

# Information, Advice and Guidance Strategic Board Papers

Paper One:  
Working in Partnership with  
Key Stakeholders

September 2005

Of interest to members of local IAG Strategic Boards

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This is one of a series of themed papers designed to support Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Strategic Board members. We hope that the ideas here will be used as a focus for discussion in Strategic Board meetings and to support the development of effective IAG strategies in local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) areas.

This first paper focuses on some key principles for effective partnership working and provides some examples of ideas and activities that Strategic Boards have also found useful.

Local LSCs should use the content of this publication to inform discussion and debate at local Strategic Board meetings on Information, Advice and Guidance.

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# Introduction

First mooted in the LSC strategy for 'Coherent IAG Services for Adults', published January 2003, local Strategic Boards for IAG have been convened by the LSC at local level, to ensure a more strategic approach to:

- delivering the seven key objectives of the LSC strategy for Coherent IAG Services for Adults
- planning and ensuring delivery of coherent local IAG services in line with the National Policy Framework for IAG
- targeting of local priority groups while ensuring the universal entitlement is met
- contributing to and drawing on findings of LSC Strategic Area Reviews as they relate to IAG
- the effective integration of all LSC IAG funded provision including IAG core funds, IAG delivered through Further Education, Adult Community Learning, Work-based Learning and Workforce Development. This should also include Local Intervention and Development Fund and European Social Fund co-financing, including locally funded guidance provision
- working with key stakeholders and partners including Business Link and Higher Education to ensure integrated 'joined up' services in their local area.

Feedback from members of local Strategic Boards has highlighted a desire for a series of occasional papers to help stimulate local discussion and debate on a range of IAG issues. This first paper focuses on some key principles for effective partnership working and provides some examples of ideas and activities that Strategic Boards have found useful.

# Some Key Principles

## Clarify what is expected of Strategic Boards

Board members need to understand the Government's expectations of IAG so that local planning is in line with relevant cross-governmental policies and so that they are clear about how IAG supports meeting policy objectives. Arrangements should also be in place to monitor how local IAG delivery supports meeting national objectives.

In order to ensure Strategic Board members develop specialist knowledge, key national documents need to be regularly reviewed. Specific examples include:

- Realising our potential – Skills Strategy (DfES March 2004)
- Welfare to Workforce Development (NEP February 2004)
- National Policy Framework for IAG for adults (DfES March 2004)
- LSC Coherent IAG services for adults (LSC, reprinted February 2005)
- Action Plan for meeting the Learning and Skills Council's Strategy for Coherent Information and Advice services (February 2005)
- Skills: Getting on in Business, getting on at work (DfES March 2005).

The LSC document 'Coherent IAG Services for Adults' describes the role of the Strategic Board for IAG and sets out seven key objectives for delivery of a successful IAG strategy for adults.

Copies of all of these documents are available from the LSC website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

## Good idea

Specific partners could review relevant publications from their national body and present key points/discussion items as an agenda item to enable other Board members to agree local actions. For example, a Jobcentre Plus representative could give a presentation on Welfare to Workforce Development; TUC representatives could present on Union Learning Academies.

Strategic Board members could go on to share local and regional priorities and development work and agree what this means for planning and delivery of IAG services in their area.



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## Understand other organisations and the role of other partners on the Strategic Board

As a member of a local Strategic Board do you really understand the remit and priorities of other member organisations? For example:

- Who are they?
- What policy developments drive their work?
- What are their priorities?
- How are they funded?
- What IAG do they provide?
- What drives their planning and does IAG feature in the planning process?
- How will IAG help them achieve their objectives?
- How do they see their relationship and contribution to the Strategic Board?
- Do partners work on a local, regional national basis?

Most of the key partners represented on local Strategic Boards have websites that set out their role and remit. The LSC has produced a series of 'Working Together' documents in partnership with national stakeholders and these set out principles and good practice for working together. These are available through the LSC website ([www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)) or nextstep website ([www.nextstepstakeholder.co.uk](http://www.nextstepstakeholder.co.uk)).

'Working Together' publications have been produced for Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, Higher Education, and Trade Unions, and are a good starting point for Strategic Boards to review how they will take forward development work with these organisations.

Other useful websites are:

- Connexions – [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)
- Jobcentre Plus – [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)
- Higher Education Institutions – Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) – [www.agcas.org.uk](http://www.agcas.org.uk)
- National Offender Management Service – [www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk)
- **learndirect** – [www.learndirect-advice.co.uk](http://www.learndirect-advice.co.uk)
- Business Link – [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)
- Learning Partnerships – [www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/llp/](http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/llp/)
- TUC – [www.learningservices.org.uk](http://www.learningservices.org.uk)
- Voluntary and Community sector – [www.nacvs.org.uk](http://www.nacvs.org.uk).

These are national websites but there may be local or regional sites that provide more detailed local and regional information. It would be a good idea to share these details and circulate them to staff within your organisations.

### Good idea

The LSC has regular keep in touch (KIT) meetings with Board members outside the formal board infrastructure to develop a better understanding of how organisations conduct IAG in the context of their core business.

### Good idea

Arrange geographic clusters of larger delivery agencies within the local delivery network to mentor smaller ones as they develop their IAG processes. Suggest individual Board members lead each cluster and regularly report to the Board on issues identified and solutions implemented.

### Good idea

Take a thematic approach to meetings, identifying topics useful to all Board members – for example the Employment National Training Organisation could present on the **matrix** quality standard, or **learndirect** provide an update on the learning directory and the engagement of local learning providers.

## Make links and work closely with other local and regional structures

IAG Strategic Board members need to have a clear understanding of how IAG fits within, and contributes to, local and regional policy and planning structures. For example:

- Is there a clear route for the Board to contribute recommendations and actions for IAG to the LSC and other organisations and partners' planning arrangements?
- Do all Board members have clear idea of what this route map looks like?
- Is the reporting route formally and sufficiently integrated into policy and decision making structures at local and regional level? For example, is there a clear link to planning for adult skills?
- How is the Board proposing to work with other Strategic Boards in their region? For example, the Regional Development Agency ([www.consumer.gov.uk/rda](http://www.consumer.gov.uk/rda)), Regional Skills Partnerships, Learning Partnerships, and Sector Skills Councils ([www.ssda.org.uk](http://www.ssda.org.uk)).

### Good idea

Consider a regional meeting of Strategic Boards. There is a lead LSC person responsible for IAG in each region who could help identify areas where regional collaboration would contribute to the development of coherent approaches to IAG.

## Use local demographic data and knowledge of existing provision to extend the range of services available

Map provision of IAG services from all funded sources and obtain information from all Strategic Board members on IAG provision within their organisations.

Share more detailed information between stakeholders and partners about areas of greatest need to help planning for IAG services.

Think about the potential of mapping IAG provision and delivery against national sources of data, such as the indices of deprivation published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) at [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk).

Think about how you can improve information on learning, training and work across all partners and stakeholders.



## Think about how partnership working and collaboration is visible at all levels of each organisation and for service users

Identify whether there are opportunities for shared delivery on each other's premises.

Develop systems (formal and informal) for staff to communicate with each other at all levels.

Identify if referral systems are in place, whether data is shared on how effective they have been and agree any actions for further improvements.

Discuss the potential for shared targets and agree mutual responsibility for their achievement.

Develop innovative projects to meet specific local needs and consider the potential for collaborative funding applications.

## Build joint training and development opportunities across partner organisations to build coherence and shared standards

The LSC published 'Competence and Capacity: Enhancing Information and Advice Delivery Potential' (February 2005) ([www.nextstepstakeholder.co.uk](http://www.nextstepstakeholder.co.uk)). This identifies three priorities to underpin the LSC's national Continuing Professional Development strategy (CPD) for IAG. These are:

- strategic development of IAG services including leadership development, understanding and applying labour market information and the use of performance data to inform strategy and service development
- using business acumen to improve service delivery; and
- coherence in service delivery.

The Strategic Board may wish to take these three priorities as the starting point for considering local CPD priorities and actions for IAG across partner organisations.

## Agree how you will promote IAG within partner organisations and to service users

How will you dovetail IAG marketing into other campaigns such as Adult Learners week and Skills for Life, for example?

How will you coordinate promotion and marketing of IAG across each of the partner organisations?

What role will the Strategic Board play in promoting and embedding the 'nextstep' brand?

### Good idea

Consider whether a regular bulletin on IAG matters could be shared (perhaps electronically) between Board members and other partners.

## Work out where improvements to IAG services are needed, agree what would constitute success and how to recognise you have attained it.

For example:

- Who will carry out monitoring and evaluation of activities across organisations?
- How will you provide evidence of added value and share success stories across partners?
- Could you consider agreeing some shared measures of success over and above specific organisational targets?
- How will you actively encourage IAG partners and providers to become accredited to **matrix**?
- How will you prepare for IAG services being inspected through the Common Inspection Framework?

### **Related Publications**

*Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Services for Adults*

Publication reference

LSC-P-NAT-050025

*Competence and Capacity:  
Enhancing Information and Advice  
Delivery Potential*

Publication reference

LSC-P-NAT-050009

*Working Together: Connexions and  
Adult Information, Advice and  
Guidance Services*

Publication reference

LSC/AA000/1183/04

*Review of Framework Agreements  
for IAG*

Publication reference

LSC/AA000/11028/04

*Working Together: The Learning and  
Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus and  
nextstep Services*

Publication reference

LSC-P-NAT-050010

*Working Together: nextstep and  
Trade Unions*

Publication reference

LSC-P-NAT-050008

*Working Together: nextstep Services  
and Higher Education*

Publication reference

MISC/0686/03

### **Useful website**

[www.nextstepstakeholder.co.uk](http://www.nextstepstakeholder.co.uk)

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