



Leading learning and skills

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

February 2005

Of interest to local Learning and Skills Council,
Jobcentre Plus and nextstep colleagues

In partnership with Jobcentre Plus

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Jobcentre Plus work in partnership at a strategic and operational level to develop where feasible coherent systems to meet the needs of individuals and employers.

The LSC and Jobcentre Plus have produced this document to support more effective joined-up information, advice and guidance (IAG) services (branded as **nextstep**) for adults wherever they are delivered. This publication builds on the outcomes of a *Review of Framework Agreements* for IAG services published in March 2004 and six subsequent case studies.

We intend that this publication will support effective strategic planning through the Strategic Boards for IAG and the development of practical joint working between local LSCs, Jobcentre Plus districts and offices, and **nextstep** contractors that directly benefit all our service users.

© For action

Between now and July 2005, local LSC, Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** contractors should use the content of this publication to inform the development and agreement of local IAG Framework Documents.

Of interest to local Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** colleagues

Summary

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Executive Summary

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Jobcentre Plus – part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – have jointly produced this document to support more effective joined-up information, advice and guidance (IAG) services for adults wherever they are delivered. This publication builds on the outcomes of a *Review of Framework Agreements* for IAG services between local LSCs and Jobcentre Plus districts published in March 2004 and subsequent case studies carried out in six areas.

We intend that this publication will support effective strategic planning through the Strategic Boards for IAG and the development of practical joint working between local LSCs, Jobcentre Plus districts and offices, and **nextstep** services that directly benefit all our service users.

The further development of closer working relationships between Jobcentre Plus, the LSC and **nextstep** services will also be informed by the recommendations contained in the National Employment Panel (NEP) document *Welfare to Workforce Development* and the emerging New Deal for Skills as they impact on wider IAG services.

This publication is intended to:

- provide the background and context for the LSC and Jobcentre Plus working together at national, regional and local level
- set out some principles that underpin successful joint working
- highlight examples of how Jobcentre Plus and local LSCs and **nextstep** services are working together at a strategic level and on a day-to-day basis at district and local level
- support LSC and Jobcentre Plus managers in developing effective local strategic planning and delivery arrangements.

Foreword

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1 One of the key objectives for the Skills Strategy *21st Century – Realising our Potential* (Department for Education and Skills, July 2003) is to achieve closer working between Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide a better service for individuals and employers and raise the skills levels of individuals.

2 The achievement of successful partnership working between the LSC, Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** services will contribute to increasing substantially the number of adults achieving their first Level 2 qualification, help to ensure that services are joined up from the service users' perspective and make more effective use of resources.

3 The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has already set out a minimum core access to information and advice to which all service users should be entitled in the *National Policy Framework for IAG for Adults* (DfES, December 2003) and the LSC has established local Strategic Boards for IAG, which will include senior representation from Jobcentre Plus. The remit for these Strategic Boards, together with some specific actions for LSC and Jobcentre Plus, is set out in *Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults* – the LSC Strategy for IAG for Adults, published in January 2004 and reprinted in January 2005.

4 The LSC and Jobcentre Plus – part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – have jointly produced this “Working Together” document to support more effective joined-up IAG services for adults wherever they are delivered. This publication builds on the outcomes of a *Review of Framework Agreements* for IAG services between local LSCs and Jobcentre Plus districts published in March 2004 and subsequent case studies carried out in six areas.

5 We intend that this publication will support effective strategic planning through the Strategic Boards for IAG and the development of practical joint working between local LSCs, Jobcentre Plus districts and offices, and **nextstep** services that directly benefit all our service users.

6 The further development of closer working relationships between Jobcentre Plus, the LSC and **nextstep** services will also be informed by the recommendations contained in the National Employment Panel (NEP) document *Welfare to Workforce Development* and the emerging New Deal for Skills as they impact on wider IAG services.

7 Finally, we would like to thank all those who took part in the review of framework agreements and, in particular, those who took part in the case studies from:

- Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire
- Nottinghamshire
- South East London
- Suffolk
- West of England
- West Yorkshire.

Aims of this Publication

8 This publication is intended to:

- provide the background and context for the LSC and Jobcentre Plus working together at national, regional and local level
- set out some principles that underpin successful joint working
- highlight examples of how Jobcentre Plus and local LSCs and **nextstep** services are working together at a strategic level and on a day-to-day basis at district and local level
- support LSC and Jobcentre Plus managers in developing effective local strategic planning and delivery arrangements.

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Actions for the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus in the Learning and Skills Council Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy

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In January 2004 the LSC published its strategy document *Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance Services for Adults* (LSC 2004). To deliver the LSC IAG Strategy for Adults, the LSC will chair a local Strategic Board for IAG convened by the LSC at local level. These will include senior representatives from Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, Business Link and other senior partners, such as those in higher education.

10

The LSC IAG Strategy for Adults contains a number of specific recommendations in relation to IAG services for adults and Jobcentre Plus working together. LSC and Jobcentre Plus managers will need to take these recommendations into account and consider how they will manage and deliver them in their local context. Actions include:

- drawing on the outcomes of LSC strategic area reviews that relate to IAG for adults to support closer working between local LSCs and Jobcentre Plus
- working with Jobcentre Plus to share labour market information effectively and ensure all information and advice providers and Jobcentre Plus staff have a good understanding of each other's services

- working with partners, including DWP, Jobcentre Plus and other government agencies to ensure that labour market information is defined and understood, and IAG practitioners are trained in the use of labour market information
- working with partners, including DWP, Jobcentre Plus and other government agencies to ensure that labour market information is shared, utilised and available to employers, information and advice providers and individuals
- working with DWP and Jobcentre Plus to support service users in considering learning and training opportunities and improving referral between information and advice services and Jobcentre Plus.

11

The Strategic Board for IAG should provide the opportunity for both agencies to share information on need, identify the provision that is needed at local level and make sure that local contract arrangements for information and advice (IA) are targeted to meet that need.

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Current Delivery Arrangements

The LSC specification for **nextstep** service delivery sets out the requirements for its contractors as follows.

Jobcentre Plus plays a vital role in providing IA services and the Skills Strategy identifies that closer working between **nextstep** services and Jobcentre Plus will play an important part in delivering an integrated IAG service for service users. Jobcentre Plus is funded by the DWP and will not be in receipt of IAG programme funding. However, Jobcentre Plus should be a member of the Strategic Board for IAG.

The successful contractor will be required to agree with Jobcentre Plus locally how they will work together. Currently each local LSC and IAG partnership has in place a framework agreement with its local Jobcentre Plus district. These have recently been evaluated and a series of recommendations have been agreed to improve local working arrangements.

The delivery plan should demonstrate how the following objectives will be met:

- ensuring staff in the **nextstep** delivery network and Jobcentre Plus staff will have a good understanding of each other's services
- ensuring effective cross-referral arrangements with Jobcentre Plus and the **nextstep** delivery network will be effectively implemented
- ensuring appropriate labour market information produced by Jobcentre Plus will be made available to service users of the **nextstep** service
- maximising the use of WorkTrain
- producing a local framework agreement with Jobcentre Plus.

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The Learning and Skills Council

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The LSC contracts with a main contractor for IA services for adults under the **nextstep** brand to manage the delivery of **nextstep** services in the local area. This main contractor will then sub-contract with local IA providers to meet the needs of the local community for IA services. The contractor is also responsible for ensuring that they, and their sub-contractors, are working closely with Jobcentre Plus to ensure coherence for the customer.

Jobcentre Plus

13

Jobcentre Plus is a large and complex organisation whose vision is to deliver a single integrated service for all benefit claimants of working age. Front-line delivery is through a national network of local offices supported by district tier colleagues in 90 locations across the country. Regional strategies are given on a geographical basis by nine regional offices plus Office for Scotland and Office for Wales and in turn organisational strategy is given by colleagues at national tier from sites in Sheffield and London.

14

Business development managers at district level drive forward relationships between Jobcentre Plus and partner organisations to ensure working age claimants have access to appropriate provision to move from welfare into work. They are also responsible for developing and delivering local marketing initiatives and ensuring that appropriate advice and guidance services operate in the district. The Regional Business Development Manager ensures region- or country-wide partnerships are supporting delivery of the region's or country's objectives. At national level, a Partnerships Division exists to give a national, organisational steer on working with the LSC, regional skills partnerships and IAG services.

15

At district level, local agreements are being developed to detail how Jobcentre Plus and the local LSC will work together to deliver the recommendations in the NEP Welfare to Workforce Development report. These agreements will underpin how partner organisations will deliver jointly against the recommendations and will support Jobcentre Plus achieve its vision and ministerial commitments.

Principles for Achieving Successful Working Relationships

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Through a review of framework agreements and six case studies of local LSCs, **nextstep** contractors and Jobcentre Plus working together, we have identified some principles that are important to achieving successful working relationships between local LSCs, Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** contractors. These cover:

- improving the quality of service for the customer
- clear strategic planning
- active communication
- evidence of practical joint working
- shared values and behaviours.

Improving the quality of service for customers

17

The overall aim for the LSC and Jobcentre Plus working together should be to support an improved quality of service to the service user. As Jobcentre Plus begins to tailor its services more to individual need and works with a wider range of service users and the LSC focuses its priorities on delivering services to those below a Level 2 qualification there will be greater scope and need for the two agencies to be working effectively together to meet the needs of the (often shared) service user group.

18

This will include ensuring delivery of the core service entitlement and principles for coherent service delivery contained in the DfES publication *A National Policy Framework for IAG for Adults* (see Annex B).

19

From August 2004 all LSC IA funded contractors are expected to have achieved the **matrix** Standard for IAG. Although there is no requirement for Jobcentre Plus to take part, some individual Jobcentres have decided to undertake accreditation in the **matrix** Standard to support improvements in the delivery of IA by staff working with service users.

Clear strategic planning

20

The LSC and Jobcentre Plus are committed to working together to ensure that national policy and strategy decisions take account of the need for coherent services for adults, and that appropriate provision exists that is "joined up" from the service user's perspective. This will be achieved by working together at national and local level through the national joint Jobcentre Plus Implementation Group and through joint delivery planning of LSC executive directors and Jobcentre Plus district managers. National working together includes the production of an LSC and Jobcentre Plus Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to cover all areas of joint interest, including partnership principles and joint working arrangements.

21

Other key ways of working together at national level include the following.

- The Skills Strategy Project Board will deliver the requirements of the Skills Strategy.
- Working together on agreed recommendations of the NEP in *Welfare to Workforce Development*. See Annex B.

22

At local level, joint strategic arrangements will need to consider how the LSC and Jobcentre Plus will:

- deliver the key objectives of the LSC's Strategy for IAG for *Adults in Coherent IAG Services for Adults*
- work together through membership of a local Strategic Board for IAG convened and chaired by the LSC
- produce a three-year strategic development plan for IAG in the local area through the local Strategic Board for IAG that includes how the LSC, Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** contractor will work together to provide joined up services from a service user perspective

- make decisions about the development of “intermediary” agreements to embed good working relationships by formalising referrals and capturing outcomes for both parties
- ensure IAG is part of the LSC strategic area review including review of the role of IAG in Jobcentre Plus services.

23

Some local LSCs and Jobcentre Plus districts have produced a local MOU covering all areas of joint interest between the local LSC and Jobcentre Plus.

Active communication

24

Active communication is key across organisations – from the setting of national strategy to effective practice “on the ground” working with service users. This can be achieved through:

- a clear understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities and how different partners can all influence each other’s work
- developing communications from management to a local office level, raising awareness of what each organisation is about and how partners can help each other
- named contacts and link advisers building and maintaining relationships through attendance at meetings
- shared access to meetings including access to appropriate Jobcentre Plus meetings
- the active involvement of local LSCs in bringing positive ideas and opportunities for liaison and cooperation
- Jobcentre Plus ensuring effective local linkages, and **nextstep** contractors ensuring that local office staff are invited to meetings and events
- informal ongoing contacts between **nextstep** advisers and their Jobcentre Plus colleagues.

25

Other examples of active communication happening at local level include:

- active promotion of IAG in Jobcentre Plus meetings and through literature exchange
- a six-monthly IAG partnership outreach newsletter specifically for Jobcentre Plus staff
- provision of IAG resources, training and information-sharing and networking
- IAG outreach advisers attending Jobcentre Plus communication meetings
- a new IAG directory to be launched in all local Jobcentre Plus offices in the district.

Evidence of practical joint working

26

It is important to translate good strategic planning and communication into practical joint working that will benefit the service user. This might include:

- **nextstep** advisers being located in Jobcentre Plus offices
- agreeing shared outreach locations
- Jobcentre Plus referring service users to Employer Training Pilots
- joint working on local area redundancies
- establishing joint action plans or delivery plans with objectives and milestones
- exploring the potential for shared targets or objectives
- ensuring clear arrangements for follow-up of service users and outcomes are agreed
- developing innovative approaches and services to meet the needs of clients in the local area
- building knowledge of each other’s services; sharing of information; involvement with joint projects.

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Shared values and behaviours

27

Many of the contributors to the review of framework agreements and our case studies emphasised the importance of shared values and behaviours at all levels in achieving real success in working together. Values and behaviours described included:

- being open, honest and transparent about our priorities and having a shared willingness to help each other towards solving issues
- positive relationships working towards practical developments and good sharing of information
- recognition of the importance of impartiality of **nextstep** services:

IAG needs to be seen to underpin the whole lifelong learning and development process of adults and therefore be integrated into the ethos of all partner organisations such as Jobcentre Plus. This will be facilitated by a buy in at strategic level and local agreements to ensure that IAG and its component parts are second nature to all front-line delivery staff and their local managers.

Putting Principles into Action

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Planning and delivering services

28

The Strategic Board for IAG, convened and led by the LSC, and to include Jobcentre Plus representation, should support clear planning for the delivery of services across **nextstep** contractors and Jobcentre Plus services to meet the needs of customers in the local area. This planning should draw on the outcomes of LSC strategic area reviews (StARs), be based on good local and regional labour market intelligence and feed into the LSC and Jobcentre Plus joint delivery plans.

29

The Strategic Board for IAG should ensure that the local **nextstep** contractor has put in place services and sub-contracting arrangements that will meet the needs of individuals and employers, including Jobcentre Plus service users.

30

nextstep contractors are expected to include objectives, milestones and performance indicators for working with Jobcentre Plus in their delivery plan for the LSC.

31

Paragraph 12 details of the LSC requirements of its **nextstep** contractors.

The framework agreement document

32

In 2002, Jobcentre Plus and the LSC developed a framework agreement for IAG services to support planning and delivery arrangements between local LSCs, IAG partnerships (now **nextstep** contractors) and Jobcentre Plus.

33

Framework agreements supported the need to take a more strategic view of IAG services and to work in partnership to achieve more coherent services to service users across the full range of IAG provision.

34

Many local LSCs and Jobcentre Plus districts, working with their then IAG partnerships, went on to develop more comprehensive local agreements intended to support more "joined-up" IAG services for service users.

35

Agreements covered, for example:

- named contacts
- effective communications
- keeping up to date with information on services
- joint planning
- staff development
- ensuring quality
- sharing of management information
- data protection
- equality and diversity.

36

Local areas will need to consider the best way for them to produce a specific framework agreement including how clear arrangements for joint working can be established effectively through the business and delivery planning processes of each organisation, production of the strategic development plan by the local Strategic Board for IAG and the delivery plan of the **nextstep** contractor.

37

In order to support the planning arrangements between Jobcentre Plus, the local LSC and **nextstep** contractors, an example template for a local framework agreement is included at Annex C.

38

The LSC, Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** contractors need to make sure that there is evidence of a clear relationship between strategic planning arrangements and the delivery of services in the local area and consider how planning and delivery contribute to the LSC and Jobcentre Plus joint delivery plan for Welfare to Workforce Development. See Annex B for more details of Welfare to Workforce Development.

Referral arrangements

39

It is important that we understand what happens to each of our service users, whatever the journey, from receiving initial support and advice, through learning opportunities and ultimately into employment. We need to be able to track and evaluate the impact of different types of referral between different agencies.

Case Study – Suffolk

The Jobcentre Plus District Manager is an observer on the LSC Strategic Board for IAG and a three-way service level agreement exists between Jobcentre Plus, the local LSC and the **nextstep** contractor. There are links with the local LSC and Jobcentre Plus in other areas of mutual interest such as the Skills Strategy and this will be a major driver for joint working in the future. The local LSC and Jobcentre Plus also work together on a regional basis through the Government Office for the region and Regional Skills Brokerage.

Suffolk has intermediary arrangements in place to formalise referral between IAG provision and Jobcentre Plus but the strength of local relationships is really seen as the key to effective joint working. Although distances can be great, there is a high degree of commitment to joint working. Jobcentre Plus premises are used for delivery and in rural areas everyone

“piggybacks” onto each other’s services. For example, Jobcentre Plus and IAG staff both work in community and learndirect centres. This approach provides service users with access to other services such as childcare partnerships and lone parent advisers.

Jobcentre Plus, the local LSC and the **nextstep** contractor share marketing events such as jobs fairs and Learning and Work events and through other projects such as joint ESF launches and mystery shopping. The **nextstep** contractor also works with the rapid response unit to support any large-scale redundancies.

The **nextstep** contractor has also used funding to develop a specific project to support deaf people to access services including links to Jobcentre Plus services.

Case Study – Nottingham

In Nottingham the framework agreement acted as a good starting point for a new relationship with Jobcentre Plus contacts at district level and the **nextstep** contractor. The contractor and Jobcentre Plus have also gone on to develop a short action plan for their work together that helps them to review progress on a regular basis.

At a strategic level the Jobcentre Plus district manager chairs the Welfare to Workforce partnership and the local LSC also sits on this partnership.

The local LSC and Jobcentre Plus also work together through the local Learning Partnership and through the local regional skills partnerships where the local LSC is the lead on employer engagement.

The DWP, the local LSC and the local authority are also working together to bring together their labour market intelligence and the local LSC funds a labour market observatory at Nottingham Trent University.

The roll-out of Jobcentre Plus means that Jobcentre Plus staff are working with customers in a different way. They are now working in outreach locations, have an adviser specialising in work with minority ethnic communities and advisers providing benefit advice on housing estates.

There are currently five **nextstep** providers who act as intermediary organisations and the **nextstep** contractor carries out the follow-up of those clients centrally and feeds this information back to Jobcentre Plus. As referrals are growing, arrangements for follow-up of Jobcentre Plus clients may need to be reviewed. The Jobcentre or the IA provider, depending on where the

vacancy originated, will validate outcomes with employers. IA advisers are co-located on Jobcentre Plus premises on a part-time basis and Jobcentre Plus advisers can book appointments for service users. They have developed a referral form to support this process and management information is kept on the number of clients seen by IA advisers on Jobcentre Plus premises.

Nottingham Jobcentre Plus has found IA services particularly useful to customers who are currently not eligible for some Jobcentre Plus services from the first day of their contact with it but could benefit from additional support such as CV preparation.

Jobcentre Plus feels that the need for IA services will increase once the roll-out of Jobcentre Plus is completed in Nottinghamshire and when Jobcentre advisers are dealing with the full range of clients including, for example, those on incapacity benefit and lone parents.

Future priorities are to:

- identify where clients and client groups are shared and work together on provision to support their needs
- focus on basic skills and Jobcentre Plus referrals
- identify “cold spot” geographical areas and ensure joint provision in those areas
- develop further links with between the local LSC and Jobcentre Plus on employer engagement
- develop joint approaches to the use of labour market information to shape and deliver provision.

40

nextstep contractors are required to provide management information on the number of referrals to Jobcentre Plus and Jobcentre Plus will monitor referrals to **nextstep** services where the **nextstep** contractor is recognised as an intermediary organisation. Good monitoring of referrals will also allow Jobcentre Plus to measure the impact of referrals to **nextstep** services on successful job outcomes.

41

It is intended that the outcomes of work on trialling the Level 2 offer in the North East and South East regions will provide us with better information about the most effective way to manage the referral process and we will be working with colleagues to disseminate the outcome of these trials.

42

A national online management information system for **nextstep** contractors was introduced in September 2004 and this will support more effective sharing of information on referrals in future. Some **nextstep** contractors have identified good practice referral policies and practices, which include:

- direct contact being established between the **nextstep** adviser and Jobcentre Plus adviser
- co-location of services and referral being offered on the same premises
- all staff having good information about available services
- properly recorded information about the referral
- having a clear understanding about confidentiality and making sure the service user also understands this
- clear arrangements for follow-up and validation of outcomes for service users
- benchmarking of referrals to use as a basis for measuring improvement
- analysing referrals to gain a measure of the impact on outcomes.

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Intermediary agreements

43

Many areas have introduced formal intermediary agreements between Jobcentre Plus offices and **nextstep** contractors. This means that **nextstep** contractors are formally recognised as non-contracted partners who assist Jobcentre Plus clients with their job search, enhances the service user's chances of obtaining employment, for example CV assistance, interview technique, workshops, or job-specific training.

44

Both partners have recognised the benefits of intermediary arrangements including:

- raising the profile of **nextstep** and Jobcentre Plus provision
- measuring and counting outcomes for Jobcentre Plus
- encouraging referral and ensuring follow-up of the service user.

45

nextstep contractors and Jobcentre Plus will need to consider jointly arrangements for follow-up of the service user and how any outcomes into education or employment will be validated, that is confirmed with the employer or training and learning provider. In some areas the **nextstep** contractor has taken on the responsibility for follow-up and validation of outcomes and in others

the Jobcentre Plus office follows up the service user and then informs the **nextstep** contractor of the outcome. It is important to have clear local arrangements with good systems for sharing information, and that the resource implications for **nextstep** contractors are taken into account.

46

All **nextstep** contractors and Jobcentre Plus districts should discuss the potential benefits and implications for effective intermediary arrangements and come to local decisions about the extent to which intermediary arrangements may benefit the service user.

Management information

47

Jobcentre Plus and the LSC should jointly consider what management information (MI) should be collected and shared at strategic level to:

- plan and target services
- monitor effectiveness through data sharing
- measure impact and communicate effectiveness
- recognise achievement.

Case Study – West Yorkshire

Jobcentre Plus in West Yorkshire has appointed a Jobcentre Plus manager to take responsibility for delivering the Jobcentre Plus requirements of the Skills Strategy. The manager is working with each of the four districts to coordinate this work on a regional basis and this approach also makes it more straightforward to develop relationships with the local LSC. The Jobcentre Plus manager sits on the Strategic Area Review Group and has gathered information on all the IAG services being delivered across all the Jobcentre Plus districts for Jobcentre Plus provision.

The **nextstep** contractor has developed a single framework agreement with Jobcentre Plus (where three were previously in place) and has a single management information system for all its IA providers. This will support the potential for better sharing of management information with Jobcentre Plus and provide the opportunity to monitor referrals between organisations more effectively.

All the local Jobcentre Plus areas have IA advisers working for some of the time on Jobcentre Plus premises.

An MOU exists between the LSC and Jobcentre Plus and further joint working will help to ensure the MOU is really working in practice.

"Partnerships are most effective when they are a meeting of equals."

A West Yorkshire IAG conference is planned where a workshop on Jobcentre Plus initiatives is planned and a sub-regional newsletter has also been discussed. The IAG website has a new section for updates on what the IA delivery network is doing and Jobcentre Plus will be able to make use of this. All partners agree that moving to Jobcentre Plus means the Jobcentre will be seeing a much wider range of service users and they will need to respond to this. "There is no point in us chasing the same service users." The roll-out of Jobcentre Plus offices will also help with Internet access and staff making use of information technology (IT), including IA resources to support their work.

Case Study – Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire (High Wycombe)

High Wycombe went "live" as Jobcentre Plus in April 2003. It is now acting as a single enquiry point for jobseekers and people on incapacity benefits and income support. Jobcentre Plus advisers are now doing enhanced training and working with service users on a more ongoing basis. For example, New Deal advisers have taken part in NVQ training in Advice and Guidance at Level 3.

The District Manager for Jobcentre Plus sits on the IAG Strategic Board and there have been strategic links developed through the LSC StAR process. Links include sharing of broad MI on targets and performance and shared training days with Jobcentre Plus, including sessions with the Disability Employment Adviser.

Jobcentre Plus and the local LSC have carried out joint European Social Fund (ESF) presentations and providers have found it very helpful to see the local LSC and Jobcentre Plus working together. The local LSC and Jobcentre Plus have been able to explain in the same forum what each organisation would be looking for in submissions for ESF money. Many providers will want to submit to both the local LSC and Jobcentre Plus.

"Assist" (the local Connexions partnership in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire) attends the Jobcentre Plus offices and direct referrals are made for service users to see an Adult IA adviser. There is also a freephone number and service users can be referred to see an "Assist" adviser in a Jobcentre if it is convenient. Jobcentre Plus sees a growing need for these services but there is a need for ongoing training to make sure all staff are aware of services and make referrals where appropriate. "Assist" will also work with the rapid response unit to provide support for people facing redundancy in the area.

"Assist" has produced a booklet called The 3 Ps of Job Seeking Success and every team in the Jobcentre has one. The Assist adviser can then refer users to other sources of help.

"Assist" is an intermediary organisation but Jobcentre Plus carries out its own follow-up of service users referred to IA services. Jobcentre Plus also carries out the validation of outcomes with employers and training providers. They inform "Assist" of successful outcomes.

Case Study – West of England

There is a high level of Partnership Agreement between the local LSC and Jobcentre Plus to cover key areas of interest such as the Skills Strategy, social inclusion and basic skills. A Jobcentre Plus representative also sits on the LSC ESF co-financing panel.

The Jobcentre Plus representative and IA manager meet every six weeks and a Jobcentre Plus representative currently sits on each of four IAG Area Boards. The **nextstep** contractor has established a prototype Strategic Board for IAG. The **nextstep** contractor has run a workshop on Jobcentre Plus services, and WorkTrain for Advisers is also running a training day for IA advisers. A new directory of all IA services is to be available. The directory will also be published on the website and there is a page on the website for Jobcentre Plus.

There are action teams in all Jobcentre Plus areas, which also may refer to IA services. West of England Jobcentre Plus district is currently preparing for the matrix quality assurance award for IA services across 11 offices because it feels it will improve front-line services.

Jobcentre Plus staff identified a number of benefits of IA services to Jobcentre service users, which include service users being:

- more confident
- more able to plan for the future
- more understanding of possible next steps
- more able to take up or continue learning.

Shared MI includes information at **nextstep** Network group meetings, details of large-scale redundancies, any new initiatives, any new major companies moving into the area.

Jobcentre Plus, the local LSC and the **nextstep** delivery network are jointly running two major retail skills sector initiatives.

Ambition Retail

Ambition Retail is a training programme that supports people who already have Level 2 skills to go into retail management training. The **nextstep** contractor funded **nextstep** contractor support for participants and was crucial to the success of the funding bid. Partners have developed a joint service user record form that meets Jobcentre Plus, **nextstep** and training provider requirements.

Shops for Jobs

Ambition Retail found that many people were not immediately ready for training above Level 2 and Jobcentre Plus, the local LSC and the **nextstep** contractor responded by jointly setting up a high street (former Jobcentre) shop that brings together Jobcentre Plus staff, IA staff, basic skills provision and retail sector work-based learning all under one roof.

Case Study – South East London

The Jobcentre Plus District Manager sits on the Board of the local LSC. The District Manager for Jobcentre Plus is also engaged in other local strategic partnerships, such as the Lifelong Learning Partnership, where the local LSC is also represented. The District Manager has quarterly meetings with senior LSC staff.

The Partnership Manager from District Office sits on the IAG Strategic Board and the IAG services directory includes

Jobcentre Plus services. An IA adviser is based in the Jobcentre Plus office, as an intermediary organisation, and this has generated 25 per cent of the job entry outcomes of that Jobcentre office.

Jobcentre Plus staff and **nextstep** delivery staff feel that the key is having individual staff who will generate interest in IA services and make sure that new staff know of the services that are available.

48

The sharing of MI should be informed by the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and Jobcentre Plus, the LSC, and **nextstep** contractors should satisfy themselves that they are meeting the obligations of the Act. As a minimum, partners should ensure that details of individual service users are not passed between organisations without the prior consent of the service user.

49

MI will be regionally aggregated and published on a quarterly basis by the LSC. The development of a new national MI system for **nextstep** services will support collection of more robust data from September 2004.

50

Examples of MI that is currently being shared includes:

- performance targets and outputs
- composition of the Jobcentre Plus register
- monitoring of referrals between services
- outcomes of mystery shopping and other service user satisfaction measures
- sharing of evaluation, research and other reports
- labour market intelligence
- outcomes of development work.

Sharing and using labour market information effectively

51

The Skills Strategy identifies the need for the LSC to work with the DWP to draw together the labour market information (LMI) that employers and individuals require to make choices about learning and work.

52

The DfES National Policy Framework for IAG for Adults requires providers of information services to provide supporting information on national and local LMI in a format that is accessible to the user including information on local LMI and trends. Advice services should include the meaningful interpretation of LMI and intelligence.

53

The LSC IAG strategy document *Coherent IAG Services for Adults* identifies specific actions for the LSC and Jobcentre Plus to:

- ensure that LMI is defined and understood, and **nextstep** practitioners are trained in the use of LMI
- ensure that LMI is shared, utilised and available to employers, **nextstep** contractors and individuals
- use local labour market supply and demand intelligence to ensure gaps are effectively identified and addressed at local level.

54

Strategic Boards, drawing on the LMI available from Jobcentre Plus, the LSC, regional skills partnerships and others, should ensure that all provision of IAG in their local area is planned for and delivered using good LMI and that resources exist at local level to support advisers and service users in making choices based on good LMI. This should include materials that advisers can use with service users, for example:

- knowledge of skills needs, gaps and priorities
- decline and demand for skills by sector and level
- information on redundancies and new local opportunities
- information on inward investment and recruitment.

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55

Examples of LMI being shared in ways that are accessible to advisers and service users include:

- monthly LMI briefings
- Internet or intranet pages providing LMI
- making use of the WorkTrain website
- local newsletters
- training and development for advisers in using LMI with service users.

56

The LSC's continuing professional development (CPD) strategy "*Competency and Capacity – Enhancing Information and Advice Delivery Potential*" to be published in February 2005 will include recommendations for ensuring advisers have a good knowledge of LMI. The recently established National Resource Service will ensure there are resources available to ensure IA services are supported by up-to-date accurate LMI that is accessible and easily understood.

57

In the recent review of framework agreements a lack of confidence was expressed about the extent to which closer working together had made a difference to identifying and addressing gaps in learning and training provision and this is something that the LSC and Jobcentre Plus, working with the **nextstep** contractor through the Strategic Board for IAG, will wish to address.

Continuous professional development

58

In the review of framework agreements local LSCs and **nextstep** contractors identified that good progress had been made in improving staff awareness of Jobcentre Plus services. They had also seen improvements in the competence of staff in working with service users to support them with information about Jobcentre Plus services. Jobcentre Plus staff had noticed an improvement in making IA services more visible to service users. It is important that we continue to build on this encouraging start through more explicit strategies for CPD.

59

The LSC's CPD strategy "*Competency and Capacity – Enhancing Information and Advice Delivery Potential*" will be published in February 2005. While Jobcentre Plus staff will identify and implement their own training and development strategies for their staff it will be useful for the LSC, **nextstep** contractors and Jobcentre Plus to share information on training and development needs to see where there is overlap and the potential for sharing resources and development opportunities. Local LSCs, Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep** contractors will also wish to review their own local needs for training and development. The LSC CPD strategy has already identified three key themes around which a national programme of support will be implemented. These are strategic development, business acumen and coherence in service delivery.

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60

The review of framework agreements and case studies also identified the need to make sure development work between the LSC, **nextstep** contractor and Jobcentre Plus is an ongoing process. Strategies for CPD need to include a continuous review of how well each other's services are understood so that levels of knowledge and understanding are not lost to the organisation through staff turnover. The review also identified a need for formal training for managers in partnership working and the role of **nextstep** and Jobcentre Plus services.

61

Of course, good CPD is not only about formal training and development opportunities, but will include building good awareness and understanding through active communication and effective ongoing relationships between staff at all levels.

62

One of the key elements of the reform of IAG as outlined in the DfES National Policy Framework is the development of a National Resource Service, which will support innovative approaches to the delivery of IAG services by developing new resources and materials to support consistency in the quality of service.

Annex A: Resources

Publications

21st Century Skills – Realising our Potential (HMSO 2003).

National Policy Framework for IAG for Adults (DfES 2003).

Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance Services for Adults (LSC 2004).

Welfare to Workforce Development – Recommendations of the National Employment Panel Skills Advisory Board (2004).

Local Learning and Skills Councils and Jobcentre Plus: Review of Framework Agreements. Executive Summary (LSC 2004).

Learning and Skills Councils and Jobcentre Plus: Review of Framework Agreements. Final Report (Miller Morgan Consulting 2004).

Jobcentre Plus Vision 2003–07 (DWP 2003).

Jobcentre Plus Services (DWP 2003).

Websites

www.lsc.gov.uk

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Annex B: Background Information

The Skills Strategy: *21st Century Skills – Realising our Potential*

1 The Government's Skills Strategy *21st Century Skills – Realising our Potential* (DfES 2003) recognises the important role IAG has in helping people to understand the opportunities and support available to them.

2 One of the key objectives for the Skills Strategy is to achieve closer working between Jobcentre Plus and the LSC to provide a better service for individuals and employers.

3 Specifically, the reform of IAG for adults includes, as one of its objectives, the need for the LSC to work with the DWP to:

- draw together the LMI that employers and individuals require to make choices about learning and work
- encourage Jobcentre Plus staff to consider the role that learning and training could play in helping inactive benefit claimants prepare to return to the labour market, including referral to further IAG on learning.

The National Policy Framework for Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults

4 In 2003 the DfES produced the National Policy Framework and Action Plan for IAG for Adults. This Policy Framework set out:

- an entitlement to core IA services
- a set of principles for coherent IAG service delivery
- an action plan for the reform of IAG services to adults.

5 IAG services and Jobcentres working together will need to ensure that planning and delivery of services meets the requirements of the National Policy Framework. Details of the Policy Framework can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk

Coherent Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults – the Learning and Skills Council's Strategy for Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults

6 In January 2004 the LSC produced its own strategy document for IAG services for adults to ensure the implementation of the Skills Strategy recommendations for IAG and to deliver the requirements of the National Policy Framework in line with the LSC's own key objectives.

7 To deliver the LSC IAG Strategy for Adults, the LSC will chair a local Strategic Board for IAG convened by the LSC at local level. These will include senior representatives from Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, Business Link and other senior partners, such as those in higher education. Further details of the LSC IAG Strategy for Adults can be found at www.lsc.gov.uk

New Deal for Skills

8

The Chancellor announced a New Deal for Skills in the 2004 Budget. New Deal for Skills is not a new scheme, but is about creating a better joined-up service for the low-skilled, building on recommendations in the Skills Strategy to improve support for the low-skilled, including the employed, jobseekers and the economically inactive.

9

It is a joint project between DWP and DfES with close LSC and Jobcentre Plus involvement and collaboration with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury.

10

New Deal for Skills takes forward recommendations from the NEP report (see below) and aims to improve support for the low-skilled by:

- creating a new intensive skills guidance service, co-located with Jobcentre Plus where possible (skills coaching). This service will be contracted for by the LSC

through its network of IA contractors. Trials are set to commence in April 2005 with roll-out planned, subject to evaluation of the trials, for August 2006

- developing skills passports, which record evidence of an individual's progress and achievement against a broadly employer-defined set of skills improving mechanisms of financial support for those for whom training provides a route back to work
- learning from the Employer Training Pilot experience to extend the benefits of Employer Training Pilots to those not in work
- creating a skills offer designed around and driven by the consumers rather than the producers of training.

National Employment Panel – Welfare to Workforce Development

11

In February 2004 the NEP published *Welfare to Workforce Development*. This publication

set out 35 recommendations and Jobcentre Plus and the LSC have agreed to take forward 23 of these. The remaining 12 are the responsibility of DfES and DWP.

12

In the report, which identifies measures to increase collaboration and synergy between the welfare to work and workforce development systems, the following eight recommendations are identified as the keystones of the reform:

- a shared objective and performance indicators to drive the welfare to work and workforce development systems in the same direction
- a basic skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) target that is based on achievement along with increased investment to expand the number of quality basic skills training providers
- alignment of the benefit systems to help learners meet the cost of living while in training
- joint LSC and Jobcentre Plus local delivery plans with measurable objectives for key collaborative activities
- harmonisation of Jobcentre Plus and LSC contracting for employment and training services
- improved IAG services for disadvantaged individuals and continued training and support once they are in work
- collaboration in the way that human-resources-related public services are marketed and delivered to employers
- a modern apprenticeship target that is based on outcomes and a lifting of the age cap to afford greater access for disadvantaged people. Since the publication of the report, Jobcentre Plus and the LSC have developed a joint implementation plan that has been agreed by respective organisational directors and sets out who in each organisation is responsible for delivering each recommendation, including those relating to IAG. Regular progress reports on the recommendations are made to the relevant national steering groups.

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Jobcentre Plus

13

The vision for Jobcentre Plus between 2003 and 2007 is to deliver a single integrated service for all benefit claimants of working age – helping those who can into work and supporting those who cannot. Jobcentre Plus wants to achieve employment opportunity for all in the labour market regardless of where people live, ethnicity, age or family status.

14

Jobcentre Plus aims to:

- promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age, increasing the speed with which people move from welfare to work
- change the culture of benefits to a new approach centred on rights and responsibilities
- achieve a step change in our service so that we treat every one of our service users as an individual and offer them support and services tailored to their particular needs
- use every suitable contact with our service users as an opportunity to discuss the possibility of work and reduce the chances of fraud and error in benefit payments
- help service users build confidence, overcome barriers to work and move into employment accessing high-quality support services where appropriate
- provide suitable help and support to service users with the greatest barriers to work to develop new skills that employers want, and to find or stay in work
- provide our service users with the means to contact us in ways most convenient to them, including the telephone and Internet, allowing us to focus our support on providing face-to-face services of the highest quality
- deliver our services in offices accessible to all of our service users, especially those with disabilities or sensory impairments, and provide a professional and welcoming environment
- build on the success of our Outreach and Action Team initiatives in taking our services to our service users
- enable our personal advisers to make a real difference to our service users' lives.

The Learning and Skills Council

15

The LSC's mission is to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training that puts learners first.

16

Our vision is that, by 2010, young people and adults will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world.

17

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills has asked the LSC:

- to raise participation and achievement by young people
- to increase demand for learning by adults and equalise opportunities through better access to learning
- to raise skills levels for national competitiveness
- to improve the quality of education and training delivery
- to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

18

Key targets for the LSC are to:

- extend participation in education, learning and training
- increase engagement of employers in workforce development
- raise achievement of young people
- raise achievement of adults
- raise the quality of education and training service user satisfaction.

19

The LSC must also demonstrate that individual learners are placed at the heart of the system.

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The Learning and Skills Council's remit for Information, Advice and Guidance services

20

The remit letter from the Secretary of State in 2000 asks the LSC to "further develop coherent IAG services for adults" and sets out what is expected of the LSC in relation to IAG services:

High-quality IAG will be essential if people – especially non-learners – are to be drawn into learning, and helped to ensure that they make the right choices about learning. And beyond that, every learner, in whatever form of provision, should have access to readily available, impartial and high-quality IAG about learning and work.

Annex C:

Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council

Template Framework Agreement

1

Jobcentre Plus and the local LSC need to ensure that IAG services “join up” at the local level. Specific arrangements for joint working need to be established between both organisations to ensure customer needs are met.

2

To facilitate this, the framework below has been designed as a basis upon which a more comprehensive local agreement can be produced. Jobcentre Plus district managers and the local LSC manager have joint responsibility for developing and signing these documents.

Named Contacts

3

Jobcentre Plus and the local LSC must provide details of named contacts with responsibility for producing the agreement and future liaison.

Information

4

Systems should be put in place to ensure information about IAG services is accurate, up to date and clearly states the services on offer.

Communications

5

Mechanisms need to be established to facilitate effective two-way communications to ensure that the awareness and competence of staff are enhanced in relation to IAG services, and gaps in provision are identified and, where possible, addressed.

Joint Planning

6

Both organisations need to work closely together to achieve coherence in joint planning, whilst recognising the client groups they each serve.

Quality

7

Jobcentre Plus and local LSCs should ensure that quality is embedded throughout the IAG services delivered.

Data Protection

8

Both organisations must ensure that data protection principles are adhered to.

Management Information

9

Minimum requirements of both organisations should be clearly stated and agreed.

Equality and Diversity

10

Mechanisms need to be in place to allow all customers unbiased access to appropriate and equitable levels of customer service.

Research

11

Relevant research, evaluation, customer feedback and surveys should be shared between both organisations to influence the delivery of IAG services.

Complaints Procedures

12

In dealing with complaints, Jobcentre Plus and the local LSC will adhere to their respective complaints procedures. However, systems should be in place to ensure that details are shared where they impact on the other organisation and, if it becomes necessary, issues are escalated.

Review of Local Agreement

13

A revised agreement based on this Working Together document should be in place by [date agreed each year] and reviewed annually thereafter.

Annex D:

Customer Satisfaction Quotes of Jobcentre Plus Clients Using Information, Advice and Guidance Services

"Talking to an adviser gave me more confidence in my decision-making and listening to my gut feelings."

"I found this beneficial as I was able to relate my non-employment skills to a working environment."

"The adviser made me feel a bit more confident and more aware of different opportunities."

"Seeing an adviser has benefited me with CV preparation. I realised my previous CV had not been properly structured."

"I feel more confident when applying for jobs and interviews."

"I am clearer about my skills."

"I received very good advice on reformatting my CV."

"Definitely more confident about my skills and more aware of my opportunities."

"There is light at the end of the tunnel."

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Related Publications

Review of Framework Agreements for IAG

Publication reference: LSC/AA000/1028/04

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

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