



Leading learning and skills

The Black Country Learning and Skills Council Annual Plan 2006-07

May 2006

Of interest to National, Regional and
Local Learning and Skills Colleagues

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Our Vision

The future of the Black Country lies in a thriving economy where knowledge is a key element of what is sold. This can only be achieved with a highly skilled local workforce. Yet the current situation is that far too many local people lack any qualifications whatsoever and far too few possess higher level skills. Without turning this situation around there will be serious limitations on the number of prosperous businesses and individuals in the Black Country.

Nationally 15 per cent of adults have no qualification. In the Black Country this figure is 22 per cent. Nationally 25 per cent of adults have higher level qualifications. In the Black Country it is 16.8 per cent. Improving these figures is a key local challenge for the Learning and Skills Council and its partners.

Significant progress has been made. For young people achievement rates in 5 A*-Cs at GCSE results have risen. Full time participation in 16-18 education has risen by around 260 learners and each year a higher proportion of those who participate are succeeding. Adults have benefited greatly from the introduction of the Employer Training Pilot which reached over 5,000 learners in its first year of operation. A much higher proportion of adults are following purposeful qualifications leading to nationally recognised qualifications.

Providers and partners have achieved greater levels of participation and have increased both the success rates and the value and recognition of the qualifications achieved. This improvement gives a platform for the huge challenges we face, nevertheless much remains to be done.

One of the key challenges we need to take action on is the variation in performance between providers. Half the sixth forms in the Black Country improved their achievement rates at Advanced level. However, half did not or went backwards. In some cases the reason for the reduction in achievement rate was because of appropriate changes in the nature of the provision. This did not hold true in all cases. The LSC locally is increasingly robust in its monitoring and challenging of the progress.

Of equally stark concern was the variation in performance between further education colleges and performance within those colleges. Some of the variation in the participation rates and success rates between providers could be accounted for because of differences in the communities those institutions serve. Too much of it is not. The LSC and the colleges themselves have been increasingly focusing their attention on the reasons behind these variations. We are starting to see the positive impact of this attention on both quality and participation.

The same focus is in evidence in work-based learning. A key achievement during the year was meeting a challenging participation target for work-based learning and a significant step forward in the work-based learning success rates. The current year will see a continuation of our determination to drive up the success rates in work-based learning. Each individual who succeeds on a work-based learning programme represents a real asset for the future of the Black Country. Each person who fails to complete a programme represents not just a concern for

the future of the Black Country but a real concern for the future of that individual and their family.

A real focus on the needs of the individual lies at the heart of one of the most important planks of this year's LSC plan. A Black Country-wide 14-19 strategy, called 'Enjoy and Achieve,' has been adopted by the Black Country Consortium and key partners, such as the local authorities and Connexions. Effective implementation of this ten point plan will make a real difference to the motivation of young people by ensuring that they are closely monitored and strongly supported through each stage of their progress on a high quality programme that meets their individual needs. Every child is an individual who matters and we intend that young people should enjoy their programme of learning. They also need to be well-equipped to achieve their goals and the qualifications they gain need to be of widely recognised value.

Every adult is also an individual who matters. The reason why the Employer Training Pilot has been such a success is that it has focused on the needs of the employer and the employee. Independent skills brokers have helped employers to gain access to flexible provision that suits the needs of their particular company and this has enabled a lot more local people to develop their skills in their workplace. As an example of what was achieved, a food manufacturing company in the Black Country employing over 350 local people, half of whom come from a wide variety of ethnic minorities, has used the scheme to provide English language skills for employees on the night shift and also to provide supervisory management skills for employees progressing through the company.

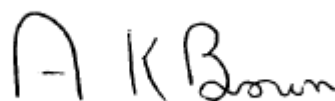
This example illustrates the kind of practical difference that the work of the LSC can make both to the lives of individuals and to local employers in developing the skills they need to compete successfully in an increasingly skilled economy.

This annual plan is based on an analysis of the direction and development of the local economy. It identifies the practical actions the local LSC will take in collaboration with its partners to support the transformation to a knowledge economy. It seeks to identify the key local challenges and to articulate how local provision will need to change in order to respond to those challenges. Crucial to this is one fundamental principle. Provision of learning and skills in the Black Country will be determined by the changing needs of the local community and its employers, not by historical patterns of funding or provision. It is in the success at fostering the transition to a diverse and highly skilled economy that the outcomes of this plan will ultimately be judged.



Ben Reid

Chair



Andrew Brown

Executive Director

Our Priorities

We have published our second Annual Statement of Priorities which will take us further forward in our aim of transformation. Our six priorities for 2006/07 are to:

1. Ensure that all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities
2. Make learning truly demand-led so that it better meets the needs of employers, young people and adults
3. Transform the learning and skills sector through agenda for change
4. Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development so that we provide the skills needed to help individuals into jobs
5. Improve the skills of workers who are delivering public services
6. Strengthen the capacity of the LSC to lead change nationally, regionally and locally.

Our Regional Priorities for the West Midlands

The regional priorities outlined demonstrate the LSC's contribution to the work of the Regional Skills Partnership and the delivery and success of the Regional Economic Strategy by:

1. Using a data-driven approach to develop a detailed understanding of the changing nature of the labour market in terms of the supply of and demand for skills
2. Aligning the supply of training and related support to the needs of individuals
3. Matching the supply of training and related business support to the demands of employers and the wider economy
4. Ensuring that employers and individuals fulfil their role in the investment in skills and training.

Partnership Working

To achieve these priorities, the LSC in the West Midlands will continue to work in partnership with all stakeholders across the region through the alignment of plans and funding. Key partners include:

- Advantage West Midlands
- JobCentre Plus
- Sector Skills Council
- Higher Education Institution/Higher Education Funding Council
- Business Link

Learning Priorities – the impact on Providers

Colleges and providers are at the heart of delivering these regional priorities. Actions agreed in their three year development plan will address the priorities outlined in the local LSC annual plan and will ensure that funding is focused upon key areas. Successful delivery depends upon high quality provision that:

- Closely engages with employers to understand their needs
- Aligns to the skills priorities of the region
- Can meet the required range of specialist skills across the region
- Is central to the delivery of the regional and local economic agenda
- Aligns with the work of other partners to deliver an accessible and comprehensive service to employers and individuals
- Develops and exploits opportunities for leveraging in increased levels of investment by employers into training
- Provides learning and skills opportunities that lead to nationally recognised qualifications and opportunities for progression
- Commits to continuous quality improvement and the attainment of recognised accreditation standards.

Planning Priorities for 2006/07 – West Midlands Region

The following planning principles were agreed through the Regional LSC/ FE /AoC Consultative Forum to be applied against the allocations for 06/07:

- A minimum of 60 per cent accredited Skills for Life provision as a milestone towards the 80 per cent target for 2007/08
- A maximum of 10 per cent partnership, sub-contracted or franchised provision (if current level is below 10 per cent, there should be no increase)
- A minimum of 10 per cent of the adult participation budget, at the level of the individual (general) FE college, to support activity that delivers full level 2 qualifications to part-time adults. With a year-on-year increase in funding committed to part-time adult full level 2 provision (guide of five per cent)
- The LLSC will agree with each provider a proportion of this funding that will be committed to Train to Gain type activity
- Increase in participation of adults on full level 3 qualifications to a 10 per cent minimum in areas of specialisms/CoVEs.

Our Targets

Under priority 1 for young people:

- **Increase the proportion of 19-year olds who achieve at least Level 2 by three percentage points between 2004 and 2006, and a further two percentage points between 2006 and 2008, and improve attainment at Level 3.**

Nationally we need an additional 31,000 young people to gain a Level 2 in 2005/2006 compared to 2003/2004 and a further 22,000 in 2007/2008 compared to 2005/2006.

Locally in 2003/04 60 per cent of 19-year olds in the Black Country had achieved at least Level 2. In order to reduce the gap between the local and national figure we aim to increase by five percentage points by 2006 and a further three percentage points by 2008.

This will mean that locally we need an additional 290 young people to gain a Level 2 in 2007/2008 compared to 2005/2006.

Under priority 2 for adults:

- **Reduce by at least 40 per cent the number of adults in the workforce who lack an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualifications by 2010.**

Nationally, in 2006/07 we need to increase the numbers of full Level 2 achievements through further education and work-based learning to 117,000 [NB excludes NES and NETP elements]. In addition the roll out of the National Employer Training Programme will increase the LSC contribution to this target.

Locally we plan to deliver 2,821 full Level 2 achievements through further education and work-based learning in 2006/07, which is an increase of 259 compared to 2005/06.

In addition, we will also deliver 2,322 **first** full Level 2 achievements through NETP.

Under priority 2 for adults:

- **Improve the basic skills of 2.25 million adults between 2001 and 2010, with a milestone of 1.5 million in 2007.**

Locally we need 6,500 learners to achieve Skills for Life qualifications in 2006/07.

Underpinning both priorities 1 and 2 for Apprenticeships:

- **The LSC has agreed a new performance indicator for Apprenticeships. The aim is for 75 per cent more people to complete their Apprenticeships in 2007/08, compared to 2002/03.**

Nationally we aim to raise the number of completions to 70,000 in 2006/07 supporting the achievement of Level 2 and Level 3 qualification targets.

To raise the number of completions by 75 per cent from 2002/03, 1,453 completions would be required in 2006/07. In 2004/05 this target was exceeded by 168.

Locally we aim to raise the number of completions to 2,772 in 2006/07.

We also work with key partners to contribute to the following targets:

- Increase the proportion of young people and adults achieving a Level 3 qualification.
- Reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training by two percentage points by 2010
- Increase participation in Higher Education towards 50 per cent of those aged 18 to 30 by 2010.

Our Values

Our values set out the way we work.

- **Trust:** the LSC has to be world-class at partnership and so we believe trust must be at the heart of the LSC.
- **Expertise:** we demonstrate expertise and true leadership in every aspect of our work. We have complete understanding of the communities we serve and of what is needed by business in terms of current and future skills.
- **Ambition:** we are ambitious for ourselves, in the goals and objectives we set, but more importantly we are ambitious for the communities we serve, for employers and for individuals in education and training.
- **Urgency:** we want to bring drive and urgency to the learning and skills sector, to tackle long-standing issues swiftly and professionally and to be responsive and fast moving.

Together, our four values will ensure the LSC can provide leadership and direction at a time of great change.

Our plan sets out how we will deliver our national and regional priorities in a local context highlighting what actions will be critically important in local delivery and what our contribution to the national targets will be.

A Context for Delivery

The Black Country is home to just under 1.1 million people. Statistics on relative deprivation are stark with 40 per cent of areas within the Black Country being amongst the 20 per cent most deprived areas of the country and 17% of local areas being amongst the 10% that are most deprived nationally.

Nevertheless the area is changing rapidly. Already the majority of employment in the Black Country lies in the service sector. The largest employment sector is now public administration followed by retail and then manufacturing. This does not fit with the perception of the Black Country as an area dominated by heavy industry.

Employment in the Black Country ¹

Agriculture and fishing	0.4%
Energy and water	1.0%
Manufacturing	20.1%
Construction	8.9%
Retail, distribution, hotels and restaurants	20.9%
Transport and communications	6.8%
Banking, finance and insurance	11.6%
Public admin. education and health	24.9%
Other services	4.7%

The future growth trends strongly indicate that the switch to a more diverse and highly skilled economy is expected to continue. The forecast changes in employment indicate that the highest growth will come in wholesale and retail, followed by other business services and then health and social work. Because of replacement demand even in manufacturing there is a net need for 13,700 new employees in the Black Country.

This is expected to be coupled with a change in the character of employment. In manufacturing there is expected to be more emphasis on design skills, on high technology and on niche markets. Across the board there is expected to be a growth in managerial, technical and professional occupations. Already 31 per cent of Black Country employment is in this category and this is expected to continue to increase.

Percentage of total employment by occupation group²

	BC	WM	England
Managers and senior officials	11.3	13.6	15.3
Professional occupations	9.5	11.5	12.7
Associate professional & technical	10.4	12.2	14.0
Knowledge workers	31.2	37.3	42.0
Administrative and secretarial occupations	13.1	12.4	12.5
Skilled trades occupations	14.2	12.5	11.1
Personal service occupations	7.0	7.2	7.6
Sales and customer services occupations	9.2	7.8	7.7
Process plant & machine operatives	11.0	9.6	7.3
Elementary occupations	13.7	12.8	11.4

Forecast changes in Black Country employment by sector³

	Changes (000s) 2004 - 2014	Replacement Demand (000s) 2004- 2014	Net Requirement (000s)
Agriculture	0	0	0
Mining & quarrying	0	0	0
Food, drink & tobacco	-1	2	2
Engineering	-1	5	4
Rest of Manufacturing	-14	28	14
Electricity, gas & water supply	-1	1	1
Construction	-7	13	7
Distribution	3	34	38
Hotels and catering	1	8	9
Transport and telecommunication	1	9	10
Banking & insurance	0	4	4
Other Business services	11	21	31
Public admin and defence	-1	9	8
Education	4	16	20
Health and social care	6	20	26
Miscellaneous services	2	9	11
All industries	4	180	184

Given these changes, it is not surprising that the Black Country Consortium’s vision for the future is of a knowledge economy. The Consortium is a key organisation for the future of the Black Country. It has brought together the key leaders in the region, including leaders of each of the local authorities, the LSC and the business community. It is leading the Black Country study, the purpose of which is to set radical new aspirations and forge a vision for the Black Country leading to the renaissance of the sub region. In short, the ambition is for people to see the Black Country in colour and for the full potential of the area to be realised. This is an ambition that the Black Country Learning and Skills Council fully endorses.

The future of the Black Country lies in a thriving diverse economy where knowledge is a key element of sustaining that economy. This can only be achieved with a highly skilled local workforce. Given the importance of skills to the continued regeneration of the Black Country there are some sharp and direct challenges to be faced.

Supporting the regeneration of the Black Country by improving the participation and achievement of young people and raising their aspirations

At GCSE the relative performance of year 11 students in gaining 5 A*-Cs⁴ was:

	2003	2004	2005
England	52.9%	53.7%	56.5%
Black Country	44.3%	45.2%	49.2%
Dudley	50.9%	51.1%	53.5%
Sandwell	35.9%	38.0%	43.0%
Walsall	43.3%	43.5%	46.2%
Wolverhampton	46.9%	48.4%	55.1%

The improvement in performance has been hard won and is significant. Nevertheless, the gap between Black Country performance and the national average performance remains very real.

The same pattern of significant progress, coupled with serious challenges remaining, is also in evidence with regard to participation and achievement in learning from 16 to 18. Overall participation in education and training has increased significantly, particularly for young people resident in the Black Country

Total participation 16-19 by resident (ACL, school sixth forms, FE, WBL)⁵

Age	2003/04	2004/05
16	12,843	13,326
17	10,501	10,586
18	4,688	4,523
19	2,586	2,448
Overall	30,618	30,883

Not surprisingly, this is accompanied by a reduction in the percentage of young people who are not engaged in education and training. This was 9.0 per cent in September 2005 compared with 10.9 per cent in September 2004.

Although still high, especially for males, the proportion of Year 11 leavers entering employment without training has reduced from 7.3 per cent in 2004 to 4.4 per cent in 2005.

In the further education sector an extra 152 young people participated in learning provided in the Black Country. Perhaps more significantly, an extra 728 young people undertook full-time study in a further education college.

16-18 participation⁶

	2003/04 (FO5)	2004/05 (FO4)	Change
FE 16-18	18,211	18,492	+281
FE 16-18 Full-time	12,505	13,233	+728

Not only did more learners participate in further education, more also passed. The success rates for students studying on courses lasting more than 24 weeks at Black Country colleges increased from 55 per cent in 2002-3 to 56 per cent in 2003-4 (the last year for which audited data is currently available). This still leaves 44 per cent of those who started a course not gaining the qualification. There were very significant variations in the overall success rate and the changes in success rates.

FE 16-18 success rates (long courses)⁷

Colleges	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05 provisional
Dudley	55%	53%	56%	58%
Halesowen	66%	69%	71%	70%
King Edward VI	89%	93%	93%	92%
Sandwell	42%	46%	48%	49%
Stourbridge	47%	57%	57%	64%
Walsall	53%	56%	56%	58%
Wolverhampton	48%	53%	58%	59%

This issue of variation in performance is a fundamental one for the Black Country. It is not just that there are large variations in success rates and in the rate of improvement of these between institutions and within institutions. There are also large variations in participation which are, in too many cases, not obviously linked to changes in need. For full time 16-18 students in further education the numbers participating⁸ were as follows:

Colleges	2003/04	2004/05 provisional
Dudley	2,215	2,185
Halesowen	2,430	2,795
King Edward VI	1,344	1,354
Sandwell	960	1,007
Stourbridge	1,700	1,373
Walsall	2,196	2,533
Wolverhampton	1,658	1,981
TOTAL	12,505	13,233

There is a real issue over ensuring that the provision available for young people is of consistently high quality and reflects the local needs rather than past levels of provision. In particular there is a need for more good quality provision to be available locally in Sandwell.

The trend towards increased participation was not fully reflected in work-based learning provision. Here an extra 213 young people undertook Apprenticeships but the reduced numbers of those following NVQ-only provision resulted in an overall drop of 267 young people participating in all work-based learning programmes. One of the reasons for this was a real drive to improve success rates on Apprenticeship programmes and these increased more rapidly than the national average to stand at 48 per cent in 2004-5. The issue of variation of performance between work-based learning providers remains a central concern for local and national policy. Success rates in retail and health, public services & care are above the national average. However, success rates fall as much as 17 percentage points below national averages in ICT and construction. Ensuring that all trainees have access to high quality provision continues to be at the heart of provider development plans and LSC funding allocations.

Apprenticeship success rates⁹

2004-5 Black Country Success rate	=	48.05% up 4.75%
2004-5 Regional success rate	=	49.82% up 1.78%
2004-5 National success rate	=	50.34% up 4.5%

The entry to employment programme attracted 1,597 learners in 2004-5 compared with 1,958 in the previous year but there was a 5 point improvement in the positive progression rate which reached 40 per cent.

Participation and success in school sixth forms was the subject of a detailed study in the Black Country and this revealed a fascinating pattern of change. More young people are choosing to study in sixth forms across the Black Country.

School sixth forms⁹

	2003/04	2004/05
Black Country	7,091	7,454
Dudley	419	456
Sandwell	1,252	1,389
Walsall	2,937	3,078
Wolverhampton	2,483	2,531

The success in attracting learners is, however, not necessarily reflected in success at retaining them or in providing them with advanced level qualifications. 29 per cent of those who undertake an AS qualification do not progress to take an A2. Those who do take an A2 or an alternative Advanced level qualification achieve lower average points scores than those who study in conurbations with very similar social profiles. The average Advanced level points score in the Black Country is as follows:

Advanced level average point score¹⁰

	2004	2005
National average	269.2	277.6
Black Country	225.6	234.5
Dudley	249.7	265.1
Sandwell	161.4	182.3
Walsall	231.9	239.6
Wolverhampton	201.5	202.4

More worryingly the achievement rates actually declined in just as many schools as they increased over the three year period between 2002 and 2005. This represents a very major challenge for an area which is seeking to prepare its young people to work in a knowledge economy.

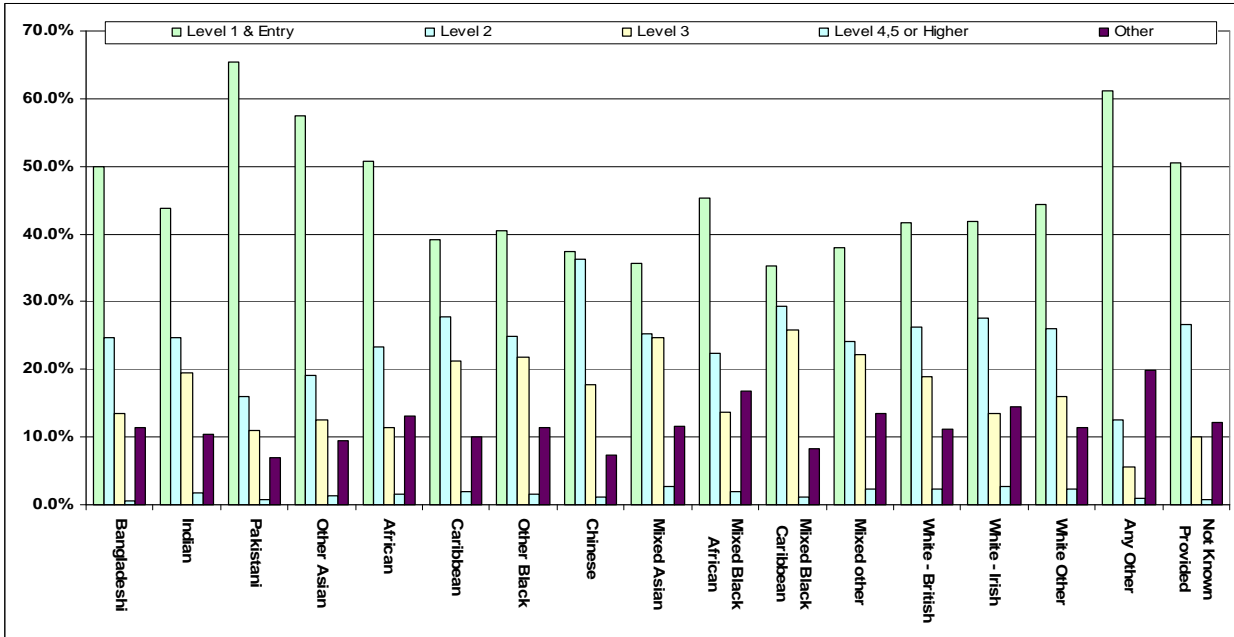
LEA ¹¹	No of Schools with declining Av. Point score – 2002/05	No of Schools with improved Av. Point score – 2002/05	Largest decline in Av. Point Score by a School from 2002/05	Largest increase in Av. Point Score by a School from 2002/05
Dudley	1	2	-37.1	39.8
Sandwell	5	3	-29.7	22.6
Walsall	13	5	-61.4	35.7
Wolverhampton	5	12	-54.7	49.7
Black Country	24	22	-61.4	49.7

Of all the issues identified when examining the participation and achievement of young people, the variation of performance is the most significant. Providers offering very similar choices to very similar client groups achieve very different

achievement rates. Robust monitoring and challenging of the reasons lying behind these variations is a crucial element of local planning.

Variations in participation and performance between different ethnic groups and between genders within those groups is a particularly sharp concern in the Black Country. Participation rates across virtually all ethnic minority communities are high, indicating just how strongly the communities value education. However, the level of the course that members of those communities are most commonly studying is not always consistent with family ambitions. For example, level 1 provision is very commonly studied by students who describe their ethnicity as being of Pakistani origin. By comparison students of Chinese origin are much more commonly studying at higher levels.

Ethnicity – participation¹²



When it comes to success rates there are again sharp contrasts – notably between boys and girls from the same communities.

FE success rates by ethnicity¹³

Ethnicity	Gender				Overall	
	Female		Male		02/03	03/04
	02/03	03/04	02/03	03/04	02/03	03/04
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	61.8%	66.5%	60.0%	63.0%	60.8%	64.8%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	62.6%	70.4%	56.6%	60.8%	60.4%	67.2%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	66.1%	68.6%	51.1%	62.0%	61.9%	66.6%
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	57.4%	67.6%	48.7%	67.6%	52.1%	67.6%
Black or Black British - African	51.9%	68.4%	54.6%	62.9%	53.3%	65.9%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	58.5%	60.6%	53.5%	60.1%	56.7%	60.4%
Black or Black British - any other Black background	57.2%	61.8%	53.5%	62.2%	55.7%	61.9%
Chinese	65.7%	69.3%	55.7%	63.2%	60.6%	66.3%
Mixed	61.5%	66.5%	57.4%	62.3%	59.9%	64.9%
White	66.8%	70.1%	63.3%	66.6%	65.3%	68.6%
Any Other	61.6%	70.9%	60.1%	70.3%	60.6%	70.5%
Not Known / Not Provided	58.4%	74.0%	57.2%	65.2%	57.8%	70.0%
Overall	65.0%	69.5%	60.6%	65.5%	63.2%	67.9%

Whilst these success rates show evidence of significant improvement, the issues of the particular needs of the different communities across the Black Country must lie at the heart of any successful strategy designed to create a knowledge economy.

If we are to succeed in increasing participation and achievement young people need to be engaged and motivated throughout the 14-19 phase. The importance of working in partnership to achieve this has been recognised by the adoption of a Black Country 14-19 strategy which has the support of The Black Country Consortium, the leaders and chief executives of the four local authorities, Connexions, The University of Wolverhampton and the LSC.

This strategy is that:

1. The planning of provision will be driven by:

An analysis of the needs of employers and of the needs and aspirations of young people and their advocates.

An analysis and evaluation of the present provision.

A clear statement of what each young person can expect from the education system, alongside a statement of their responsibilities.

2. Coherent processes will be in place for monitoring, reporting and improving the quality of provision. These processes will be driven primarily by the internal performance management system of each provider. These will be backed up by effective, overarching performance management systems driven by the relevant planning authorities in each area. These will focus on the scrutiny of an organisation's self-evaluation. Local performance will be reported against a set of agreed targets and performance indicators. The systems will focus both on exchange of good practice and on challenging under-performance. They will involve targets and a development plan for each provider. Bureaucracy will be minimised by ensuring quality management systems align with inspection frameworks.

3. Each learner will have an individual learning plan to provide support and challenges in order to raise achievement. This will ensure that learning is purposeful and appropriate for the individual. Individual steps towards achievement will be celebrated and built upon and their programmes of learning will be personalised.

4. Providers of education and training will work together in collaborative consortia to ensure that young people have the widest possible choice of relevant learning opportunities at the right level. Opportunities to use electronic learning will be maximised to increase access to high quality, relevant learning materials and progression information.

5. There will be an area prospectus of learning opportunities available to each young person. This will describe, in a coherent format, the opportunities available for young people.

6. There will be a coherent framework of high quality vocational learning opportunities commencing at age 14. This will build qualifications between the different stages of education and maximising progression opportunities into employment with training or into higher education.

7. Learners will make decisions on their learning programmes informed by high quality, independent advice and guidance.

8. The aspirations of young people of all abilities will be raised by developing a network of guaranteed places in universities and employment linked to the achievement of individual learning plans. Awareness of progression opportunities will be maximised and young people will be motivated to achieve purposeful progression from 14-19 education into higher education or employment. This

network will also commit to meeting the needs of young people with learning disabilities by providing appropriate progression routes and associated support programmes to ensure access.

9. There will be a programme of continued professional development for managers, teachers and trainers to ensure provision remains relevant to the changing needs of young people and their future employers in the Black Country economy.

10. The partners' investment strategies will be co-ordinated to provide young people with high quality, stimulating and challenging learning environments. These will offer a choice of specialist facilities. Planning bodies will work together to maximise the opportunities for young people to take advantage of the specialist facilities and expertise available in schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, universities and employers.

This agreed strategy to raise participation and achievement from 14-19 will be accompanied by an equally robust focus on the needs of adults.

Supporting the regeneration of the Black Country by raising the level of skills of adults

Of all the indicators which illustrate the scale of the challenges facing the Black Country in its progressive transformation into a highly skilled economy, the most dramatic is the high proportion of adults with no qualifications whatsoever and the low proportion of adults who hold a level 4 qualification.

Working Age Population by Qualification Level¹⁴

Level	1999	2003	Gap between Black Country and England in 2003
No qualifications	24.4	21.9	+7.1
Level 1	19.9	16.1	-1.2
Level 2	13.8	15.1	-0.2
Level 3	10.8	13.4	-1.3
Level 4	13.4	16.8	-8.2
Trade Apprenticeships	6.7	6.6	+0.4
Other qualifications	10.9	10.0	+1.0

Whereas the good news is that the gap between the Black Country and the rest of the country has narrowed, it would be inappropriate to take much comfort from this in the context of an 8.2 per cent gap in higher level achievements. Nevertheless the change has been hard won as a result of a major drive to ensure that provision for adults isn't just about participation – it is about participation that leads to achievements that count for something in the job market. An important element of this is the achievement of basic skills and first level 2 qualifications.

Basic skills numbers

Learners counting toward achievement target¹⁵

2001	2,818
2001/02	5,159
2002/03	4,340
2003/04	5,045
2004/05 (estimate)	7,761
Cumulative	25,123

These statistics show that just over 25,000 learners have achieved their first basic skills qualification since 2001. Increasing numbers of people have been gaining worthwhile basic skills qualifications at the same time as there has been a reduction in the overall volume of adults participating in further education. This has been the result of deliberate targeting of funding available for adults.

Adult Further Education

The drop of 5,001 learners to 77,281 has been accompanied by a real improvement in the quality of qualifications that adults achieve. Provision that is recognised on the national qualifications database has increased as follows:¹⁶

2002/03	25%
2003/04	45%
2004/05	63%

Alongside the improvement in the focus of provision on relevant qualifications, there has been a continued commitment to sustaining a network of adult and community learning. The numbers studying on these programmes in 2004-5 increased from 18,339 to 19,947. Encouraging those who participate in adult education to continue their education and to gain new qualifications remains an important local focus.

Overall, the real determination to ensure that qualifications are worthwhile in the marketplace has been facilitated by major new initiatives. These are designed to reach those in employment and provide employers and employees with the qualifications that are right for them via the provider of their choice. These include the Director Development Programme which supported 395 senior managers, and the Employer Training Pilot.

Employer Training Pilot

The Employer Training Pilot in the Black Country commenced in 2004-5 and learners are still continuing to record achievements. The scale and the flexibility of the programme and the excellent response from employers indicated that there is a real thirst from a wide range of Black Country employers for training – provided that the training flexibly meets their needs.

NVQ Level 2	Starts	Achievers
2004/05	3,467	1,958
2005/06 to date	3,792	1,095
Basic Skills	Starts	Achievers
2004/05	217	115
2005/06	493	119

Source¹⁷

The good news is that this programme is to go national in 2006-7 and that it will be accompanied by a level 3 trial in the Black Country. Maximising the value of the local implementation of the National Employer Training Programme requires a further step change in the way that providers of education and training services respond to the needs of employers. Locally it is crucial that the principles of the LSC's Agenda for Change programme are adopted enthusiastically by providers. At the heart of that programme is a commitment to providing flexible skills training for people already in employment.

It could take generations to transform qualification levels across the Black Country if we rely solely on the improvements achieved in young people's education. Engaging employers in training and upskilling their staff is one of the best ways to make the biggest inroads into the core challenge.

We also cannot expect employers to encourage their staff to participate in training unless that training is easy to access, flexibly provided and directly relevant to their needs. We cannot reasonably be asked to support employers with the costs of training unless that training equips staff with recognised and transferable qualifications. It must be down to employers, advised and supported by a network of qualified skills brokers, to decide on the best provider of the training that their staff need. It will be up to providers to ensure that the provision they are making can be easily accessed and genuinely meets the standards expected by employers.

It is the view of the LSC that this will require providers to increasingly specialise in those fields where they can deliver provision which is genuinely providing the skills needed for the future in high quality facilities equipped to the latest commercial standards, delivered by trainers who understand the latest needs of the marketplace. Planning and commissioning appropriate local specialist provision to meet future needs therefore forms the third focus of this plan.

Supporting the regeneration of the Black Country by ensuring that learning provision is of high quality and is relevant to the current and future needs of employers, learners and potential learners

The Black Country Study, which will be the main planning document driving the overall development of the Black Country, is expected to focus planning for the future on four main town/city centres. These will be Wolverhampton, Walsall, Brierley Hill and West Bromwich. Each of these centres is expected to see strong growth in retail and office employment. Each of these centres has a particular focus to its economic development.

In planning the appropriate range of specialist provision with partners, Black Country LSC will focus on working with partners to ensure that provision required locally is available and that the development of employer-focused specialist provision is appropriate for the future needs of commerce and industry.

All areas are expected to need 'first-rung' provision, and the extent of demand in such areas as business and managerial provision and health and care training means that strong local provision will be needed in each of the boroughs and the city.

In Wolverhampton the existence of the Science Park and the development of the i54 Technology Park together with the continued development of the Lean Academy, indicates that high technology manufacturing and science industries will be an important part of the future. Developments in the health sector have strong potential links with this direction of development. There are, therefore, possibilities to foster local specialist development in high technology, lean manufacturing, science and health.

In West Bromwich there is a huge local investment in housing market renewal together with high levels of local investment in building schools for the future both of which will have an associated impact on demand in the construction industry. A significant local issue is also the importance of ensuring that those whose first language is not English are able to take full advantage of employment opportunities. There is, therefore, potential to focus specialist development in Sandwell on creative industries and on construction. In ensuring that local people and local enterprises have access to the quality of training facilities that they are entitled to expect the Black Country LSC is strongly supportive of the creation of a modern new college in West Bromwich by Sandwell College.

Brierley Hill has developed rapidly from being an out-of-town shopping centre into being a major town centre in its own right. The focus for employment has been retail, leisure industries and office developments. Training provision in Brierley Hill does not currently match future needs and the location of much of the learning provision in Dudley is based on historical developments rather than future needs. The LSC will therefore give the highest priority in its planning of provision in the Dudley borough to ensuring that there is a coherent match between the supply of training and local needs. This will mean refocusing the locations of provision and a stronger specialist focus on service sector and leisure employment. The extent of construction work in Dudley indicates that there will be a continuing need for a specialism in construction in the borough, further changing nature of manufacturing in Dudley indicates that there is a need for one thoroughly modern, specialist in manufacturing techniques but on a smaller scale than currently.

Walsall, positioned as it is between the new M6 toll road and the successful Birmingham City centre, has a real potential for rapid growth. The waterfront developments, coupled with the development of the new business learning campus at Walsall College of Art and Technology, maximise these opportunities. A key opportunity here is the potential to attract ICT-focused companies to co-locate and to ensure that the new college is not simply a rebuild but a major refocus on the needs of employers. This indicates that a particular focus on high level ICT skills and on creativity could be worthwhile.

Investment strategy

In fostering these developments, the scale of the capital investment being made by the LSC is considerable. Nationally £350 million will be spent on renewing the Further Education estate in 2005-6, rising to £600 million per year in 2009-10. Locally, major investment is required to renew the estate and make it 'fit for future purpose.' The key local investment priorities are:

1. The development of a new college in West Bromwich which is fit for the future needs of learners across the borough of Sandwell
2. The development of a business learning campus in Walsall
3. The reduction in number of college sites in the borough of Dudley and the increase of the quality and the alignment with future skills needs of the estate in the borough.
4. The improvement of the quality of facilities at the Paget Road campus of City of Wolverhampton College and the maximisation of opportunities generated by the i54, Science Park and Lean Manufacturing complex.

The Black Country benefits from a wide range of funding programmes and initiatives designed to address the relative deprivation in parts of the sub-region. These include:

- * European Social Fund contract currently totalling over £22m over the period 2005-2008
- * The Sandwell Building Schools for the future programme
- * Combined resources of North and South Zone attracting £33.5m of investment in 2006-7
- * Neighbourhood renewal programme
- * New Deal for the Communities
- * Local area agreements
- * The Wolverhampton – Telford technology corridor and the I54 initiative.

In making its own investments, the Black Country LSC will work with partners to maximise the value of the collective investment by ensuring that it is coherently aligned to address the future needs of the community and its employers. For example, alongside the major developments there continues to be a need to increase the quality of facilities available for first step and community provision and to ensure that this provision is sustainable and coherently aligns with local need. The LSC's approach will be to only support initiatives which are clearly sustainable and which either address key supply gaps that have been identified by well-evidenced research, such as a Strategic Area Review, or significantly improve the quality and the coherence of existing community provision.

The LSC is determined that the value of its overall investment will be maximised and that it will be used to foster the creation of facilities and approaches to learning which support the transition to a knowledge-based economy in the Black Country. This applies not just to capital investment but most importantly to annual mainstream revenue funding. Our approach will be driven by the LSC's Agenda for Change. This means that we will be progressively shifting to invest only in high quality provision that is fit for the future. It also means that we will be giving a very

high priority to ensuring that providers are able to supply good quality specialist provision that meets the expectations of employers. The LSC will be looking to commission provision which carries credibility with employers and will also be looking to ensure that employers can find the support they need easily.

We will be continuing to work to align advice and guidance on skills with the work of other organisations providing advice and support for business, such as Business Link and JobCentre Plus. We will also be expecting step changes to the way that providers, such as colleges, provide services for employers. Amongst the tools we will be building on to achieve this, will be the evolution of the local CoVE network into a service with a much stronger emphasis on meeting the needs of local employers and disseminating the most up-to-date training practices.

In doing this our key objective is to support the regeneration of the Black Country by ensuring that provision is of high quality and is relevant to the current and future needs of employers, learners and potential learners. The Black Country does not exist in isolation; it is part of a City Region. Black Country LSC therefore needs to ensure that local provision appropriately equips local people to compete in and contribute to both the local and the wider City Region labour market¹⁸.

Achieving this high skilled society will ensure that each individual is able to maximise their opportunities in life. It will also enable employers to compete successfully in an economy when knowledge is a key element of what is being sold.

Skills Matrix

Priority mix of FE delivery

The table below shows the proportions of FE delivery in 05/06 that may contribute to our targets in our high, medium and low skills priority areas. The proportion of delivery which is likely to contribute to targets in our high priority sectors has increased from 2004/05 by 9 per cent for those aged under 19, and 15 per cent for over 19s. The proportion of delivery no longer eligible for LSC funding for under 19 year olds has remained static at 1 per cent and for over 19s has reduced from 9 per cent to 4 per cent.

Academic Year 2005/06

Under 19	High		Medium		Low		Total	
	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	% of Overall
Likely to contribute	34,583,573 32331	63%	13,031,879 11475	24%	5,765,929 4032	11%	53,381,381 47838	97%
Potential to contribute	984,153 935	2%	84,415 215	0%	59,455 110	0%	1,128,024 1260	2%
No longer eligible for LSC funding	325,536 550	1%	37,641 113	0%	9,079 155	0%	372,262 818	1%
Other (eg UFI and Unclassified)	0 0	0%	0 0	0%	0 0	0%	0 0	0%
Entitlement	0 N/A	0%	0 N/A	0%	0 N/A	0%	0 N/A	0%
Totals	35,893,262 33816	65%	13,153,936 11803	24%	5,834,460 4297	11%	54,881,657 49916	100%

19 and Over	High		Medium		Low		Total	
	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	% of Overall
Likely to contribute	25,104,056 34573	69%	2,239,253 3132	6%	2,527,585 2051	7%	29,870,894 39756	83%
Potential to contribute	3,290,162 4571	9%	829,947 1200	2%	664,310 1577	2%	4,784,418 7348	13%
No longer eligible for LSC funding	1,337,276 5208	4%	32,655 209	0%	143,169 2017	0%	1,513,100 7434	4%
Other (eg UFI and Unclassified)	0 0	0%	0 0	0%	0 0	0%	0 0	0%
Entitlement	0 N/A	0%	0 N/A	0%	0 N/A	0%	0 N/A	0%
Totals	29,731,493 44352	82%	3,101,855 4541	9%	3,335,063 5645	9%	36,168,412 54538	100%

NB percentages are funding values as a percentage of the total funds, for each age group

The key changes needed

National Priority One: Ensure that all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities

Key challenges for the Black Country:

- GCSE and 'A' Level performance is significantly below the national average
- 10 per cent of young people aged 16-18 are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Achievement rates declined in just as many school sixth forms as they increased over the two year period between 2002 and 2004
- Variation in participation and success rates of ethnic minority groups.

Issues for action:

- Implementation of the Black Country Consortium 14-19 Enjoy & Achieve entitlement
- Development of the 14-19 provider consortia needed to deliver the 14 Diploma lines across the Black Country, levels 1-3

- Improved performance of the sixth form provision in the Black Country (from 234.5 point score in 2004/5 to 251.6 in 2006/07)
- Implement the Black Country Equality and Diversity Impact measures to ensure all sections of the community have opportunities to participate in purposeful learning.

National Priority Two: Making learning truly demand-led so that it better meets the needs of employers, young people and adults

Key challenges for the Black Country:

- The future growth trends strongly indicate that the switch to a more diverse and highly skilled economy is expected to continue. The forecast changes in employment indicate that the highest growth will come in wholesale and retail, followed by other business services and then health and social work
- Low proportion of Black Country adults have a Level 4 qualification
- Significant numbers of current employees in priority sectors have low qualifications.

Issues for action:

- Implementation of the Black Country Every Adult and Business Matters Strategy
- The realignment of provision in Dudley to take account of the development of Brierley Hill and the increase in service sector employment that it implies
- A change in the volume and character of engineering provision with each engineering college focusing on a clear specialist area of engineering provision
- An increased proportion of construction provision to provide trainees with on-site assessment certificates and greater variety of construction craft and managerial training
- Implement the Black Country Equality and Diversity Impact measures to ensure all sections of the community have opportunities to participate in purposeful learning
- Roll-out of Train to Gain particularly focussing on priority sectors in the Black Country
- Contribute to the Higher Education participation target through the Aim Higher programme and by encouraging closer collaboration with Higher Education Institutes through the new Lifelong Learning Network.

National Priority Three: Transforming the learning and skills sector through LSC Agenda for Change

Key challenges for the Black Country:

- Implement Agenda for Change and priorities for success in the Black Country
- Continue to improve the learning infrastructure in the Black Country
- Addressing the variations in performance and quality of provision.

Issues for action:

- The development of learning facilities and programmes which are fit for the future in Sandwell via the development of a new campus in West Bromwich

- The development of a new business learning campus in Walsall as a key movement in the work of re-designing the further education provision in the Borough
- Lessen the significant variations in success rates between providers delivering provision in the same sectors to similar sections of the community by building on good provision and weeding out weak provision.

National Priority Four: Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development so that we provide the skills to help individuals into jobs

Key challenges for the Black Country:

- High percentage of Black Country adults have no qualifications
- Need for adults to achieve Skills for Life qualifications
- 40 per cent of areas within the Black Country being amongst the 20 per cent most deprived areas of the country and 17 per cent of local areas being amongst the 10 per cent that are most deprived nationally.

Issues for action:

- A shift to provide an appropriate range of training in response to the i54 development and the potential Cosford development
- Maximising the benefit of the National Employer Training Pilot and the level 3 trial
- Targeting of ESF provision on identified priority and under achieving groups.

National Priority Five: Improve the skills of workers who are delivering the public services

Key challenges for the Black Country:

- Highest level of hard to fill vacancies are in health and social care sector.

Issues for action:

- Increase progression from school to health and social care sector through Careership project
- Upskill individuals through Learning to Care ESF programme.

National Priority Six: Strengthen the capacity of the LSC to lead change nationally, regionally and locally

Key challenges for the Black Country:

- Alignment of LSC provision with other programmes through the Local Area Agreements
- The Black Country Study will determine the key regeneration policies for the Black Country for the next 30 years.

Issues for action:

- Ensure LSC priorities are fully reflected in the Black Country Study
- Maximise the impact of LSC partnership teams, economic development teams and the City Region team in addressing learning and skills aspects of the regeneration agenda.

Regional Changes

Sector Skill Agreements (SSAs)

The LSC's commitment within the SSA is to ensure that the provision purchased addresses the skills priorities within the Agreements. The following priority qualifications/areas have been identified:

- OSAT
- Business Improvement Techniques
- ITQ
- School support staff.

1. Construction Skills

The on site assessment and training (OSAT) delivery model for construction provision has been one of the most successful sector pilots. National funding will not continue beyond September 2006 and OSAT delivery now needs to be incorporated into mainstream provision. The figures identified below are the Construction Skills Taskforce's projections for the number of workers requiring an NVQ level 2 within the region.

	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
W. Midlands	3,214	4,046	3,503	3,503

2. SEMTA

UK companies lag behind competitors on the implementation of lean manufacturing and high performance working particularly SMEs. SEMTA has identified the Business Improvement Techniques (BIT) NVQ as a key qualification in their agreement which will progressively replace the NVQs in performing engineering manufacture.

The figures identified below are the projections for the number of employees requiring an NVQ level 2 & 3 within the region over the coming year.

Region	L2	L3
W. Midlands	10,800	1,350

3. E- Skills

The SSA priorities focus on level 2 and above for IT users and level 3 and above for IT professionals delivered through ITQ. This provides a highly flexible framework to enable individuals to achieve a qualification. It is intended that ITQ will replace all IT user qualifications by September 2006. The target ITQ is for 750,000 ITQ by 2008 and the regional target is shown below.

Region	06/07	07/08
W. Midlands	17,600	22,400

4. Additional Priorities – School Support Staff

School support staff work across a number of occupational areas, often with multiple roles. Job roles include administrators, teaching assistants, technicians and pupil supervisors.

The figures identified below are the sector's projections for the number of employees requiring an NVQ level 2 within the region over the next two years 06/07 & 07/08.

Region	06/07	07/08
W. Midlands	1,550	1,550

Summary Statement of Activity

Area Name: **Black Country**

What we have delivered so far and our planned changes for 2006/07

Red header indicates underpinning data is incomplete (validates FE and WBL Total Learners values, and ACL 19+ FLLN values only).
Green header indicates underpinning data is complete (validates FE and WBL Total Learners values, and ACL 19+ FLLN values only).

Summary of Young People (16-18)	2004/05				Funding £
	Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)		
FE Total Learners	18231				£53,009,836
<i>of which</i>					
Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications	5804	3523	60.7%		
Learners on a full level 2 qualification	2457	1866	75.9%		
Learners on a full level 3 qualification	6017	2830	47.0%		
School sixth form	7278				£33,831,436
Work Based Learning	12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AIL (%)		
WBL Total Learners	4455				£10,948,119
<i>of which</i>					
Learners on an Apprenticeship	4164	903	21.7%		
Learners on an Advanced Apprenticeship	634	163	25.7%		
Entry to employment	Learners			Positive destinations	
	Volumes (starts)	Numbers in learning	Average length of stay (weeks)		
All E2E	1703	1640	15.8	830	£7,278,220

2005/06					
Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)		Funding £	
18164				£63,422,589	
5697	3279	57.6%			
3567	2334	65.4%			
7037	3711	52.7%			
7379				£36,008,948	
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AIL (%)			
4492				£11,622,896	
3999	1314	32.9%			
695	208	29.9%			
Learners					
Volumes (starts)	Numbers in learning	Average length of stay (weeks)	Positive destinations		
1585	1606	15.2	890	£6,802,872	

2006/07					
Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)		Funding £	
18533				£65,478,451	
6032	3667	60.8%			
3833	2530	66.0%			
7291	3897	53.4%			
7453				£37,200,920	
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AIL (%)			
5002				£11,353,538	
4355	1595	36.6%			
828	245	29.6%			
Learners					
Volumes (starts)	Numbers in learning	Average length of stay (weeks)	Positive destinations		
2026	1885	16.2	1107	£5,965,948	

Summary of Adults (19+)	2004/05				Funding £
	Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)		
FE Total Learners	78285				£46,042,238
<i>of which</i>					
Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications	4977	2875	57.8%		
Learners on a full level 2 qualification	5033	2228	44.3%		
Learners on a full level 3 qualification	3033	1166	38.4%		
Adult & Community Learning	21324				£3,946,961
Work Based Learning	12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AIL (%)		
WBL Total Learners	3037				£4,952,365
<i>of which</i>					
Learners on an Apprenticeship	1656	472	28.5%		
Learners on an Advanced Apprenticeship	1277	203	15.9%		
Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications (ALL AGES)	4673	2109	45.1%		
ETP/NETP	Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)		
	171	24	14.0%		

2005/06					
Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)		Funding £	
68745				£48,095,153	
4767	2375	49.8%			
4451	2242	50.4%			
3113	1597	51.3%			
21000				£6,006,089	
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AIL (%)			
3023				£4,455,305	
1636	550	33.6%			
1247	320	25.7%			
5662	3145	55.5%			
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)			
2408	2228	92.5%			

2006/07					
Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)		Funding £	
55542				£41,238,617	
5126	2554	49.8%			
4849	2453	50.6%			
3059	1591	52.0%			
20718				£5,612,789	
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AIL (%)			
2963				£3,798,409	
1656	564	34.1%			
1210	368	30.4%			
6998	4461	63.7%			
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)			
5284	5205	98.5%			

Summary of Other	2004/05			
	Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)	
Discrete* activity, eg fully ESF, and LIDF funded provision	3188	1228	38.5%	

2005/06			
Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)	
5162	2530	49.0%	

2006/07			
Volumes of learners	Learners In-year achievements (volume)	In-year achievement / Volume (%)	
4855	2670	55.0%	

Budgets	FE	WBL	E2E	SSF	ACL	ETP/NETP	Development Funding	Capital	Administration	Other Programme Budgets
2004/05	£110,601,512	£17,082,770	£7,993,000	£33,831,436	£6,101,301	£1,868,310	£7,106,192	£2,193,898	£2,698,423	£6,340,381
2005-06	£116,409,000	£17,845,000	£6,719,000	£36,008,948	£6,101,000	£6,644,000	£5,760,000	£1,299,000	£2,691,000	£9,276,000
2006-07	£115,502,656	£16,352,612	£6,368,207	£37,200,920	£5,612,792	£5,300,175	£3,305,455	£0	£0	£3,959,128

Notes:
All budgets are Academic Year budgets.
This workbook ends at 2006/07.

*Discrete funded activity - i.e. activity which is solely ESF funded (not co-financed) and is not already included in FE, WBL or ACL Toolbox or any other activity not recorded in the FE, WBL or ACL Toolboxes and not ESF funded, e.g. LIDF or discrete project funded.

Key actions

Priority	Action	Measure of Success
Priority 1 Ensure that all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities.	1. Support 14-19 developments and improvements in each borough including the 14 -19 Implementation Plan, 'Enjoy and Achieve' and Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships, and borough Local Area Agreements.	Enjoy & Achieve implementation plan developed by September 2006 Development of a coherent area prospectus of opportunities jointly with local authorities by July 2006 Effective collaborative consortia arrangements in each area Individual Learning Plan for all learners Contributions made to Joint Area Reviews.
	2. Continue the development of a coherent vocational offer to increase the number of young people taking up vocational options. 3. Actively encourage partners to engage employers in the design and delivery of 14-19 provision.	One third of young people involved in Increased Flexibility to gain a qualification in a vocational subject at level 2 over and above predicted outcomes Recruit 600 Student Apprentices, 473 to achieve a Level 2 qualification for 06-07. (ESF Funded) 80 per cent of young people taking part in the Young Apprenticeship programme to achieve a level 2 qualification Involve more WBL providers in collaborative arrangements Employer involvement in YA/SA programmes EBL Review completed and recommendations implemented by September 2006.
	4. Ensure that the breadth and level of provision post-16 in school sixth forms is appropriate to learner need.	A' level average point score increased from 234.5 in 2004/5 to 251.6 in 2006/07 Consortium identified to deliver 16-19 competition by December 2006.
	5. Identify and target key issues of variation in success rates and influence networks such as Black Country Partnership for Learning, Black Country Training Group, Black Country School Improvement Partnership and work with 14-19 co-ordinators to enhance the quality of 14-19 provision in the Black Country.	- Improved level 2 at age 19 attainment - Increase FE 16-18 success rates from 69.5 per cent in 04/05 to 72.2 per cent in 06/07 to 76 per cent in 07/08 - Increase E2E positive outcome rates from 41 per cent in 04/05 to 57 per cent in 06/07 - Increase Apprenticeship framework completion rates from 38.3 per cent in 04/05 to 56 per cent in 06/07 - Increase school sixth form average A level point score from 234.5 in 2004/05 to 251.6 in 2006/07 - Increase level 3 FE 16-18 success rates.
	6. Build on the curriculum strategies developed through the Languages Pathfinder.	

	<p>7. Continue implementation of the Black Country Connexions/LSC Participation Strategy</p>	<p>NEET reduced by borough at November 2006 to (including LAA stretch targets):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dudley 7.5% • Sandwell 9.8% • Walsall 9.7% • Wolverhampton 9.7%. <p>862 young people assisted through ESF funded programmes, 529 progressions to learning, 123 progressions to employment, 150 accredited short course achievements and 30 NVQ Level 1 achievements for 06-07.</p>
	<p>8. Work with Connexions to implement the Learning Agreement Pilot which will result in a programme of support for young people who enter jobs without training.</p>	<p>2,000 young people in jobs without training to take up training through Learning Agreement Pilot supported activity.</p>
	<p>9. Single Black Country project to be funded to support achievement of minority ethnic groups with below average achievement. Equality and diversity impact measures to drive the targeting of resources.</p>	<p>Increased success rates for ethnic minority groups currently below the Black Country average.</p>
<p>Priority 2</p> <p>Making learning truly demand-led so that it better meets the needs of employers, young people and adults</p>	<p>10. Build on the achievement of the Employer Training Pilot to establish an effective local service under the National Employer Training Programme.</p>	<p>Successful transition of Skills Hotline, Employer Skills Offer, and skills brokerage to regional Train to Gain arrangements.</p>
	<p>11. Set and achieve targets for basic skills participation and achievement under the National Employer Training Pilot.</p>	<p>Essential Skills Employee Programme developed for NETP brokers</p> <p>Engagement targets through NETP increases by a minimum of 25 per cent</p>
	<p>12. Develop and enhance the Black Country component of the regional brokerage network to provide effective advice on training solutions for employers.</p>	<p>NETP Broker Key Performance Indicators are achieved</p> <p>Regional brokerage network incorporates existing arrangements with local partners i.e. JC+, Business Link, colleges and CoVEs, private providers and Connexions to ensure effective local delivery of NETP.</p>
	<p>13. Develop a plan to address gaps in capacity of priority provision, to define the approach for targeting priority sectors and employers and to support colleges and providers with Employer</p>	<p>NETP level 2 starts target of 5650 achieved with focus on priority sectors</p> <p>80 per cent achievement rate of level 2 NETP participants</p> <p>NETP to engage with 2 per cent learners with disabilities.</p>

	Engagement.	36 NVQ level 1, 1,135 level 2, 546 level 3 and 60 level 4 qualifications achieved through ESF funded projects for 06-07.
	14. Develop the Centre of Vocational Excellence network to lead on specialisms and represent the Black Country in regional specialist networks. CoVEs will be expected to lead on employer engagement, curriculum development and driving up quality across the Black Country.	All CoVEs to meet the Quality Mark standard for their specialist area of provision by March 2007.
	15. Level 3 trial introduced from August 2006.	Level 3 trial targets of 1,014 starts achieved in line with regional/local priorities and employer demand.
	16. Identify progression to be followed by employed learners from level 2 to level 3 through NETP.	Development of a system to track NETP progression completed by June 2006.
	17. Reflect the LSC Higher Education Strategy through Aim Higher, Foundation Degrees and Black Country Partnership for Learning.	Support the Higher Education PSA participation target Increase in level 3 success rates for both young people and adults.
	18. Develop Every Adult Matters Strategy	Strategy approved by partners by April 2006. Prospectus of provision developed for September 2008 enrolment.
	19. Work with providers to increase the participation and success of under represented groups and communities at each level of learning.	To increase the participation of under represented communities at each level of learning Increase in the number of females entering engineering provision (Apprenticeships) to 5 per cent by 2008 Increase the numbers of males entering care provision (Apprenticeships) to 8 per cent by 2008 Increase the participation of under represented communities at each level of learning To address issues of data collection with regard to those learners with disabilities (youth and adult) To increase the success rates of black Caribbean in (2003/04 – 60.4 per cent against average 68 per cent)

		<p>Increase the success rates of learners with disabilities within WBL to the Black Country average (2003/04 26 per cent against 43 per cent)</p> <p>Increase the success rates of those groups of learners below the Black Country average of 43.3 per cent in WBL (2003/04).</p>
	20. Work with local transition planning partnerships to develop models to forecast the provision needs of learners with LDD that will contribute to regional LLDD planning in response to the national review of provision for learners with LDD - "Through Inclusion to Excellence"	<p>Local provision planning models agreed to feed into the regional planning process by March 2007</p> <p>18 young people supported through Good Company ESF funded project for 06-07, with 3 level 1 achievements.</p>
	21. Focus the use of ESF resources on the national, regional and local priorities.	<p>Remaining £76m of £157m Regional ESF funding contracted by December 2006.</p> <p>By December 2007 the following local achievements made:</p> <p>2,369 Skills for Life Achievements 2,025 NVQ level 1 3,667 NVQ level 2 2,157 NVQ level 3 92 NVQ level 4/5.</p>
<p>Priority 3</p> <p>Transform the learning and skills sector through Agenda for Change</p>	22. Planning and quality of provision informed by robust further education, external institution, adult and community learning and work based learning self assessment process and three year development plans to support the development of specialisms in the Black Country.	<p>Annual Planning Review completed January 2007</p> <p>Quality of provider self assessment reports and three year development plans improved through effective evaluation and feedback</p> <p>Targets met as detailed in planned changes for 2006/07 table</p> <p>ESF level 2, 3, 4 and 5 targets achieved (see 21.)</p>
	23. Support the development of specialisms in the Black Country	
	24. Ensure that the training infrastructure in the Dudley borough is geared to meeting the requirements of the expanding retail, commercial, leisure and public service economies e.g. Brierley Hill.	<p>College and training provider three-year development plans clearly show how provision will be transformed to meet economic priorities.</p> <p>Development of college specialisms</p>
	25. Promote the progressive rationalisation and	Agreement from colleges on implementation

	<p>improvement of the buildings and services of the Stourbridge and Dudley colleges to deliver a balanced supply of high quality education and training services across the borough.</p>	<p>of actions from strategic options review. Curriculum planned jointly and delivery sites specified by August 2006 Decisions taken on future of sites and integrated into regional property strategy.</p>
	<p>26. Ensure that training facilities in Wolverhampton are improved and geared to economic regeneration plans and projects, with particular emphasis on support for developing further, science and modern manufacturing within the Technology Corridor [the i54 technology park and Wolverhampton Science Park] by developing quality education and training provision in science, lean manufacturing and health services.</p>	<p>College and training provider three-year development plans clearly show how provision will be transformed and focused to meet economic priorities LSC Director to chair WTTC Skills Sub-group. Production of partnership action plan by July 2006.</p>
	<p>27. Full proposals to be submitted for the consolidation of Sandwell College within West Bromwich. 28. Plans for the development of a complementary Knowledge Centre to be finalised and sources of partnership funding resolved. 29. Ensure that the college's physical re-structuring plan is geared to the development of high quality education and training provision appropriate to the needs of the local economy.</p>	<p>Complete 'in principle' capital application submitted to LSC by June 2006, preceded by first phase as appropriate. Detailed application submitted to LSC by December 2006.</p>
	<p>30. Progress the development of the Walsall Business & Learning campus and ensure that training provision is geared to economic regeneration plans and projects, with particular emphasis on the opportunities in modern manufacturing, retail, health, leisure, public services, and design.</p>	<p>Detailed capital application to be considered LLSC by September 2006 Local Council endorsement in November 2006 National Capital Committee consideration in February 2007.</p>
	<p>31. Monitor and support the development and implementation of recovery plans for colleges in financial difficulty.</p>	<p>Recovery plans agreed and implementation underway by March 2007</p>

	32. Monitor the financial health, management and governance of all colleges in the sub-region to ensure that college management have an appropriate focus on maintaining and improving financial health/viability.	Colleges maintain or improve their financial health assessment based on returns provided during the year.
	33. Increase the proportion of FE provision leading to national qualification framework via development plan target setting and monitoring Majority (80 per cent) of provision = NQF.	75 per cent National Qualification Framework provision 06/07, working towards 80 per cent.
	34. To manage FE partner provider provision in line with regional policy.	Meet target of no more than 5 per cent of LSC funding being franchised, partnership / sub-contracted.
Priority 4 Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development so that we provide the skills needed to help all individuals into jobs	35. Implement the LSC/JobCentrePlus joint working agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint arrangements agreed for delivering Basic Skills provision to Black Country individuals by September 2006 - Joint approach to working with employers, referring employers to Train2Gain and individuals to nextSteps agreed by August 2006 - More collaboration between the LSC's, provider base and JobCentrePlus clients encouraged, building on the MG Rover Group model, to increase the number of people accessing and attaining qualifications by December 2006.
	36. Develop a coordinated approach to customised training, in collaboration with the planning and procurement agencies operating in the four local authority areas, to ensure that economically inactive residents are encouraged to benefit from the major investment in housing, health and education projects, and in particular from opportunities in construction and refurbishment projects.	<p>Agreement of Strategic Framework for Adult Training by March/April 2006.</p> <p>Agreement with Local Authorities and Regeneration Zone on projects and combination of funds to support development of skills and employment.</p>
	37. Work with the local authorities and JobCentre Plus to ensure that adequate support is given to people from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.	<p>Neighbourhood Renewal Funds contracted and will concentrate on:</p> <p>Wolverhampton – Adult employment initiative, learning co-ordinators in priority neighbourhoods, special measure for Heath Town area.</p> <p>Sandwell – Skills for Life, Engagement</p>

		<p>programmes.</p> <p>Walsall – Support for schools, skills and worklessness</p> <p>Dudley – Worklessness, BEST project</p> <p>Housing Market Renewal Area Investment Plans for 06/08 to detail:</p> <p>ESF Objective 3 Regional Co-financing Plan Phase 3 that will focus on pre-recruitment training for the unemployed, older workers (50+) and migrant workers, working in collaboration with JobCentre Plus by taking referrals of clients in receipt of benefits (regional allocation - £30m) contracted by December 2006.</p>
	38. Specific targets and actions relating to basic skills to be set and monitored in provider development plans	<p>Development plans set targets to:</p> <p>Increase 19+ numeracy provision</p> <p>Target wards with highest levels of need</p> <p>Increase NQF provision to minimum of 60 per cent</p> <p>Target offender learner needs</p> <p>Deliver 6,500 basic skills achievements by July 2007.</p>
	39. Target Skills for Life resources on areas with greatest needs within each borough.	<p>As above, plus:</p> <p>Influence non-LSC funds to address basic skills needs in each borough</p> <p>£750k non-LSC funds identified to address basic skills needs</p> <p>1,134 Skills for Life achievements through ESF funded provision 06-07.</p>
	40. Improve basic skills teaching capacity via the Blend Centre	<p>200 places filled on short course CPD</p> <p>50 places filled on customised level 2 Unit 1</p> <p>30 BC tutors on level 4 at university or colleges</p>
	41. Work with regional colleagues to ensure effective implementation of offender learning and skills service.	<p>Black Country providers to have collaborative arrangements in place to deliver learning to offenders in the community by April 2006.</p>
	42. Develop actions as a result of the strategic framework to address the adult learning need in Black Country and North West Birmingham	<p>Agreement of strategic framework for adult training by March/April 2006.</p> <p>Commitment given by partners to actions. Funding from partners endorsed in relevant business plans.</p> <p>1,101 NVQ level 1 achievements, 40 level 2 achievements and 621 progressions into employment from ESF Funded programmes</p>

		for 06-07.
	43. Continue to work with the voluntary & community sector workforce to maximise the impact of all sources of funding on the achievement of practical outcomes.	1,800 work placements completed, 135 level 2, 182 level 3 and 32 level 4 qualifications achieved through Backfill, Right People Right Skills, V&C Sector Skills Transformation and Developing Voluntary Sector Organisations projects for 06-07(ESF funded) Deliver workforce development and capacity building programmes, to include level 2 & 3 in certificate of managing V & C organisations; PQASSO to the sector and specifically BME groups; Institute in Leadership and Management qualification level 3 & 4 ; IAG level 3 & 4 & NVQ's 2 & 3, plus a number of non-accredited short courses for board/ committee members and trustees.
	44. Local Learning Partnerships will commission and co-ordinate learning opportunities utilising Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities (NLDC) funds.	3,500 new learners accessing NLDC provision during 2006/07.
	45. Align services with those of partners through their business plans and through the Local Area Agreements.	The need to address skills issues strongly identified in all four Local Area Agreements.
	46. Improve effectiveness in identifying and utilising partnership funding, thereby enhancing the value of LSC capital and revenue funding, and ensuring that spending plans of the various regeneration agencies and partners are effectively combined to support economic regeneration of the area through skills development.	Alignment of LSC and partner plans such as Black Country Consortium including the Black Country Study, Regeneration Zones, Housing Market Renewal, New Deal for Communities, Urban Regeneration Companies and Local Strategic Partnerships.
	47. Ensure plans align with the Black Country Study and with the City Region strategy.	Inclusion of skills strategies in the Black Country Study and in City Region strategy.
Priority 5	48. Target low skilled workers in the public sector.	27 per cent of ETP and NETP participants from health and public services.
Improve the skills of the workers who are delivering public services.	49. Support the delivery of the Children's Workforce Development Strategy.	700 early years & playwork qualifications at level 2 200 early years & playwork qualifications at level 3 500 school support staff at level 2 500 school support staff at level 3 200 school support staff VRQ

		(Funds: Mainstream, NETP, 248 Level 3s through ESF)
Priority 6 Strengthen the capacity of the LSC to lead change nationally, regionally and locally.	50. Strengthen the capacity of Black Country LSC to lead change sub-regionally and locally.	Establishment of four local partnership teams Establishment of economic development team.

Our Delivery Resources

Partnership Working

The LSC is committed to working in partnership, to ensure that improving the skills of local people and meeting the skills needs of local employers remains at the heart of the work of all those working to achieve the renaissance of the Black Country. The development of an education and skills strategy for the Black Country Consortium is a key element of this. The Black Country Study places the transition to a knowledge economy at the centre of the sub region's development plans, and both the chair and the executive director of the LSC are directors of the Black Country Consortium.

In working with local authorities, the development and agreement of a joint 14-19 education and skills strategy has been a highly significant step forward in partnership working. The development of local area agreements, initially in Walsall and Wolverhampton, offers a further opportunity for effective collaboration with local authorities, as does the development of Children and Young People's Trusts in each local authority. Regular dialogue takes place with education planners from each of the local authorities and with the university to facilitate alignment of plans. There is strong local authority representation on the local LSC Council, with one chief executive and one council leader. Higher Education is also represented on the Council.

In identifying priorities for sixth form provision, collaboration with Government Office for West Midlands (GOWM) has been particularly constructive, and GOWM is represented as observers on the LSC Council. The Council also has observers from other key partnership agencies including Black Country Business Link and Chamber of Commerce and Black Country Connexions. The LSC works closely with Connexions on issues such as young people not involved in education, employment and training, and we plan to jointly deliver a key project for young people who are in employment without training. Black Country LSC and Business Link have worked together effectively. Of particular note is the development of Skills Hotline, an effective advice and brokerage service which aligns skills support with wider business support, operating via a single hotline. This reflects our commitment to partnership working with employers to identify skills needs and to plan changes in provision to fully reflect those needs. There is strong employer representation on the local LSC Council.

The LSC has worked in partnership with the regional development agency, Advantage West Midlands (AWM), on a wide range of regeneration initiatives and projects such as the development of the new business learning campus for Walsall, which would not have been possible without AWM's active and financial collaboration. The alignment of our common purpose is reflected in the local implementation of the shared regional skills strategy.

Amongst all the wide range of partnerships, perhaps the most significant has been the partnership between the LSC and local providers of education and training. Whether in the voluntary sector, work-based learning, sixth forms, adult education, external institutions or further education, it is the delivery partners who make the

biggest difference to the quality of the experience for learners and the supply of appropriate training opportunities for employers. The LSC remains committed to working in collaboration with those delivering the service to ensure that it continues to strengthen and to meet the needs of the wider partnership network. The local director team and LSC chair meet with chairs of governors of local FE institutions collectively and individually to discuss future direction and LSC priorities.

We also intend to refocus the role of Learning Partnerships to co-ordinate learning opportunities for adults at a borough/city level to provide a strategic forum which:

- a) contributes to the regeneration agenda, in particular where Local Area Agreements are in place and to support their development where they are not; and
- b) foster first steps provision and progression and achievement from it.

Local Council

The Black Country LSC Council is instrumental in supporting, challenging and driving forward this plan. It oversees the plan's development in Council meetings and monitors its achievement through periodic performance reports. This includes the four sub committees of young peoples learning, skills and adult learning, capital & learning infrastructure and finance, performance and audit. The Council is able to make powerful connections between the work of the LSC and the work of partner organisations and disseminate LSC strategies through it's own networks.

City Region

City Regions are the enlarged territories from which core urban areas draw people for work and services such as shopping, education, health, leisure and entertainment. Interest in City Regions has grown as the "reach" of core cities has expanded, making their formal boundaries increasingly outdated. Interest has also grown due to the recognition that their functional nature makes them increasingly appropriate for a range of strategic issues. The City Region work in the West Midlands brings together seven local authorities including those in the Black Country, with key stakeholders including the West Midlands Regional Assembly, the Local Government Association, Advantage West Midlands, JobCentre Plus and the LSC.

Black Country, Birmingham and Solihull and Coventry LSCs have taken an active role to position the skills and employment agenda as a major driver in the overall City Region strategy. Aligning the work with the Local Area Agreement plans, it aims to develop an integrated employment and skills strategy and close the employment and inactivity gap between the most deprived communities and the rest of the City Region. With the planned development of a City Region Skills and Employment Board, the LSC, with JobCentre Plus and other key partners, plans to implement an "employer driven" employment programme to provide training and employment opportunities for those in the most disadvantaged groups and communities across the City Region.

European Social Fund (ESF)

The six LSCs in the West Midlands have joined together for the first time to manage the UK's first regional co-financing scheme to deliver the European Social Fund (ESF). During 2006/7 we will seek to procure activity worth approximately £60m across the region. This funding will be used to address both regional and local skills issues.

ESF focuses on improving people's skills and employment opportunities. It is aimed at helping three key groups:

- Social minorities and excluded groups – including, helping long term unemployed, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, ex-offenders and people lacking basic skills needed to get a job
- Businesses – helping to boost workforce productivity and the West Midlands economy by supporting the Regional Skills Partnership aim to develop a highly and appropriately skilled workforce
- Local communities – helping to cut unemployment and benefit claims, upskilling communities and helping them to become more sustainable in the long term.

Equality and Diversity

The LSC will ensure that planned activities take account of its duty to promote equality of opportunity in relation to race, gender and disability and responsibilities under other equality legislation including the Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and European regulations relating to sexual orientation, religion or faith and age (due to come into effect in 2006). The local office will work in partnership with colleagues at regional and national level to support the process of equality impact assessments across all functional areas.

Our actions and activities which are covered in this plan will be underpinned by and reflect the Council's race equality scheme.

The Black Country LSC is committed to using equality and diversity impact measures (EDIMs) as the mechanism for monitoring and assessing the impact of its equality and diversity work. The EDIMs cover both 16-18 and 19+ as data showed that the same issues persisted for under-represented and under-achieving groups. They have been determined using local population data together with performance data.

They will be reviewed with providers as part of the annual planning cycle.

The EDIMs agreed for 2005/2008 for the Black Country are:

	Impact Measure	Return Date	Outcomes by 2008	Target Increase
Participation	<p>To increase the participation of under-represented communities at each level of learning</p> <p><i>Origin: Census 2001, FE ILR for 2002/03 and 2003/04 ethnicity breakdown, WBL ILR for 2002/03 and 2003/04</i></p> <p>NOTE: data shows high participation against population for particular groups at level 1 and 2 and low participation at level 3 and above</p>	<p>FE/ACL -F01 – January 2006/F04 Sept 06 WBL – available quarterly</p>	Reducing the gap in participation at all levels of learning	Targets to be determined through three-year development plans
Attainment - reaching learners who are disengaged	<p>To increase the success rates of the black Caribbean's in FE (2003/04 – 60.4 per cent against average 68 per cent)</p> <p><i>Origin: FE ILR data 2002/2003 and 2003/04 achievement rates</i></p>	FE -F05 for 2004/05-Dec 2005	Measures/actions put in place to ensure black Caribbean's achievement mirrors that of other learners	To reduce the gap in success rates to 2 per cent by 2008
	<p>To increase the success rates of those groups of learners below the Black Country average of 43.3 per cent in WBL.</p> <p><i>Origin: WBL ILR 2003/2004</i></p>	WBL- 2005/06 – August 2006	Measures put in place to improve rates of those currently below Black Country average	To reduce the gap of those learners below Black Country average to within 2 per cent
	Employer Training Pilot (ETP) to engage with 2 per cent learners with disabilities from its overall target of	ILR analysis monthly	Target set for 2005/06	76 learners with disabilities engaged

	3,800 individuals			
Work with employers	Employer Training Pilot (ETP) to target engagement of 100 BME businesses	ILR analysis monthly	Target set for 2005/06 – 100 BME businesses	100
Measuring outcomes that identify good practice in equality and diversity	Increase the number of females entering engineering provision (WBL apprenticeship) from 3 per cent (59) to 5 per cent (98) by March 2008 Increase the numbers of males entering care provision (WBL Apprenticeship) from 6 per cent to 8 per cent (149) by March 2008 <i>Origin WBL data 2003/04</i>	WBL – quarterly and full return August 2006 for 2005/06	98 149	2% 2%
	Disability not known in FE to reduce from 21.3 per cent to 18 per cent by 2008. Disability not known in ACL to reduce from 53 per cent to 40 per cent by 2008. <i>Origin FE ILR 2003/04 and ACL return 2003/04</i>	FE/ACL - F01 2005/06 – Jan 06 F04 2005/06 – Sept 2006	FE reduction of 3.8 per cent ACL reduction of 13 per cent	18% 40%
	To increase the success rates of learners with disabilities within WBL to the Black Country average (baseline 26 per cent against Black Country average of 43 per cent) <i>Origin WBL ILR data 2003/04</i>	WBL – August 2006 for 2005/06	Measures put in place to increase the success rates of those with disabilities	Reduce the gap of those with disabilities achieving success (via three-year development plans)

LSC Workforce Diversity Goals

The LSC has Workforce Diversity Goals and the table below shows the workforce profile for LSC Black Country as of December 2005.

LSC Workforce Diversity Goals	Goal by 2010	Actual proportion of LSC Black Country workforce – Dec 2005
Proportion of LSC employees who consider themselves to have a disability or limiting illness.	7.5%	1.2%
Proportion of the LSC's workforce from non-white ethnic minorities.	3%	18%
Proportion of ethnic minorities in senior roles (band 3 or above).	5.55%	6.67%
Proportion of women in senior roles (band 3 or above).	51%	52.0%
Proportion of men in band 1 roles.	32%	23.5%

Learners with Learning Difficulties and / or Disabilities

The region has commissioned a review of provision and support for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD). This review, chaired by the Executive director for Coventry and Warwickshire, will bring forward recommendations for the development of provision to better meet the needs of learners within the region. As far as is possible, it will allow for the further development of the network of specialist providers to meet the requirements of those who need specialist and residential provision, and for development work to improve the ability of mainstream providers to meet the needs of a wider range of LLDD learners.

In addition, the region is working with the RNIB to develop a support strategy for learners with visual impairments and is hosting a secondee from NIACE to coordinate the West Midlands Mental Health Network.

Locally, we are engaging with transition planning groups at borough and city level with key partners such as Connexions, Health, Social Services, Special School Heads and SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) to identify future provision needs for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the roles of the different partners in enabling access to provision. The transition planning groups report into the Children's and Young People's Strategic Partnerships.

Offender Learning

The West Midlands region assumes responsibility for learning and skills in custody from the 1st of August 2006 and already has responsibility for the offenders in the community. The rationale for the transfer of responsibility to the LSC is to create an integrated approach to the delivery of learning and skills. This is to be achieved by improving the quality and consistency of provision in custody, to deliver learning

equivalent to that in the mainstream. The region is divided into three partnership sub areas in order to manage the new arrangements. There is also a regional board and operational group linked to the cross government priority of reducing re-offending. Each local office currently has an 'offender lead' who has been working with the regional team to establish effective partnerships in custody and the community. There are 13 prison establishments and four probation areas in the region.

ICT and e-learning

We will exploit the investment in the ICT infrastructure with partners at national, regional and local level to raise standards and achievements through aligning planning and funding usage. For example, Black Country Digital Challenge Bid, mobile technologies in Dudley and Wolverhampton ITQ delivery.

Sustainable Development

The LSC has a huge opportunity to make a difference to sustainable development. If the messages and actions of our own organisation, those with which we work, and the learners which we fund could be adapted then we have a strong role to play.

In 2005, we published a strategy for sustainable development- *From Here to Sustainability*. Our vision is that the learning and skills sector will proactively commit and contribute to sustainable development through its management of resources, the learning opportunities it delivers and its engagement with communities.

In order to do this we must address the issues around environmental sustainability and use our influence, funding and approaches to achieve this vision. Although sustainable development is about much more than halting climate change and environmental considerations, tackling this agenda will go along way to making the LSCs vision a reality. The West Midlands is playing a strong lead in ensuring that the issues are addressed in a robust and meaningful way as follows:

- Ensuring that our own, and our providers internal ways of working are environmentally sustainable e.g. converting to more environmentally friendly fuel options, adopting the principles of reducing, reusing and recycling waste
- Ensuring that the principles of sustainability are embedded into the curriculum and qualifications which we fund e.g. by requiring learners to undertake the sustainability option where there is currently a choice within the qualification. Further examples relate to using each curriculum area to further learner's understanding of climate change issues through relevant issues within their chosen vocations e.g. better construction methods, treatment of chemicals for hairdressers, etc.
- Ensuring that we are building the principles into our skills strategy by making the link between sustainability and the industries important to it. For example, recognising the need of employers within the renewable energy sector

- Sourcing examples of good practice and using this as a basis for further awareness raising.

Staffordshire LSC is taking the lead on this issue regionally and is the representative for all local offices on the national implementation group.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of learners is a fundamental value for the LSC. We believe that learners are entitled to learning that takes place in a safe, healthy and supportive environment. Our policy is to adopt a “best practice” role with regard to the promotion of learner health and safety, by applying the following four core principles:

- to expect that colleges and other providers funded by the LSC will fully meet their legal obligations and “duty of care” to learners
- to seek assurance that colleges and other providers have suitable and sufficient arrangements for learner health and safety
- to take appropriate action where expected standards are not met or maintained
- to promote the raising of standards for learner health and safety through support and challenge as appropriate.

End Notes

- ¹ Labour Force Survey 2005
- ² Labour Force Survey 2005
- ³ IER 2005' Working Futures II (NB: discrepancies might occur due to rounding of figures)
- ⁴ DfES 04/05, Statistical First Release
- ⁵ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ⁶ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ⁷ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ⁸ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ⁹ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ¹⁰ DfES 04/05, Performance Tables
- ¹¹ DfES 04/05 Performance Tables
- ¹² LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ¹³ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ¹⁴ Labour Force Survey
- ¹⁵ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ¹⁶ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ¹⁷ LSC 2005, Individual Learner Record
- ¹⁸ A detailed assessment of the skills needs of the Black Country can be found on <http://www.blackcountryobservatory.co.uk/researchdetails.asp?id=602>

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