



Leading learning and skills

Learning and Skills Council County Durham Annual Plan 2006-07

May 2006

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

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Our Vision

Learning and Skills Council County Durham has a Vision to transform the landscape of post 16 learning in the County. We will lead the delivery of high quality learning and skills, driving economic competitiveness and making a real difference to the people who live and work in the county.

We have already made significant progress towards our Vision. During 2004 - 2005 we exceeded extremely challenging and ambitious targets. As a result of our actions, we:

- Have more young people participating in learning than ever before.
- Saw increases in both young people and adults achieving Level 2 and Skills for Life qualifications.
- Raised employer engagement in learning to its highest level ever.
- Completed our Strategic Area Review and 14-19 Area Inspection to give a blueprint of the future
- and opened New College in Durham.

Our challenge now is to raise the bar even further and to drive a passion for learning across the County. Our Annual Plan reflects these challenges:

- We have increased targets in priority areas of learning, striving for higher achievements so we can raise skill levels across the county
- We have identified the changes needed so that learning is responsive to the needs of the labour market and Sector Skills Agreements and;
- We have created targeted approaches to meeting the needs of young people, adults and employers across the county. This will focus our activities on the large numbers of young people not in education, employment or training and on the deep rooted issues of economic inactivity.

We expect far greater collaboration in aligning resources to deliver these changes. We will tackle difficult issues. We will lead, we will be innovative and we will be ambitious in supporting economic competitiveness and social inclusion in County Durham

2006/2007 will also see the implementation of structural change within the LSC itself. A new partnership team will be set up for County Durham supported by a regional service centre. This new team will provide a sharper focus for our local work, supporting our partners and shaping local provision. The Council itself will play a key role in this, providing continuity at a time of change and guiding the successful transition of our plans and actions.

LSC County Durham believes passionately in working locally. Through our *agenda for change* programme we can strengthen our capacity to lead change at all levels and further increase our effectiveness in supporting local delivery.

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 North East

The Regional Skills Partnership Action Plan has recently been revised, but retains the seven objectives set out for 2005/06. Our commitment, as a member of the Partnership, is to all those objectives. But our operational focus and the focus of our resources should be on those to:

- Increase employer demand for, and investment in, skills.
- Raise individual aspirations and demand for learning and provide individuals with opportunities throughout life to achieve their aspirations and embrace change.
- Enable those excluded from the labour market to access learning and sustainable employment.
- Ensure all individuals have the foundations for employability - the attainment of skills for life and a first level 2 qualification.
- Increase the achievement of intermediate and higher level skills to support growth, innovation and productivity.
- Enable colleges and learning providers to be more responsive to employers' and learners' needs.

And we endorse the Partnership's priorities, which are to:

- Develop Management and Leadership skills and capability
- Increase the proportion of the workforce qualified to Level 3;
- Support individuals not currently participating in the labour market to access learning and sustainable employment
- Ensure young people are motivated and skilled in order to enter and succeed in an increasingly knowledge based labour market

We respond to those objectives and priorities in the context of our national priorities and our understanding of the local context.

Progress Towards County Durham Headline Targets ^[1]

Target Area	Target 2003/2004	Achievement 2003/2004	Target 2004/2005	Achievement 2004-2005	Target 2005/2006	Progress toward target 2005- 2006	Ahead / On / Behind Target Indicator
1. 16-18 Learner numbers - consisting of FE, WBL and School Sixth Form elements:							
FE element ^a	7683	6010	5793	5845	6122	4883	
WBL element ^a , including	2950	2658	2000	2450		2452	
Apprentice and NVQ Programmes – Average In Learning ^b , combining:	2000	1798	1143	1666	3918	2125	
Apprenticeships ^a				1204		1155	
Advanced Apprenticeships ^b				406		520	
NVQ learning ^b				56		123	
Entry to Employment (E2E) – Starts ^b	950	860	857	784		327	
School Sixth Form Element ^c	3200	3222	3382	3363		3418	
Total 16-18 Learner numbers	13833	11890	11175	11658		10753	
2. Success Rates - FE - All Courses and Ages ^d	70%	78.00%	73%	80.00%	75.0%	Not yet available	
3. Success Rates - WBL Floor Target - All Programmes and Ages ^b , including	39%	44.49%	47%	53.35%	49%	53.5%	
Apprenticeship Framework Completions ^b			36%	43.30%		47.55%	
Apprenticeship NVQ Only ^b				9.20%			
NVQ Learning Success ^b				66.67%			
4. First Time Apprenticeships – Starts ^e		1555	1968	1532			
5. E2E - Positive Progressions ^b			49%	47%	50%	53%	
6. Skills for Life Achievements ^b	6692	1972 (6086 total)		4664 (10750 total)			

N.B. Latest achievement or progress to data as of: ^a November 2005; ^b December 2005; ^c January 2005; ^d Academic Year 2004/05; ^e July 2005

¹ Source: LSC administrative data

Our Targets

(NB All target numbers will be modified/amended as a result of a regional review of trajectories and targets)

Under priority 1, for young people:

- Increase the proportion of 19- year-olds who achieve at least Level 2 by 3 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 2006 compared to 2004 and a further 22,000 in 2008 compared to 2006.

Locally we need **3,930** young people to achieve a Level 2 qualification in 2006. By 2008 a further 2% will equate to **3,980** achievements.

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 we plan to deliver an additional 40,000 first full Level 2 qualifications in 2006/07 compared to 2005/06.

Locally we plan to deliver **2,157** first full Level 2 qualifications in 2006/07

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 **3,899** 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 71,000 in 2006/07 supporting the achievement of Level 2 and Level 3 qualification targets.

Locally we aim to raise the number of Apprenticeship completions to **893** 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:
 - Support higher level achievements through ensuring effective progression routes from level 2 into level 3 and above
- Reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training by two percentage points by 2010:
 - Provide a targeted approach to engaging young people and ensure provision needs the individual needs of the group in geographical areas
- Increase participation in Higher Education towards 50 per cent of those aged 18 to 30 by 2010:
 - Ensure effective progression routes and appropriate support for young people to stay in learning and access Higher Education

Our Values

Our values set out for us 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.

The Context for Delivery in County Durham

1. Demographic Context

1.1 The population in County Durham is 492,300, a decline of 8,000 people since 1991, with the most deprived areas experiencing the greatest loss. The greatest migration tends to be among the most highly skilled, and from the most deprived areas.

1.2 The population will increase by around 2.3% between 2001 and 2012 largely accounted for by a 27% increase in the retired population. However, the overall working population is expected to fall by around 6,400 (-2%). The 14-19 population will fall by 10% and the 16-18 population stable until 2009, is estimated to decline from c18,944 in 2005 to c16,017 in 2020 (-2,927)¹.

Challenges

- The reducing numbers of young people will need long term consideration with particular focus on future funding and capital investment. It may also require a rationalisation of the curriculum and providers to ensure that the breadth of provision offered to young people is not adversely affected.
- To increase opportunities for highly skilled career choices in order to reduce the outward migration of skilled workers and young people.
- To ensure that strategies for learning opportunities for an increasingly older workforce are in place to meet both the small to medium enterprise (SMEs) and Public sectors
- The ageing population will create changing patterns and new demands for services, particularly in the Health and Social Care sector.

2. Social Context

2.1 More than 30% of County Durham residents live in one of the 10% most deprived wards in England. This figure is almost twice the rate of any other Shire County in England. Further evidence shows that 46% of 14-19 year olds live in the top 30% of most deprived wards in the Country².

2.2 The highest levels of deprivation are found towards the east of the County but there are significant areas of deprivation situated around Stanley, Bishop Auckland and areas near Durham City. These areas display lower levels of learning engagement, achievement and progression among both adults and young people.

Challenges

- Consider existing local variations when developing solutions paying particular attention to identified deprivation most prevalent in particular areas in the east, north and south- west of the County.
- Tackling high levels of economic inactivity, working with providers to provide a range of health work and skills related support.

¹ Durham County Council Economic Development Unit

² Index of Deprivation (ID2004) ODPM

3. Employment Context

3.1 Employment opportunities within County Durham are constrained by the unusual profile of the employer base. There is an over-reliance upon traditional sectors, including manufacturing and the public sector and low levels of growth in the service and knowledge-based sectors.

3.2 There are persisting low levels of entrepreneurship and poor rates of business formation. The County has among the lowest levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross Value Added (GVA) and earnings per capita in the country³. The area is also prone to low levels of demand for skills by employers which has an adverse effect on the placement of young people and the take up of higher level skills by adults.

3.3 In County Durham, Manufacturing, Public Administration and Retail & Distribution account for 75% of employment⁴. Manufacturing, particularly prevalent in Sedgefield, Derwentside and Easington, continues to be a significant employer but is expected to continue the decline seen in recent years; this will be particularly noticeable among low skilled occupations. Similarly, occupational profiles show that the proportion of Level 4+ occupations, management, professional and technical occupations remain significantly lower in County Durham (33%) than nationally (40%). Conversely there is a high percentage of local employment at Level 2 and lower occupations. Entry level qualification thresholds for many sectors is increasing, this will have particular impact on the development of the local provision.

3.4 Growth is expected to occur in a number of sectors and occupations including Health and Social care, the Public Sector, Retail and Business Services. Occupational growth areas include management; professional, technical occupations, Personal Service and Sales/Customer care occupations. The sector and occupations which are likely to experience growth will be principally located in Mid Durham whilst those sectors and occupations most likely to see reductions are in Sedgefield, Easington and Derwentside. Despite the reductions in employment expected in many sectors, there are still high numbers employed in these sectors which will still need to be serviced by local provision.

3.5 Skills and qualification growth will be driven by the changing structure of local employment with growth most likely among management, technical and specialist occupations, these are relatively skilled and qualification intensive occupations. In addition employer demand is likely for more generic skills, often distinguished by occupational level. These skills include communication, customer handling and team working.

3.6 Whilst sector and occupation changes can be differentiated by geography, so too can skills and qualification demand. Demand for Level 3+ qualifications are expected to be more prevalent in Mid-Durham with demand for Level 2 and below more prevalent in South West Durham Easington and Derwentside.

3.7 There is still substantial evidence of gender bias both in learning and employment across the County with traditional male/female occupational stereotyping remaining strong in many sectors.

³ Office of National Statistics – Regional Trends

⁴ Annual Business Inquiry Employee Analysis

3.8 Local evidence shows that County Durham has a smaller proportion of knowledge based employment than anywhere else in the country⁵; additionally there is a lower proportion of employees at management level. Given that economic growth locally will be dependant upon management possessing sufficient knowledge to identify market opportunities and developing the capability within their organisations, it is essential that management have the necessary understanding of the key elements in the development of skills to support growth, innovation and productivity.

3.9 Employers expectations in terms of delivery of provision are:

- relevance to the workplace
- quality of provision
- value for money
- appropriateness of accreditation⁶

3.10 Currently only 14.5% of local employers within County Durham engage with the FE sector compared to 15.7 nationally. This represents approximately 2000 employers⁷.

Challenges

- The public sector is a major employer in the County. The response of local providers is pivotal, across a range of skills and levels to meet the needs of the public sector, with particular emphasis on encouraging the employment of Apprentices.
- The LSC will work with key partners to encourage the development of higher level management skills in organisations as a key element in wider development of skills growth.
- Skills growth and occupational changes are differentiated by geography in the County, the LSC will ensure that provision is responsive to localised demand and reduce the gender stereotyping that still exists in both learning and occupational areas.
- To ensure that the local provider networks and the FE sector engage with employers and respond appropriately to their needs.

4. Sector Profiles

The Learning and Skills Council County Durham has established six priority sectors based on those sectors with expectations of growth or high levels of employment. They are

4.1 Public Sector

(more detailed information will be available following publication of public sector research)

A high proportion of the local workforce is employed in public administration. Many staff currently hold a Level 4+ qualification but a significant proportion of public sector staff do not have a Level 2 qualification. Growth in this sector is expected to occur at management and senior level. There is evidence of skills requirements in procurement, performance management, financial and project management. But also more generic skills such as ICT and industry specific customer service skills.

⁵ Local Futures

⁶ Learning and Skills Council Local Employer Survey 2003

⁷ National Employer Skills Survey 2003

4.2 Health & Social care

There is expected to be a significant increase in employment in this sector in particular at higher and intermediate level occupations. There are also a significant number of employees without a Level 2 qualification. The sector currently suffers from skill shortages in key intermediate level occupations including radiologists and pharmacists. In the short to medium term consideration will be given to the change in working patterns and the different skills needed to meet new demands in delivering efficient services. In addition generic skills feature highly in this sector in particular ICT and partnership working skills.

4.3 Retail Sector

There will be considerable growth in this sector principally in general retail activities. The majority of this growth will occur in Mid Durham. This sector is characterised by high staff turnover, low skills, and low pay. This sector is sensitive to early changes in demand and technology which impact on skill demand. Skill demands are largely for the generic skill sets of customer service skills, communications and team working. But sector skills such as retailing, purchasing and ICT (Stock control) are also in demand. There may be in excess of 5,000 employees in this sector without a Level 2 qualification.

4.4 Tourism & Hospitality sector

There is a higher proportion of staff employed in this sector than nationally. It is characterised by low job tenure, high turnover, low skills, low pay and poor employment perception by young people and adults. The majority of the workforce is employed in low level occupations and do not have a Level 2 qualification. However, skill shortages appear to be most prevalent among higher level occupations in particular hotel and leisure management. Similarly, with other sectors, generic skills feature highly among employer demand including customer facing skills, communication and team working. Skill gaps which appear to be most prevalent in this sector are management skills.

4.5 Manufacturing and engineering sector

This is a large but declining sector. The principal loss of skills are occurring among unskilled occupations, however there will be some growth among higher level occupations, particularly management level qualifications. Currently there appears to be recruitment difficulties among skilled craft workers and professional/technical staff. In addition there are skill shortages among multi-skilled technicians, maintenance technicians, industry specific ICT staff (CAD/CAM) and marketing.

4.6 Construction sector

The construction sector has shown considerable growth in the County in recent years, although employment growth is expected to remain static for the medium term it is still a high volume employer and there will be high demand for young people.

Locally there is a high concentration of employment in the sector. Although employment is expected to remain stable, there will be a loss of employment among less skilled occupations. Where there is growth it will occur among management and

technical staff. There is a significant drive towards qualifications within the sector at all levels but employers are indicating that Level 3 is increasingly becoming entry level for young people. Demand will be strong for particular occupations including maintenance workers, plumbers, electricians, roofers, wood trades and scaffolders.

In addition to the six identified key sectors that are prominent in County Durham and specified in the Strategic Area Review, local Council has also identified the need to recognise those sectors providing a significant contribution to the future regeneration of the County.

Arts and Culture, Sports and Science are further sectors which can play a particular part in the regeneration of communities and the local economy. Arts projects such as the Gala Theatre, sporting developments such as the Durham County Cricket Ground and the continued expansion of NETPark will inspire the workforce of the future. These sectors also provide opportunities to encourage and influence entrepreneurship and improve the quality of life for people and the prosperity of the County as a whole.

Challenges

- To ensure funding is responsive to the needs of sectors with particular emphasis to sector skills agreements and local priorities and encourage employers to engage with apprenticeships in those sectors.
- To work with the RSP to align funding to deliver Level 3 provision and increase employer investment to meet higher level skills.
- To increase the proportion of first Level 2 provision purchased in priority sectors.
- To work with providers to ensure that appropriate courses at the right levels are available to meet the needs of the four planning areas, and contract with providers for flexible and accredited provision that contributes to LSC targets.

5. Young People

5.1 The overall 16 -18 population⁸ fell by 1.3% between 2004 and 2005 to 18,944⁹. During the same period, participation in learning increased by 1% to 80.5%, it is however, still below the national average. Despite clear improvements in most areas of the County, there are still areas of high and persistent non-participation adjacent to areas of relatively high participation, which correlate strongly with areas of high deprivation and low adult participation. Although participation at age 16 is increasing there is considerable concern at the level of non-participation at age 17.

5.2 The young people in County Durham display particular characteristics in comparison to their regional counter-parts¹⁰, These include; low aspirations towards Further or Higher Education, poor aspirations towards high levels of employment and more young people (27%) leave school before taking any exams. There are also clear differences between the motivations and expectations of boys and girls, with girls appearing more focused and ambitious, self motivating, and able to work harder towards qualifications. This is reflected in Key Stage 4 results and the higher number of males in the NEET group.

⁸ County Durham Connexions service

⁹ Durham County Council Economic Development Unit

¹⁰ Centre for Public Policy Northumbria University Young People's Attitudes to Education in the North East 2003/03

5.3 Achievement at GCSE is a crucial indicator of future participation in learning and an indication of projected Level 2 achievement at 19. The results for 2005/06 show that the County A*-C (Level 2) pass rate has increased by 4.4 percentage points to stand at 51%, although still below the national pass rate, it is closing the gap¹¹. However, in 2004 only 36.3% of young people passed at Level 2 with Maths and English. Clearly increasing Level 2 pass rates at this age will have significant impact on the achievement of Level 2 and 3 at age 19.

5.4 At any one time there are around 2,500 young people forming part of the NEET group. This figure has been reducing steadily in recent years but still represents a key group for re-engagement in learning. Although not a homogeneous group they do display characteristics which can be used to determine longer term strategies. Many of these young people are identified prior to leaving school through non-attendance and failure to take exams with many coming from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. The highest proportion of NEET's are in South West Durham with a higher proportion of males in the 16-18 group, in particular among 17 year olds. Many of them have participated in learning or employment prior to becoming NEET, making retention and progression a key issue. The highest proportion of NEET's joined the group from employment, particularly from employers who offer no training opportunities, also a high percentage are young offenders.

5.5 The Apprenticeship target for 2004/05 of 1,968 starts in County Durham has been exceeded. However, from July 2005 the target will change to 75% increase in framework completions. Although no local targets have been allocated, local analysis suggests that to meet the target 809 completions will be required in 2005/06 and 893 and 975 completions will need to be achieved in the following two years. Local evidence shows that despite the success of Apprenticeships there are still negative perceptions held by employers, young people, and their parents. Work with pre 16 year olds shows that only 7% felt that they would consider an Apprenticeship whilst one quarter stated they definitely would not pursue this career option.

5.6 The number of young people in School sixth forms has increased by 1.06% (January 2004 – January 2005) an increase of 55 for the period. Forecasts from the Local Authority suggest numbers will remain static until 2009 thereafter declining.

5.7 The highest number of courses offered in the County are at Level 3 whilst the least number are at entry, pre entry and Level 1¹². The recent Area Inspection highlighted the lack of opportunities at these levels which have a particular impact on progression for young people in the NEET group. Additionally appropriate Level 1 provision is required before movement to Level 2 provision can be considered, for the high proportion of young people who leave compulsory education without qualifications.

5.8 The number of people aged 19 will fall from 6248 in 2003/4, to 6122 in 2005/06. In 2003/04 3,826 or 61% of young people achieved a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 this compared to 67% nationally. To increase by 3% points the number of young people who achieve a Level 2 by 2006 then 3,933 young people need to achieve a qualification out of an estimated population of 6,122. By 2008 a further 2% will equate to 3,984 achievements out of a reduced population of 6014.

¹¹ County Durham Local Authority

¹² LSC County Durham Curriculum Map

In 2003/04 1,990 or 32% of the target age group (6,248) achieved a Level 3 compared to 42% nationally.

5.9 The recent Area Inspection identified that only 19% of young people from County Durham entered Higher Education. Active work through Aspire and work with Foundation degrees should start to improve this rate. Local research also shows that many young people do not believe they are “clever” enough to go on to Higher Education and many are unclear how to access information on HE. In addition, many who are qualified at a higher level hold negative perceptions about the prospect of suitable employment in the North East following their HE course.

Challenges

- To address issues of low participation, retention, (particularly at age 17) and progression in specific planning areas of the County ensuring full range and scope of provision is offered to all young people, including the development of provision at pre entry, entry and Level 1.
- To work with ASPIRE and through partners to address issues of low aspirations towards post 16 learning, HE, and higher level employment.
- To continue the improvements in the achievements and availability of Progression Routes available for pre -16 young people and identify young people who are likely to become part of the NEET and Not Known groups, whilst still in compulsory education.
- To offer support to employers who employ young people but do not offer training and improve their perceptions and those of young people and parents about vocational learning opportunities.

6. Adults

6.1 The adult skills profile reveals that the County has a lower proportion with a Level 4+ qualification (14.5%) compared to England (20%). Conversely, the percentage of individuals with no qualification in the County (36%) is higher than England (29%). Similarly, there are fewer adults qualified at both Level 2 (57%) and 3 (38%) in the County than the Country as a whole. However, variations exist within the County, for example 44% of Easington residents have no qualifications and only 9% have Level 4, compared to Durham City¹³ where 22% have a Level 4 and 27% have no qualification.

6.2 A key issue in the County is the economic inactivity rate which is some seven percentage points above the rate for England (32%). Local research shows that high rates of inactivity are localised and correlate strongly with low education participation and achievement levels.

6.3. A high proportion of adults have literacy and numeracy problems, with some areas of the County displaying rates in excess of 30%¹⁴. Significant progress has been made in recent years in tackling this problem, with 72% of the 2007 target of 14,600 already achieved. Further local research into Skills for Life shows that literacy provision is meeting demand in both Easington and Derwentside (those areas of highest need). It would appear that demand is not being met in areas around Durham City and Sedgefield in both literacy and numeracy

¹³ Source: local area labour force survey (Mar 2003-Feb 2004)

¹⁴ Basic Skills Agency

6.4 Key groups of adults are not engaged in any form of learning, including, older adults, disabled adults, the unemployed, the economically inactive, offenders and those with no qualifications. There are clear “learning rich” areas of the County i.e. Mid-Durham, whilst the East of the County, Wear Valley and Derwentside have a far lower proportion of the adult population having either been engaged in learning in recent years or currently engaged in learning. Local research shows many people in these disadvantaged groups do not see engagement in learning as a priority as it is perceived to have no impact on their life chances¹⁵.

6.5 Employment is the principal driver for learning which emphasises the importance of initial advice and guidance that both employers and adults receive. In addition the quality of adult learning is a key issue as a positive experience will encourage adults to further learning¹⁶.

Challenges

- To ensure the appropriate volume and level of provision is available to meet employer needs, in both specific sectors and appropriate locations.
- To ensure that flexible and appropriate learning opportunities are made available to disadvantaged groups.
- To ensure that Skills for Life provision is available and delivered equally across all areas of the County.
- To work with providers, employers and other partners to address the low level of participation and progression to further learning among specific groups and ensuring that appropriate Information and Advice is available for people who wish to engage in learning

¹⁵ LSC County Durham Local Household Survey 2003

¹⁶ LSC County Durham Local Household Survey 2003

Regional Skills Priority and Provision Analysis Matrix - 04/05 – County Durham

Under 19	High		Medium		Low		Total	
	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	% of Overall
Likely to contribute	10,285,626 14723	56%	4,393,218 2897	24%	451,795 697	2%	15,130,639 18317	82%
Potential to contribute	915,288 1740	5%	303,484 725	2%	0 0	0%	1,218,772 2465	7%
No longer eligible for LSC funding	190,843 489	1%	250,696 96	1%	2,284 46	0%	443,823 631	2%
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%	1,738,752 N/A	9%	1,738,752 N/A	9%
Totals	11,391,756 16952	61%	4,947,399 3718	27%	2,192,831 743	12%	18,531,986 21413	100%

19 and Over	High		Medium		Low		Total	
	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	%	£ and Enrols	% of Overall
Likely to contribute	7,604,456 13698	36%	2,979,481 5774	14%	180,889 338	1%	10,764,826 19810	50%
Potential to contribute	7,005,739 19880	33%	1,612,534 7702	8%	22,067 156	0%	8,640,341 27738	40%
No longer eligible for LSC funding	1,762,666 7675	8%	84,115 157	0%	75,094 1907	0%	1,921,876 9739	9%
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%	46,363 N/A	0%	46,363 N/A	0%
Totals	16,372,861 41253	77%	4,676,131 13633	22%	324,413 2401	2%	21,373,405 57287	100%

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

Further Regional Areas of Focus

Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

The numbers of those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) across the North East remain significantly above the national average (see Table 1). Accordingly, this is the single additional area of focus identified for the North East for 2006/07

Table 1: 16-18 NEET – North East Region						
	November 2004			November 2005		
	Number of NEET	% NEET	% Not known	Number of NEET	% NEET	% Not known
County Durham	1,661	11.1%	9.1%	1,761	11.9%	9.2%
Northumberland	689	7.3%	6.3%	818	8.7%	5.0%
Tees Valley	2,367	10.2%	18.3%	2,453	9.8%	6.4%
Tyne & Wear	4,460	11.8%	7.5%	4,239	11.3%	7.5%
North East	9,177	10.7%	10.8%	9,271	10.7%	7.2%
England	110,397	7.1%	6.8%	112,648	7.1%	6.8%

Source: Connexions

A regional review of NEETs identified a number of the challenges we face in achieving the nationally-agreed target of reducing the NEET group by 2 percentage points by 2010. This work is currently suggesting that, in order to close the gap with the national average, a regional reduction of 4 percentage points should be set as the target. In order to achieve this, a number of key strategic actions are being developed. These are:

- Building high level strategic commitment to NEETs through City Regions, Local Area Agreements and through joint regional Connexions services and Children's Trusts which leads to local action by partners through 14-19 partnerships or collaborative arrangements
- Ensuring that 14-19 partnership/collaborative delivery plans include, for example, NEETs targets based on reliable data, a focus on local geographical hot spots, identify the characteristics of those who are NEET, have a clear understanding of the barriers facing individual young people and base future provision on what has been proven to make a difference
- Agreeing appropriate assessment arrangements are in place to ensure learners gain access to the right level of learning and the right level of support
- Ensuring that the right level and range of provision through 14-19 partnerships and collaborative arrangements
- Mainstreaming provision through the flexible use of funding
- Building capacity and quality.

Learner Tracking

The LSC will work collaboratively with stakeholders in young people's learning such as the Local Authorities, Job Centre Plus, Offender Learning and Youth Engagement Service to monitor/track post 16 learners and share data as appropriate.

LSC County Durham will further develop existing mechanisms to ensure that they align with regional processes, and in accordance with the Post Inspection Action Plan will work with partners to implement a tracking and monitoring system throughout the 14-19 phase of learning by 2009.

Key changes needed

The overall aim of LSC County Durham is to provide inspiration and leadership through change for young people, adults and communities in order for them to thrive in a transforming economy. Recognising the differentiated needs of individuals and groups, we will tailor the delivery of provision to encourage social inclusion, progression and far greater achievement. During 2006 and 2007 we will strive to:

- Significantly reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those who are Not Known to be in education, employment or training (Not Knowns). Implement targeted strategies to both encourage and inspire progression into the workforce of the future:
 - Reduce the number from 12.2% (Nov 2004) to 10.5% (Nov 2006) and continue a downward trend towards 8% at 2010
 - Increase retention of 17 year olds in learning and employment with training.
 - Enable progression into key areas of learning by providing pre entry, entry and Level 1 provision that is responsive to the NEET group and is specific to geographical markets
- Provide a greater choice of vocational learning, in particular for young people who are expected to achieve 5 A* - C GCSEs to provide the level of skills necessary to enter into the employment market:
 - Increase the variety of work related provision for young people to include five New Vocational Diplomas Construction and the Built Environment, Information and Communication Technology, Health and Social Care, Engineering and Creative and Media.
 - Facilitate the identification and targeting of young people with a partial Level 2 in FE and schools so that they progress to achieve a full Level 2
- Improve the quality and responsiveness of all provision at all levels and progress a change in provision mix to ensure that employer needs, particularly in the six key sectors are met and capacity increased:
 - Effectively utilise core funding in the purchasing of high quality **Skills for Life** provision and increase the proportion of Skills for Life qualifications that count towards the target from 10,750 to 14,649 by 2007
 - Increase the quantity of **Skills for Life** provision that contributes towards the target from 61% (2003/04) to 80% in 2006/07, concentrating particularly on the public sector and identified Job Centre Plus clients.
 - **Level 2 at age 19** - Increase the number of learners achieving Level 2 at age 19 in 2006/07 from 3,826 to 3,930
 - **Apprenticeships** – Increase the number of full achievements to 900 (75% increase on 2002-2003 completions) by 2007.
 - **Advanced Apprenticeships** – Increase the number of Level 3 enrolments from 11% of total Apprenticeship enrolments to 22% during 2006-2007
 - **Level 2 Adults** – Deliver 2157 full first Level 2 achievements

- Improve the skills of the workforce who are delivering public services, paying particular attention to Apprenticeship Level 2 and 3, Level 3 and 4 management and leadership and Skills for Life.
 - **Level 3** – Increase the number of Apprentice enrolments from X to Y and the achievement rate from X% to Y% for 16-18 year olds and X% for adults
 - **Level 4** (Including Leadership and Management) – Measure to be agreed
- Ensure effective implementation of Train to Gain through an integrated high quality Business Support and Skills Brokerage service to ensure that local employers get the advice and support they need to address their skills needs.
 - Ensure a targeted and flexible approach to delivering high quality provision to SMEs in the County and in particular the six identified key sectors

What we have delivered so far and our planned changes for 2006/07 (sheet 1 of 2)

SUMMARY OF YOUNG PEOPLE (16-18)	2004/05			
	Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £
	Volumes of learners	In-year achievement s (volume)		
FE Total Learners	5786		70.3%	£17,650,618
<i>of which...</i>				
<i>Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications</i>	2675	1962	73.3%	
<i>Learners on a full Level 2 qualification</i>	1269	791	62.3%	
<i>Learners on a full Level 3 qualification</i>	1689	1207	71.5%	
<i>Learners on 2 or more A2 qualis</i>				
Discrete* activity, e.g. fully ESF, or LIDF funded provision				
School sixth form				
Work Based Learning	12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievement s (volumes)	Framework success rate	Funding £
WBL Total Learners	1858		32.9%	£5,810,181
<i>of which...</i>				
<i>Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications</i>				
<i>Learners on an Apprenticeship</i>	1444	467	32.3%	
<i>Learners on an Advanced Apprenticeship</i>	420	131	31.2%	
Entry to Employment	Learners			
	Volume s (starts)	Numbers in learning	Av. length of stay (weeks)	Pos've destination s
All E2E	741	2592	28.6	390
				£3,761,043

2005/06				
Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £	
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)			
5928		72.4%	£20,032,470	
2959	2276	76.9%		
1524	1079	70.8%		
1591	1144	71.9%		
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL	Funding £	
2012		30.5%	£5,662,328	
1584	481	30.4%		
434	124	28.6%		
Learners				Funding £
Volumes (starts)	Numbers in learning	Av. length of stay (weeks)	Pos've destination s	
727	1379	23.9	426	£3,368,908

2006/07				
Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £	
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)			
6203		73.0%	£20,857,052	
3113	2415	77.6%		
1569	1125	71.7%		
1643	1196	72.8%		
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL	Funding £	
2164		32.5%	£6,776,587	
1696	525	31.0%		
474	164	34.6%		
Learners				Funding £
Volumes (starts)	Numbers in learning	Av. length of stay (weeks)	Pos've destination s	
891	3279	22.4	515	£2,785,238

Green header indicates underpinning data is complete

Red header indicates underpinning data is incomplete

What we have delivered so far and our planned changes for 2006/07 (sheet 2 of 2)

SUMMARY OF ADULTS (19+)	2004/05			
	Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £
	Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		
FE Total Learners	45146		78.4%	£18,778,538
<i>of which...</i>				
<i>Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications</i>	1716	1366	79.6%	
<i>Learners on a full Level 2 qualification</i>	2490	2015	80.9%	
<i>Learners on a full Level 3 qualification</i>	1257	899	71.5%	
<i>Learners on 2 or more A2 qual.</i>				
Discrete* activity, eg fully ESF, or LIDF funded provision				
Personal & Community Dev't Learning	12908			£2,404,433
Work Based Learning	12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework success rate	Funding £
WBL Total Learners	897		27.5%	£2,015,849
<i>of which...</i>				
<i>Learners on Skills for Life target qualifications</i>				
<i>Learners on an Apprenticeship</i>	509	168	33.0%	
<i>Learners on an Advanced</i>	386	71	18.4%	

2005/06			
Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		
31333		78.7%	£18,632,387
1894	1509	79.7%	
3110	2407	77.4%	
1578	1164	73.8%	
12914			
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL	Funding £
983		32.2%	£1,868,425
544	203	37.3%	
437	116	26.5%	

2006/07			
Learners		Learning Aims Success Rates	Funding £
Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)		
26010		79.2%	£16,769,986
2188	1728	79.0%	
3161	2458	77.8%	
1593	1188	74.6%	
11551			
12 month average in learning (volume)	Framework achievements (volumes)	Framework achievement / 12 month AiL	Funding £
1036		35.2%	£1,835,216
587	232	39.5%	
445	134	30.1%	

Apprenticeship				
ETP / NETP	Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)	Funding £	
Of which...				
Level 2				
Skills for Life				

Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)	Funding £	

Volumes of learners	In-year achievements (volume)	Funding £	

Budgets	FE	WBL	E2E	SSF	ACL	ETP/NETP	Development Funding	Capital	Administration	Other Programme Budgets
2004/05										
2005/06										
2006/07										

Key actions

Each action should detail how you will deliver the targets and priorities in a local's context. All actions should be mapped to one of the priorities and have measurable key outcomes associated with them. The key areas for action should, as far as possible, reflect the key actions listed under each of the six priorities in the Annual Statement of Priorities.

Priority	Action	Measure of Success
ASP 1. Ensure that all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities	Increase the proportion of young people who achieve a Level 2 at the age of 19 by at least 3 percentage points.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of Learners who achieve a Level 2 by age 19 from 3826 to 3930 • 55% of 16 year-olds to achieve a Level 2 Qualification by Dec 07 (currently 51% have 5 GCSE's) • Increase the number of leavers in e2e progressing to a positive outcome from 53% to 55% • Improve from 3820 to 3930 the attainment of young people already in the system at age 19 • Deliver Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to 4,290 16-18 year olds • Increase the number of 16 year-olds who are in structured learning to 85% by December 2007 (82.4% in 2005) • Using ESF support for 1000 people at KS4 to receive additional targeted support • Provide progression routes to Level 2 achievement for 1244 learners using ESF funding
	<p>Increase the number of Apprenticeship framework completions in 2006/07</p> <p>Using AAG's design an offering which combines the contribution of schools, colleges and WBL providers to ensure clear progression pathways up to Level 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Apprenticeship Completions at 900 (75% of the 2002-2003 baseline) • Increase by 10% the number of employers who offer Apprenticeships with particular focus on the 6 priority sectors addressing stereotyping where applicable. • Increase the proportion of PLP learners who progress to an employer led apprenticeship

	<p>Double the number of Advanced Apprenticeship starts (from 11% to 22%)</p> <p>Engage young people in specialised new diploma pathways</p> <p>Challenge stereotyping to ensure that all learners can access relevant learning opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase to 76% FE learner success rate for 2007/08 • A substantial proportion of Advanced Apprenticeships to be delivered within CoVE provision • Create an additional 4% in learning Advanced Apprenticeship (WBL) with the largest percentage being delivered within CoVE provision • 5 Young Apprenticeship programmes to be available by 2007 • Increase the number of males in Health and Social care • Increase the number of females in Construction • Increase the proportion of people with a disability on Level 2 provision • Increase the number of male ethnic minority enrolments
	<p>Reduce the number of young people who are not in education employment or training (NEET) in County Durham</p> <p>Increase the access of young people to Increased Flexibility Programmes to x</p> <p>Increase the range, scope and variety of "first rung" provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce NEET Figure from 12.2% to 10.5% from Nov 2004 to Nov 2006 • Provide an ESF 'pre E2E' support programme to target 300 young people who are NEET or in danger of becoming NEET • Increase the proportion of Young People in or leaving care progressing into post-16 learning by 5% • Deliver pre-16 activity to 108 people through ESF support • Through OLASS continue to work with the Youth Justice Board and Youth offending Teams, contributing to the 90% of young people to be engaged in education, employment or training. • Increase from 45% to 55% the range of provision at pre-entry, entry and Level 1 in key sectors • Appropriate Level 1 provision to be available to encourage progression to Level 2
ASP 2. Making	Increase the number of full first Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 645 first full Level 2 qualifications through the Employer training

	and engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute towards the delivery of the BIT regional target of 3000 Level 2 and 3 qualifications - 811 Level 2 and 21 Level 3
ASP 3. Transform the learning and skills sector through agenda for change	<p>Improve the quality and appropriateness of provision</p> <p>Purchase provision which contributes towards targets within the priority sectors</p> <p>Continue to transform the learning infrastructure to meet the demands of young people adults and employers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise quality by working with FE, WBL ESF, Train to gain providers and School Improvement Partners Shift the purchase of provision and reduce category 3 provision moving it to categories 1 and 2. Shift balance of provision from non accredited learning by purchasing accredited provision in the 6 priority sectors. Reduce to 22% the amount of provision that does not contribute to targets (<i>currently 42% does not contribute</i>) Implement County Durham's Capital Plan 2006/07 to develop world class learning facilities.
ASP 4. Strengthen the role of the LSC in economic development so that we provide the skills needed to help all individuals into jobs	Contribute towards the Skills for Life national target by improving the basic skills of adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the delivery of qualifying Numeracy & Literacy qualifications from 10,548 to 14,649 Purchase appropriate Skills for Life provision paying particular attention to Durham City and Sedgefield Deliver 477 Skills for Life qualifications through ESF funding Increase to 80% the proportion of adult Further Education delivered Skill for Life qualifications that counts towards targets (in line with 80:20). Increase to 80% the proportion of adult Skills for Life provision that counts towards targets Increase to 100% the proportion of young people's Skills for Life provision that counts towards the target Deliver 509 Skills for Life qualifications through Train to Gain Deliver Skills for Life qualifications to Job Centre Plus Clients

	Support Job Centre Plus Clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Routeways within priority sectors • Deliver the national pilot to adults to access full time education at Level 2 with New College Durham in collaboration with JC+
	<p>Improve Level 2 attainment with stronger progression to Level 3</p> <p>Identify new opportunities and engage employers and FE in each of the Young Apprenticeship Diploma line activities.</p> <p>Support the development of provision to encourage more adults to progress into HE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further reduce franchising in order to provide longer courses for adults from 6% to 4.5% • Build capacity of the sector to enable new models of provision to be developed for people with SEN/LLDD to access FE and WBL • Increase delivery of full first Level 2 via the FE sector by 10% • Deliver 2937 number of full first Level 2 qualifications via Train to Gain • Reduce the number of short publicly funded courses which do not lead to national qualifications • Provide access to education and training for disadvantaged adults through fee remission, learner support programmes. • 33% of 19 year olds to have progressed to HE by December 2007 (<i>Currently 19% of young people entered HE</i>) • To develop Foundation Degrees and high quality diploma's in the priority sectors
ASP 5. Improve the skills of the workers who are delivering public services	Increase the skills development activities within the Public Sector workforce and supply chain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FE colleges and providers to improve their responsiveness to delivery in the public sector • Maximise funding to support Level 3 and above in Public Administration (excluding Education & Health Sectors) • Deliver 15% of the Literacy and Numeracy target to staff within and sub-contracted to the public sector • Contribute towards the regional target to train 850 school support staff with a minimum Level 2 • Broker links to the Employer Training Programme (Train to Gain) to

	Work with public sector employers to increase the number of Apprentices that are recruited & developed across a range of occupational sectors.	<p>maximise take-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of apprentices employed within the public sector by 10% • Local Authority to deliver 23 apprenticeships in care
ASP 6. Upskilling and preparing our own workforce	Complete restructure of new LSC in accordance with Theme 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish local partnership team for County Durham • Manage the transition process to ensure effective delivery • One Economic Development team, covering the Tees Valley and County Durham, in place by 1st June 2006

Our Delivery Resources

Equality and Diversity

The Council will ensure that planned activities take account of our duty to promote equality of opportunity in relation to race, gender and disability and our 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. Our actions and activities which are covered in this plan will be underpinned by and reflect the Council's Race Equality Scheme and the LSC's Equality and Diversity Strategy 2004/2007.

Impact Assessments

The Learning and Skills council recognises its statutory duties under Race Equality legislation and emerging duties around Disability and Gender Equality. 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.

The specific equality and diversity impact measures (EDIM's) for County Durham for 2006/07 are:

1. Increase the number of males in Health and Social care
2. Increase the number of females in Construction
3. Increase success rates of males obtaining at least a Level 2
4. Improve the number of adults who complete at least a Level 3
5. Increase the proportion of people with a disability on Level to provision
6. Increase the number of male ethnic minority enrolments

We also recognise the importance of embedding equality and diversity in our own workforce through the identification, development and dissemination of good practice. At present, the profile of the LSC workforce in County Durham does not represent that of the learners we represent.

In view of the impending LSC restructuring exercise, it is not appropriate to set specific targets at the present time. However, following the completion of the exercise in June we will look to develop appropriate regional targets.

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 Council 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.

Learners with Learning Difficulties and / or disabilities

Under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the Council has a specific responsibility to consider the needs of young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are robust arrangements in place to ensure that this group of learners have access to suitable provision that meets their needs and where appropriate the additional support required.

A strategic review of the planning and funding of LSC provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was completed in September 2005. A regional plan will be developed which will determine current and future demand, establish regional priorities identify gaps in provision and build regional capacity. The plan will be completed by Autumn 2006.

Sustainable Development

The LSC believes that the learning and skills sector should contribute to sustainable development through the learning opportunities it delivers, the way it uses resource and the way it works with communities

In September 2005, The LSC published a strategy on sustainable development. 'From Here to Sustainability'. Our vision is that the learning and skills sector will proactively contribute to sustainable development through the management of resources, the learning opportunities it delivers and its engagement with communities. In particular, during the lifespan of this plan, the LSC, colleges and other learning providers will:

- Decide how best they can contribute to sustainable development through a structured programme of capacity building;
- Have done a baseline audit of current sustainable development activity and identified examples of good practice
- Agree on the guiding principles and approaches they will adopt
- Include criteria for strategic development in all guidance and reporting requirements
- Use their experience of implementing sustainable development to identify risks and opportunities
- Understand what improvement looks like for the sector and develop a reporting framework
- Agree longer term milestones for 2020 and beyond
- Launch pilot projects to develop good practice and contribute towards sustainable development in the sector

LSC County Durham's Future of Learning in County Durham document and Post Inspection Action Plan are key documents to support and underpin this work.

Sustainable development will continue to be a key element of the provider development process

Partnership Working

County Durham remains strongly committed to working in partnership. We recognise the importance of working in collaboration with our key strategic partners in implementing the Learning and Skills Agenda.

Local Area Agreement (LAA)

We are scheduled to be covered by a Local Area Agreement (LAA) from April 2006. LSC is part of the Board arrangements for the LAA in County Durham. The LAA will focus resources in County Durham into a number of themes and targets. Included in the proposed "stretch" targets for the LAA are: achievement at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths) and increasing the achievement of Level 2 qualifications by adults. LSC has committed to supporting the LAA Partnership to achieving these targets and to aligning appropriate budgets with other partners resources.

College Governors

The Executive Director and LSC Chair meet regularly with Chairs of Governing bodies and Principal's to discuss performance, collaboration and Agenda for Change. There are also formal meetings held regionally through the Association of Colleges.

The financial health of Institutions is an area which the LSC reviews on an annual basis. The aim of the review is to monitor the financial health of providers and assess the risk that colleges represent to the LSC. The process covers:

- Review of College Financial Forecasts and Budget reports to college Governors
- Review of the colleges Risk Management and contingency plans
- Discussion regarding potential issues of concern that may affect viability
- Review of the latest ALI Inspection reports with regard to governance, leadership and management.

Personal Community and Development Learning (PCDL)

The LSC will further develop the collaborative arrangements between ACL and FE providers to increase progression opportunities including the routes from first rung learning to Level's 1, 2 and beyond.

Train to Gain

Train to Gain, formerly known as National Employer Training Programme, will be operational across the whole region with effect from 1st April 2006. Contracts with the

existing ETP Phase 4 providers, including ESF providers, will be extended to allow new learners and employers to be engaged from the period 1st April to 31st July 2006.

The LSC will work with employers, skill brokers, the regional Skills Partnership and Sector Skills Councils to discuss and agree the provision required to meet employers skills needs within regional priorities. An open and competitive procurement exercise will be completed in spring 2006 to contract the 'planned but subject to employer choice' element of Train to Gain.

Regional targets are still to be confirmed however they will support the 2006/07 national targets of:

33,000 employers contracted

233,649 learners and

45,616 First Full Level 2 achievements

Regional Skills Brokerage Service

Extensions to the existing Business Link Contract(s) will be made for the period 1st April – 31st July 2006, subsequently one Regional contract will be agreed for the period 1st August 2006- 31st March 2009, subject to annual review. The service will be impartial and independent and will meet the needs of local employers.

Reducing Re-offending Through Learning and Skills (OLASS)

Each year within the North East, there are approximately 4,500 offenders in custody of which over half return to live in the region, 15,000 offenders in community together with 14,000 juvenile referrals to the Youth Offending Service.

Offenders are one of the most disadvantaged groups in terms of access to employment and learning and skills. 52% of men and 71% of women do not have any qualifications, with 80% having numeracy needs below Level 1 and 65% having literacy needs below Level 1. In addition, juvenile offenders form a significant group within NEETS.

The acquisition of skills and qualifications which promote access to employment has been proven to impact on the likelihood of re-offending.

In December 2003, Ministers agreed that responsibility for the planning and funding of offender learning and skills should transfer to the Learning and Skills Council and in August 2005, the LSC in the North East became one of three Development Regions responsible for implementing and developing the New Integrated Offender Learning and Skills Service.

The priorities for 2006/2007 are to continue to improve both the quality and range of provision within custody ensuring that it reflects identified skill shortage areas and employer needs, to increase access to mainstream learning and skills provision for offenders in the community and to drive improvement in terms of learner participation, retention and achievement.

National Language Strategy

The LSC is committed to supporting the implementation of the National Languages Strategy. Regionally we will work with partners such as the Regional Language Network North East (RLN NE), Train for Gain brokers and language skills providers to develop a programme of language and cultural skills for business, including a programme aimed at training the brokers themselves. This will help them identify situations where employers could benefit from having staff trained in language and cultural skills and to understand and identify appropriate language skills provision. RLN NE will then set this work in the context of the Northern Way by working with RLN NW and RLN YH to partner appropriate organisations in the other two northern RDA areas.

Locally we are working with County Durham Strategic Partnership to promote and support delivery of modern foreign languages as part of our 14-19 strategy.

City Regions

LSC County Durham is actively engaged with Durham Partnership in considering the potential impact of city regions covering Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley. While there is recognition that these city regions may foster some growth in parts of the County there are also concerns that public investment may be diverted away from County Durham and remoter, more rural parts of the County will be marginalised.

Agenda for Change

The LSC will undertake a major restructuring in the way that it operates, with a focus on undertaking the most appropriate activity at the most appropriate geographical level. The aim of this change is to raise the impact that the LSC is making in increasing the level of learning and skills of the nation. This work cannot be done by the LSC alone.

Major partners are recognising the benefits of aligning their plans, thereby maximising likely impact and ensuring a joined-up approach. To do that, the LSC has acknowledged a need to strengthen its commitment to working with key local partners. In County Durham, one Partnership Team has been proposed, headed by a Local Director. A sub regional economic development team will support the partnership team also headed by a Director, which will work with local partners to support the economic and social regeneration of County Durham. Together these teams will provide a much stronger focus for our work with partners.

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