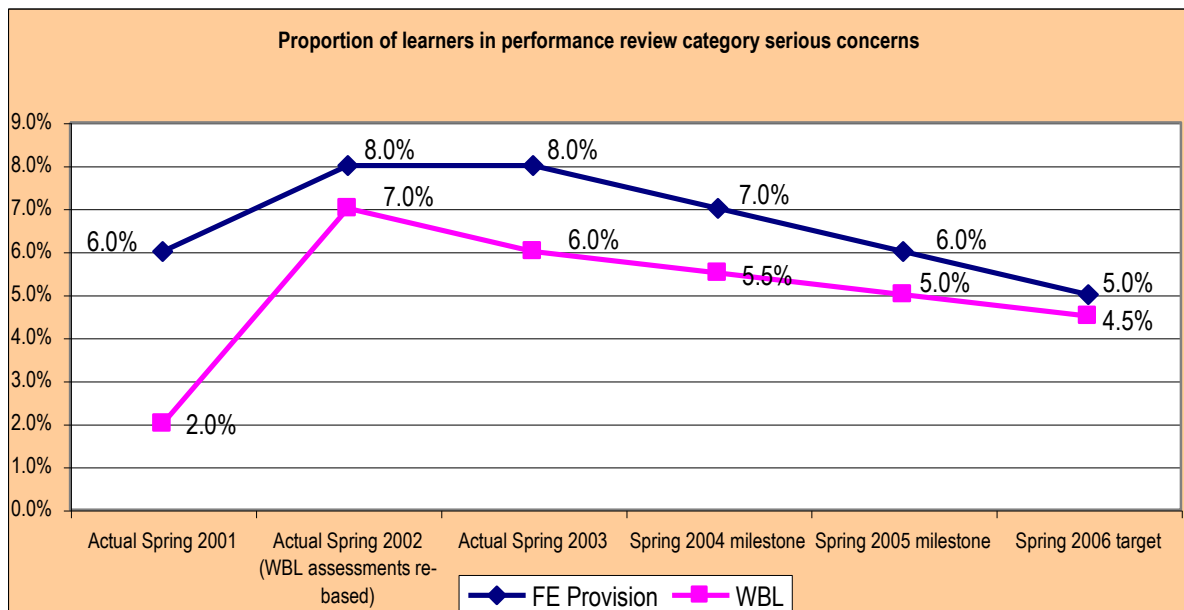
108 Performance review is the LSC's key mechanism for monitoring and assessing provider progress, stimulating providers' improvement efforts and guiding our interventions. We will ensure that the refined performance review process is more robust, rigorous and consistent in its application. More LSC funded providers will be brought within the scope of the performance review process.

109 As a contribution towards improving success rates we intend to work with our partners to increase the proportion of learners in excellent and strong colleges and work based learning providers and reduce the proportion of learners in providers in the performance review category serious concerns. As other providers are brought within the scope of performance review we will set appropriate targets for each of them. Our

milestones and targets for performance review for 2003/06 are set out below:

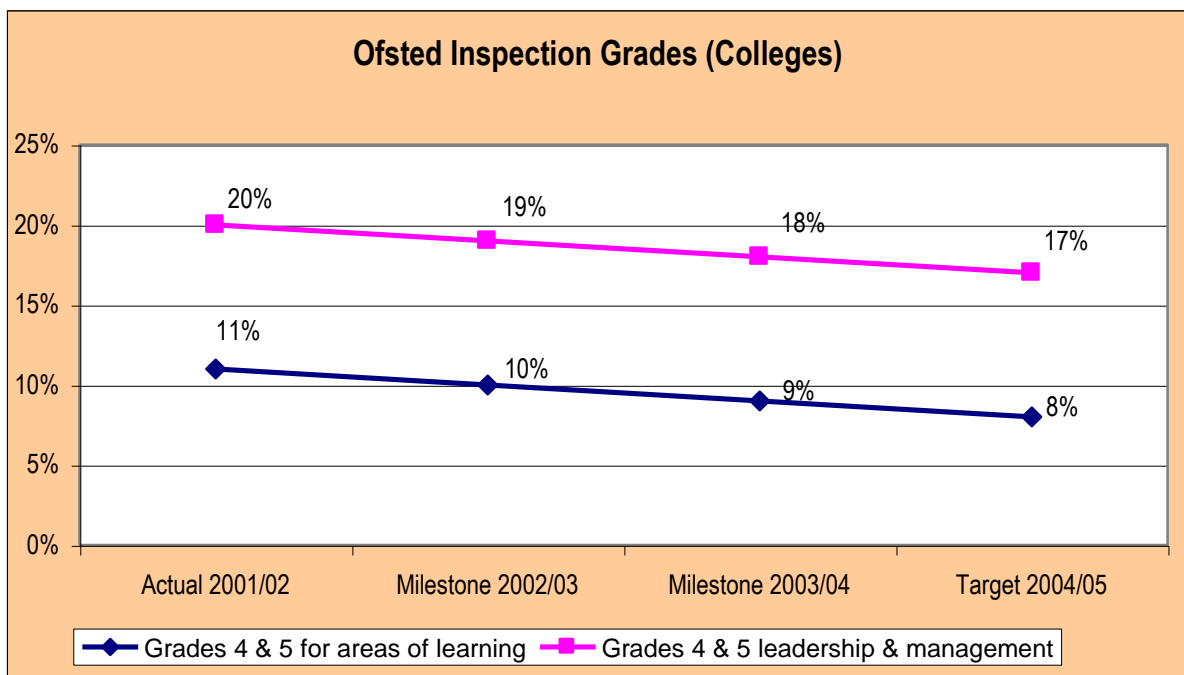
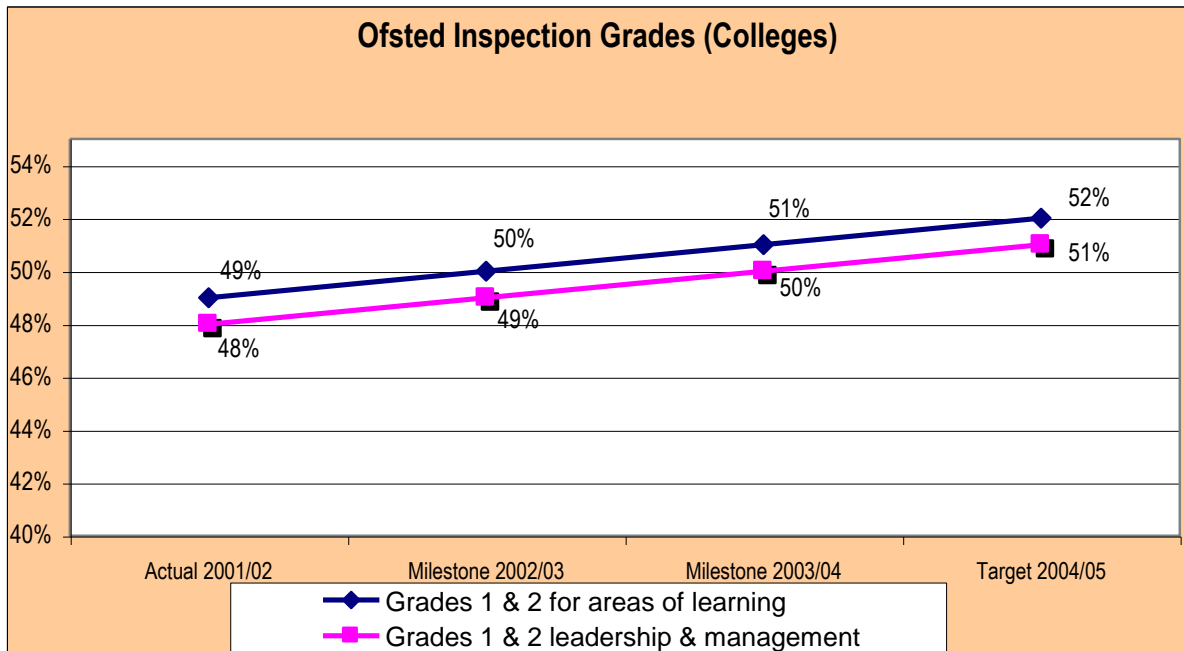


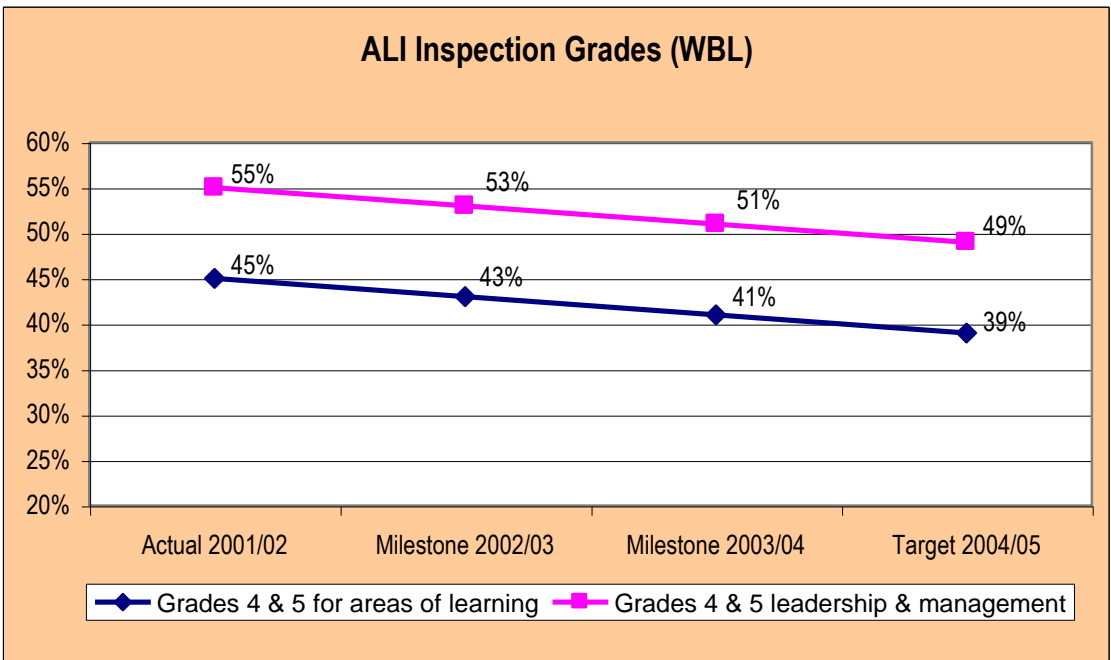
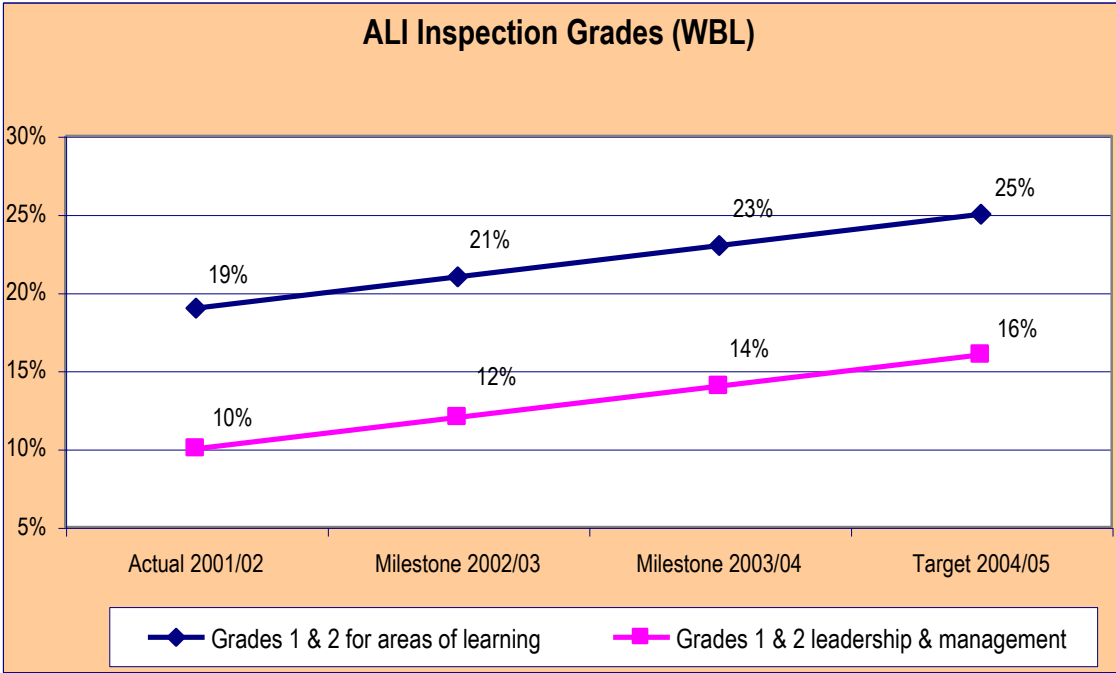
NOTE: Revised criteria of excellence for FE providers implemented autumn 2003



Inspections

110 The work to build capacity in providers and improve patterns of provision should result in an improvement in inspection grades. We have identified milestones and targets for such improvements to the end of the current inspection round in 2004/05. These are set out below:





Learner and employer surveys

111 We will publish the annual learner satisfaction survey and use it to guide national policy and strategic developments to improve quality. We will also develop and implement the first national employer satisfaction survey and publish a report in 2004. The findings from the first learner satisfaction survey indicate fairly high baseline levels of satisfaction; over 90% of learners were at least fairly satisfied and over 60% stating they were either very satisfied or extremely satisfied. The following milestones are proposed for an improvement in learner satisfaction rates. They will be reconsidered in the light of further survey findings.

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Learners stating very or extremely satisfied	63%	64%	65%
Learners stating at least fairly satisfied	92%	92%	92%

In addition to these headline milestones, we also intend to publish supplementary information showing the satisfaction rates for the key aspects which contribute to overall satisfaction, such as quality of teaching, quality of learner support, quality of classroom management etc.

Risk Factors

112 The main risk factors for the Quality Improvement Strategy are:

- slow rates of change and improvement
- divergent policy initiatives
- funding
- the capability of LSC

These risk factors and mitigating actions are discussed below.

113 Quality improvement, particularly in the college sector, has had a high government priority for at least 10 years, since the publication of the National Audit Office report *Unfinished Business*. Progress has been slow, however, in generating improvement.

114 The principal mitigating action is that the present strategy is based on a shared agenda, developed in partnership with providers and founded on a commitment to secure real improvements for learners. It is being delivered at a local level, where local knowledge and closer relationships are developing.

115 Contradictory or divergent policies which emphasise variously, growth, competition, efficiency gains, partnership, specialisation, mergers and quality would pose a risk to the strategy.

116 To minimise this risk, the current strategy forms part of the LSC's overall corporate plan, is intended to apply equitably across the learning and skills sector and is located at the heart of the Government's *Success for All* programme.

117 Almost all of the resources to support quality improvement efforts of providers are contained, quite properly, in the core funding of provision. The major additional source of funding is the LID Fund, which amounts to some £245 million in 2003-04. LID is designed to fulfil a number of purposes in addition to quality improvement. Local LSCs have a wide discretion in how they allocate the LID Fund. New demands could give rise to the risk that there may be insufficient funds to deliver the quality improvement strategy.

118 Supported by the national office, Local LSCs will minimise this risk by identifying the costs within their local plans of improving quality and raising learners' success rates.

119 The Quality Improvement Strategy requires a step change improvement in the quality of provision. In particular, it requires a change in orientation within the LSC from audit to improvement, and the acquisition of high levels of skill and context knowledge in order to develop strategic partnerships and collaborative working and support, and where necessary

challenge, providers. Currently, such skills and knowledge are not always readily available across the whole LSC.

120 Actions are being taken to minimise this risk. Local LSCs will identify the need for internal and external staffing resources. Training and development is being provided, as appropriate, to local office staff. The LSC is contracting with the Learning and Skills Development Agency to create a pool of quality assured improvement experts. The national office is monitoring and supporting local LSCs in the implementation of the strategy.

Review and evaluation

121 We will review and evaluate the implementation of our strategy through research studies, seminars involving providers, the inspectorates, the DfES and other stakeholders and partners and external evaluation of the effectiveness of our delivery programme.

122 We will monitor progress towards our improvement targets:

- at provider level through performance review and the monitoring of performance against floor targets and the headline targets contained in provider 3 year development plans
- at local level through performance review, post area wide inspection action plans and through local LSC targets for improvements in success rates
- at national level through the Individual Learner Record (ILR), the learner and employer satisfaction surveys, performance reviews and inspection grades.

123 We will update the strategy annually, in the light of progress towards targets and feedback from our research studies, seminars and external evaluations.

Consultation

124 We are indebted to providers, inspectors, the DfES, and other stakeholders and partners who participated in 8 expert seminars during September/October 2002 and 8 seminars to plan implementation of the Quality Improvement Strategy in November/December 2002.

125 The consultation draft of the Quality Improvement Strategy was published on the LSC website and by the Association of Colleges and Association of Learning Providers on their websites. Most local LSCs have commented on the draft and many shared the draft with their providers and partners. 119 organisations and individuals responded to and made comments on the consultation draft. The consultation revealed substantial support for the aims of the strategy and for the delivery actions which were proposed to implement the strategy. A full report on the consultation has been published on the LSC website – [click to download](#)

http://quality.wwt.co.uk/quality/docs/Report_on_the_Consultation_Exercise.doc

126 Two consultation circulars on the implementation of *Success for All* were published in January 2003. Over 1000 delegates attended eighteen regional consultation events and over 300 colleges, providers and other organisations made written responses as part of the consultation process. The consultation revealed substantial support for the proposals in the circulars. A full report on the consultation has been published on the LSC website. Click to download <http://3dp.lsc.gov.uk/docs/Circular-0301.doc> and <http://3dp.lsc.gov.uk/docs/Circular-0302.doc>

Timetable

- ❖ Guidance published for local LSCs and colleges on development plans, floor and improvement targets, overall assessment of FE provider performance for funding purposes and different FE provider funding levels according to performance **(May 2003)**
- ❖ Provider budgets for 2004/05 and 2005/06 agreed **(August 2003)**
- ❖ Propose a range of new success measures and commence consultation **(Autumn 2003)**
- ❖ LSC Widening Adult Participation Strategy published **(Autumn 2003)**
- ❖ Provider 3 year development plans agreed, subject to funding, by LSC **(Autumn 2003)**
- ❖ Confirm learner number targets in 3 year development plans **(By 31 October 2003)**
- ❖ Establish a strong network of Learning and Skills Beacons **(2004)**
- ❖ Progress of QIS reported and further actions identified in 2004-05 Local Annual Plans **(By March 2004)**
- ❖ Publish new framework for measuring success
- ❖ Providers complete reviews of their mission **(April 2004)**
- ❖ Progress of QIS reported and further actions identified in 2005-06 Local Strategic Plans **(By March 2005)**
- ❖ Initial launch of new success measures **(By March 2005)**
- ❖ Every local area will have completed a Strategic Area Review **(By March 2005)**
- ❖ Providers meet or exceed floor targets and agreed improvement targets **(2006)**
- ❖ 400 CoVEs up and running **(By 2006)**
- ❖ Best practice standards established for planning adult learning **(2006)**
- ❖ National improvement targets for success rates are met **(2006)**
- ❖ 90% of full time and 60% of part time teachers in colleges hold an initial teaching qualification **(2006)**.