

Action Plan for Meeting the Learning and Skills Council Strategy for Coherent Information and Advice Services

February 2005

Of interest to National, Regional and Local Learning and Skills Council colleagues, learning providers and **nextstep** contractors

© For action

This action plan sets out a series of key activities to be undertaken, between now and July 2005, at a national, regional and local level in response to the 7 strategic objectives set out in *Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance Services*, to ensure high-quality information and advice (IA) is at the heart of all LSC provision.

Of interest to National, Regional and Local Learning and Skills Council colleagues, learning providers and **nextstep** contractors

Foreword

The availability of high-quality local information, advice and guidance (IAG) services for learning and work is key to the success of national policies for learning and skills development. The number of adults involved in learning is set to increase dramatically over the next few years, widening participation in learning and raising levels of achievement. To make informed choices, people need access to good-quality, comprehensive and impartial information and advice about local learning and work opportunities and their relevance to the labour market.

The Skills Strategy, *21st Century Skills: Realising our potential* (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003), recognises that high-quality and easily accessible IAG for adults has an important role to play in meeting the skills challenge. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) set out its response to the recommendations for improving services contained within the White Paper within its strategy, *Coherent Information and Advice Services*, published in December 2004.

This action plan sets out a series of key activities to be undertaken at a national, regional and local level to ensure high-quality information and advice (IA) is at the heart of all LSC provision. Local LSCs in conjunction with their Strategic Boards for IAG should ensure that the relevant actions in this plan are incorporated into local IAG strategies.

A review of these activities will be undertaken annually to improve delivery of IA services and determine priorities for the following year.

The LSC is committed to providing a quality-assured and valued IA service. In striving to ensure excellence the LSC will continue to consult with key national stakeholders and IA providers and welcomes your feedback and ideas for further improvement.

Action Plan for Meeting the Learning and Skills Council Strategy for Coherent Information and Advice Services

Table 1: Objective 1: Ensure that excellent information and advice on learning and work is an integral part of all LSC-funded provision

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Excellent and integral IAG for adults is defined for all learners and potential learners throughout all LSC-funded provision	Clarify the DfES requirement for how the National Policy Framework (NPF) applies in an integrated setting	December 2004	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead with DfES
	Map current practice across all LSC provision including local initiative and development (LID) funds and European Social Fund (ESF) and guidance where it exists	August 2005	Local LSCs
	Support implementation and roll-out of Level 2 entitlement	From August 2004	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead and pilot regions
	Establish common processes for the collection of data relating to IAG across ESF and LID-funded IAG provision	August 2004	LSC National Office IAG, Learner Support and ESF Policy Leads
	Define and set out the purpose of IAG in the LSC Service Delivery Specification	August 2004	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
Establish clear links to learner support funding and learner entitlements, such as the Adult Learner Grant (ALG) and Level 2 entitlement	Integrate IAG into the Level 2 entitlement offer in the pilot Level 2 areas	August 2004 July 2005 – pilots	August 2004 July 2005 – pilots
	Develop use of standard diagnostic form for IAG and a formal referral process	Roll-out August 2005	Roll-out August 2005 LSC
	Explore role of IAG advisers to confirm eligibility		
All LSC IAG-funded providers deliver to common standards of service for IAG services as specified in the Action Plan of the DfES National Policy Framework for IAG	Set out the requirements for all providers in national specification for IA providers 2004/05	May 2004	August 2004 July 2005 – pilots
	Tender the service for main contractor of IA services	June 2004	Roll-out August 2005 LSC
	Produce national statement of service for all providers	July 2004	
	Establish Strategic Boards for IAG working to national remit	August 2004	
Agree a set of actions to ensure those aged 20 and over in further education, adult and community learning and work-based learning are supported by high quality IAG services for adults	Review outcomes of DfES project embedded IAG in further education (FE) colleges	December 2004	DfES, LSC
	Develop and implement a strategy for embedded IAG funded by the LSC	August 2005	LSC

Table 1: *continued*

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Identify and deliver targeted support for adults aiming for Level 3 qualifications in appropriate skill sectors	Take account of regional skill priorities, informed by regional strategic briefings in the planning and delivery of IA services	January – March 2005	LSC
	Incorporate regional skills priorities into Business Planning Cycle and Operations Guide	August 2005	Regional Sector Skills Councils and Regional Skills Partnerships
Develop and implement an effective Communications Strategy for adult IAG services	Map existing communications channels and consult with stakeholders on preferred communications methods	January 2005	LSC National Office
	Produce Stakeholders' Communications Strategy	March 2005	IAG Policy Lead

Table 2: Objective 2: Develop a flexible IAG infrastructure that meets the needs of the learning and skills agenda at national and local level

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Put in place high-level Strategic Boards for IAG in line with LSC Coherent IAG Services for Adults	Set remit for IAG Boards in national IA delivery specification	August 2004	LSC and local Strategic Boards
	Review effectiveness of Strategic Boards	March 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead in partnership with national stakeholders, local LSCs and IA delivery networks
	Produce Strategic Board Development Toolkit	July 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
	Support the development of coherence in local service delivery by producing a series of "Working Together" publications for Connexions, Jobcentre plus, trade unions, Business Link, higher education institutions, prisons	Staggered publication dates in 2005	Local LSCs, Strategic Boards and IA contractors
Procure IA services through a national specification for IA services	Publish National Specification IA services inviting suitable organisations to tender to procure and manage IA services in local LSC areas	March 2004	LSC
	Agree two-year contracting in 2004/05 contracting round	July 2004	
	Move to three-year contracting for IAG Programme Fund	2006/07	

continued over

Table 2: *continued*

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Implement the objectives of the Workforce Development (WfD) Strategy, as this relates to IAG	Identify and build effective working relationships with appropriate intermediaries such as Business Link and Sector Skills Councils at local and national level	2005/06	LSC with Strategic Boards and IAG contractors
	Produce a publication on "Working Together with Business Link" as part of a series of good practice guides	March 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
Implement actions for IAG for adults in the LSC's Widening Adult Participation Strategy	Ensure delivery plans of contractors reflect the need to widen participation of new learners, especially those adults yet to achieve a Level 2 qualification	August 2004 – July 2006	Local LSCs and IA contractors
	Measure the impact of IA services in widening participation in learning through annual independent impact analysis	March 2005 – November 2006	
Work effectively with partners in the voluntary and community sector as IAG and learning providers and as source of specialist expertise	Increase the percentage of local subcontractors drawn from the voluntary and community sector to 30 per cent	December 2004	Strategic Board and contractors
	Assess the contribution of the voluntary and community sector within local Strategic Boards and provide support to local LSCs to improve engagement where appropriate	April 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead

Table 3: Objective 3: Achieve an integrated IAG service to ensure "joined-up" provision from a customer perspective

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Integrate the learndirect national advice service with the work of the local IAG services for adults, including responsibility for the contract for learndirect telephone helpline and advice service	Contract signed for learndirect advice line with LSC	April 2004	LSC, Ufi, learndirect
	Local IA contractors to provide a local contact point and meet other requirements as set out in the national specification for IA service delivery	August 2004	
Implement the IAG National Policy Framework, including actions to achieve the Government's programme of reform for IAG	Produce specification for delivery of IA services that meets NPF requirements	March 2004	LSC, Ufi, learndirect

continued over

Table 3: continued

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Agree a clear national LSC IAG brand to sit alongside a national overarching identifier and national Marketing Strategy for IAG	Agree national brand (nextstep)	August 2004	LSC
	Launch brand to IA contractors and national stakeholders	November 2004	
	Produce a Communications Strategy with IA practitioners	March 2005	
Put in place local LSC marketing for IAG for adults, so that users know what is available where they live	Agree nationally available templates for local LSC and contractor marketing	November 2004	LSC
	Produce a statement of service for customers	November 2004	
	Implement programme of national PR	November 2004	

Table 4: Objective 4: To ensure that all information on learning opportunities, labour market information and funding support is up-to-date, accurate, comprehensive and quality-assured and is made widely available to potential learners

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Implement the minimum standards for information services in conjunction across all LSC IAG-funded providers	Publish the minimum information standards in the national specification tender documentation	May 2004	LSC with Ufi, learnirect
	Publish a recommended resources guide to support local delivery of information services through the national resource service	March 2005	
Ensure the continuing requirement for all LSC-funded learning providers to provide information on learning opportunities to the national system is met	Agreement of standard clause for all LSC contracts Work with DfES to support the successful implementation of the UK National Register of Providers	August 2005	LSC across programmes
Effectively share labour market information (LMI) and ensure all IAG providers and Jobcentre Plus staff have a good understanding of each other's services	Deliver at local level through framework agreements between local LSCs, IA contractors and Jobcentre Plus	Ongoing	Local LSC, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) including Jobcentre Plus
	Convene a series of "working together" events for managers and front-line staff to develop awareness of each other's services, develop effective referral practices and raise awareness of the requirements of the National Employment Panel report Welfare to Workforce Development	February and March 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead and Jobcentre Plus National Tier

continued over

Table 4: continued

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Ensure that LMI is defined and understood, and IA practitioners are trained in the use of LMI	Update, publish and disseminate DfES-commissioned "LMI matters"	November 2004	DWP and DfES
	Convene a programme of national LMI training	April 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead

Table 5: Objective Five: To improve advice services that help the customer interpret and use the information they have been given

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Implement the minimum standards for the delivery of advice services	Publish the minimum advice standards in the national specification tender documentation	August 2004	Strategic Board for IAG
	Let contracts in each local LSC area based on successful contractors' ability to provide access to advice services as set out in the delivery specification		
Review the outcomes of the Enhanced Services pilots to decide future delivery of targeted in-depth services	Publish formal evaluation of Enhanced Services	July 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
Support the enhancement of IAG services for offenders in prisons and the community at national and local level	Undertake background research into the provision of IA services for offenders	November 2005	LSC with DfES, the Home Office and other government departments
	Produce an IA Strategy for offenders	February 2005	
	Produce "Working Together" document	March 2005	

Table 6: Objective 6: To raise the quality and effectiveness of IAG services for adults

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Draw on the outcomes of LSC strategic area reviews (StARs) which relate to IAG for adults, to raise the quality and effectiveness of IAG services	Influence ongoing development of STAR guidance at national level	Ongoing	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
	Ensure StARs consider the implications for IAG services		Strategic Board for IAG
	Feed outcomes of StARs into requirements for subcontracted providers to reflect identified priorities at local level		Strategic Board for IAG and IA Contractor

continued over

Table 6: *continued*

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Require all LSC-funded IAG providers, funded from IAG programme funds, to have achieved the matrix Standard to measure their quality and encourage improvement	Contractual requirement to achieve matrix Standard in order to access LSC IAG programme funds	March 2004 (existing providers) January 2005 or within six months of contract (new providers)	LSC
Bring adult IAG under the scope of Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspection using the common inspection framework	Undertake an IA thematic review Undertake a series of pilots to assess the appropriateness of guidance on the interpretation of common inspection framework for IA services Bring IAG under the scope of inspection from January 2006	July 2004 March 2005	LSC with the ALI ALI, local LSCs, IA contractors
Actively encourage all organisations providing IAG services to learners indirectly funded outside the IAG programme, including further education colleges, work-based learning and adult and community learning, to be accredited to the matrix Standard	Produce a series of briefing events for local LSC staff to raise awareness of the matrix Standard Measure the take-up of matrix accreditation across all LSC-funded provision and produce quarterly reports for local LSC colleagues to inform local developments	January – March 2005 Quarterly	LSC and ENTO LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
Ensure the National Learner Satisfaction Survey takes account of the contribution of IAG for adults to the quality of the adult learner experience	Ensure IAG specific questions are incorporated into the evaluation questionnaire	February 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
Ensure that robust systems for measuring customer satisfaction with IAG services are an integral part of continuous quality improvement of IAG	Undertake annual independent impact assessment of IA services at national and regional levels	March 2005	LSC

Table 7: Objective 7: Measure the impact of IAG services for adults on meeting LSC and Skills Strategy objectives

Proposed action	Milestone	Date	Owner or partner
Establish, implement and evaluate effective impact measures for IAG against LSC objectives	Establish meaningful baseline data and improve data capture techniques and client record systems for IAG	August 2004	LSC and IAG contractor
	Produce quarterly reports on effectiveness of IAG programme	From August 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
	Undertake annual impact assessment of IAG services and produce national and regional reports	March 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead
	Undertake series of regional events to reposition IAG services as underpinning all LSC provision	November 2004	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead and Regional Directors of Skills
	Undertake series of seminars to assess effectiveness of national policy framework and coherent IAG Services Strategy to inform ongoing policy development	December 2005	LSC National Office IAG Policy Lead and DfES

Related Publications

Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance Services

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-050025

Further Information

Visit the LSC online at www.lsc.gov.uk for up-to-date news on the LSC and education and training in England. There's a lot more here about our policies and activities and you can access online versions of LSC publications.

Learning and Skills Council
National Office

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
T 0845 019 4170
F 024 7682 3675
www.lsc.gov.uk

©LSC February 2005
Published by the Learning and Skills Council.

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial educational or training purposes, on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented.

This publication is available in electronic form on the Learning and Skills Council website:
www.lsc.gov.uk

For hard copies of our publications in other formats and languages, call our publication enquires: 0870 900 6800

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-050006