

## More learners reaching Level 2

The number of adults with Level 2 qualifications has risen considerably.

Figures from the Department for Education and Skills show 841,000 more adults now have a qualification at Level 2 or above, and 70 per cent of those reaching the age of 19 do so with at least a Level 2 qualification.

Both sets of figures represent excellent progress towards two key Government Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets on Level 2 attainment for young people and adults. Melanie Hunt, Learning and Skills Council (LSC) National Director of Learning, says the figures represent 'a mark of real progress' towards world-class standards of achievement.

Melanie continues: "Driving up Level 2 attainment is a priority focus for the LSC, and we have worked relentlessly towards this goal. It is important to recognise that the progress we are seeing is the result of partnership between the LSC, Local Authorities and Connexions to build a system that enables learners to achieve the qualifications they need to get on in life and reach their potential."

The PSA target for young people aims to increase by three percentage points between 2004 and 2006 the proportion of 19 year-olds who achieve at least Level 2. This needs to rise a further two percentage points between 2006 and 2008, and also increase the proportion of young people who achieve Level 3. The LSC is working with key agencies on a range of initiatives to target those at risk of dropping out of education without Level 2.

The target for adults aims to reduce the number of adults in the workforce who lack National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) 2 or equivalent by at least 40 per cent by 2010. The proportion of working-age people with no qualifications is falling, with a 2.6 percentage point decrease since 1999, meaning an extra 656,000 people with qualifications.

Full supporting data can be found at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/>

Leading learning and skills

update

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The Newsletter for Partners and Stakeholders of the Learning and Skills Council

# Boosting campus efficiency

An innovative project to help Further Education colleges in England, Scotland and Wales manage their campuses is being rolled out.

eMandate is a database of college estate information that allows institutions to compare their performance against other colleges and improve cost efficiency and facilities for staff and learners. Property costs per learner; maintenance; repair and cleaning costs; and energy and insurance costs are just some of the measures upon which colleges are able to judge their performance. The project will create reliable key performance indicators to help all colleges improve the strategic management of their property.

The system was established three years ago by the LSC, the National Council for Education and Training for Wales and the Scottish Further Education Funding Council as a vital 'benchmarking' tool for measuring efficiency and identifying best practice. Colleges have been supplying data to eMandate and using the database over the Internet to analyse their own performance for the past three years. The project is also being used by the LSC to get a better picture of the condition of the FE estate to support its capital investment for modernising campuses.

Philip Head, LSC Director of Infrastructure and Property Services, said the project was vital to improve the sector's performance and support the business excellence theme in the LSC's *agenda for change*.

He said: "The greater the number of colleges that participate, the greater the benefits to the sector. As part of good estate management, college estate managers should keep records on the size, cost and condition of their estates; eMandate enables them to do this and builds confidence in their decision-making."

The next phase of roll out is being managed by Investment Property Databank (IPD) Occupiers, part of IPD Ltd, a world leader in property performance measurement, which also runs the Higher Education Estates Management Statistics service. In order to ensure all colleges join the next phase, their participation is being made a mandatory condition for receiving LSC capital grant.

The Scottish and Welsh bodies will announce their own arrangements. No charge is levied on colleges for participation or access to data and analysis.

IPD will contact all colleges explaining the next phase. A user-friendly website ([www.emandate.co.uk](http://www.emandate.co.uk)) should be live by the end of March.

## Train to Gain

A scheme which has already benefited more than a quarter of a million learners and 27,000 employers will be rolled out by the LSC from April under the banner of Train to Gain.

The national employer training programme will be rolled out from April, building on the success of Employer Training Pilots (ETPs). Initially, Train to Gain will be launched in 20 ETP areas. The ETP pilots have reached many of the smaller employers that are statistically less likely to provide training for their employees, 68 per cent of employers involved have fewer than 50 employees.

*An Employer's Guide to Training Providers*, available from each local LSC, will become an integral part of Train to Gain, acting as a key resource to help employers and skills brokers identify the colleges or other training providers that will most effectively meet their needs in their area.

Skills brokers will use the guide to signpost employers to LSC-funded provision, as well as review all levels of training that an organisation needs. Providers need to ensure its accuracy or risk missing the opportunity to attract employer-funded learners and demonstrate their responsiveness to employer demand.

The employer's guide will be further developed over the coming months, with a pilot in the South West to introduce an employer feedback element. Employers will be able to use the guide to rate different training, highlighting to others the provision they found valuable. If successful, it will be available nationally by the end of 2006.

Colleges and training providers should visit <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Employer/Goodtraining.htm> to ensure their details in the guide are accurate, using the 'Information for Training Providers' button.

# £41m for Apprenticeships

£41 million extra has been pledged to the Apprenticeships budget by the LSC, a three per cent above inflation rise, to support the demand from employers and learners.

The money will fund the increasing success levels achieved by apprentices and will be accompanied by adjustments to the funding rates of some Apprenticeships.

Stephen Gardner, LSC Director of Apprenticeships, said: "The Apprenticeship programme has experienced dramatic expansion and an improvement in quality over the last three years. Training providers have seen their incomes rise as more apprentices succeed and they receive the associated achievement payment. We now need to use the additional funding to make more places available to match the demand from employers and young people, whilst continuing to increase quality."

"As part of last year's funding changes we announced that we would review the actual costs of delivering each Apprenticeship. We have now looked in detail at the real costs of delivery by the highest performing training providers across the most popular Apprenticeships."

The review was overseen by an advisory group, which included the LSC, training providers and their representatives. It looked in depth at the top 11 Apprenticeship frameworks, covering 80 per cent of apprentices, and work will continue to review the remainder. As a result, some Apprenticeships will see a slight funding increase, while others, where the cost of delivery was found to be less than the funding paid for, will see a fall. The Apprenticeship in Children's Care, Learning and Development will receive a boost in funding to match the expansion into looking after children aged 8–16.

In other cases, funding will be reduced to recognise an overlap between the Technical Certificates and NVQs, or where research has shown less work is required to guide learners through their Advanced Apprenticeship if they have already completed an Apprenticeship.

Examples include Construction, where there will be more money for the Apprenticeship but less for the Advanced Apprenticeship. The decision on adjustments required extensive consultation. As some providers will need time to adjust to the new rates, the adjustments will be phased in over two years. The increased budget and new rates cover 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007.

Further information is available from [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

## Stimulating learners at Level 2

Teachers and providers in the learning and skills sector are to receive a new guide on running high quality Level 2 programmes.

A booklet, *Improving Success for Learners at Level 2: Young People and Adults*, with an accompanying CD, will help ensure Level 2 programmes, the minimum platform of skills needed for employability, are stimulating and engaging. The guide is the latest resource from a set of teaching, training and learning materials under the *Success for All* programme, the long-term FE improvement strategy, which has just marked its third birthday.

Melanie Hunt, LSC National Director for Learning, said: "We want all those on Level 2 programmes to have a high quality experience. Teachers, trainers and learners who participated in the trials of these materials and teaching methods have reported great successes, with better retention, achievement and improved inspection grades. The guide complements our existing high quality subject-specific teaching, training and learning resources and coaching programmes for tutors."

The guide is available from DfES publications on **0845 602 2260** reference T&LL2GUIDE from early March

## Stop Press

The next issue of LSC Update will include coverage of the Further Education White Paper, which is due to be published shortly and which will set out the Government's proposals for continuing the transformation of the FE sector.

## A mark of quality

A new national 'quality mark' for colleges and other training providers to recognise excellence in the delivery of workforce development services to employers is to be rolled out between April and August this year.

Creating this new national quality standard is part of the LSC's *agenda for change* FE reform programme. Its vision is to establish a nationwide network of business-focused colleges and providers that will work closely with employers to design training tailored to their workforce needs. The aim is to give employers confidence in the quality, relevance and flexibility of the training offered by providers in the FE sector, and to ensure that those demonstrating continued-excellence are 'first choice' among employers seeking workforce training. Working with partners, including providers and employer groups, a draft set of quality standards has been developed and tested with a number of colleges and training organisations. The draft quality mark is currently being revised to take account of feedback.

The standard will be applied to specific areas of provision, such as engineering, IT, construction and hospitality. Those applying for the quality mark will have to self-assess and demonstrate their responsiveness to employer needs. If they meet the criteria, they will submit their self-assessment record to a third party verifier who will agree a final score with them. If the score is above a predetermined level, the verifier will commission independent employer validation that, if successful, will lead to the award of the 'quality mark'. The new standard will be linked closely with other skills initiatives, such as Train to Gain, Centres of Vocational Excellence and the National Skills Academies. The FE Reform White Paper currently being drafted is likely to signal a single standard for vocational excellence and employer responsiveness. This will clearly have implications in terms of positioning the quality mark within the wider quality framework of initiatives.

Bobby Upple, LSC Senior Policy Manager, said: "Feedback from employer groups has been very positive, and the White Paper will further focus our efforts in delivering a coherent and rational quality standard, adding real value to the sector."

Further information is available at [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

## Local delivery vital for 14–19 agenda

The importance of creating effective local partnerships to deliver the 14–19 agenda is being highlighted by the LSC at the annual conference of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) at the Birmingham Metropole from March 17–19.

Rob Wye, LSC Director of Strategy and Communications will chair a seminar at the conference on: *The LSC and schools – local delivery of the 14–19 agenda*.

Implementation of the Government's proposals for the 14–19 phase of education is one of the major challenges facing the sector. Rob will outline the vital role local partners will have in making the entitlement a success. He will stress that schools, colleges and training providers will need to work hand in glove with Local Authorities and the LSC to make effective local delivery a reality.

Further information is available at [www.ascl.org.uk](http://www.ascl.org.uk)

## Placements at specialist colleges

Learners with learning difficulties or disabilities have been given clarity as to likelihood of funding for specialist colleges with the publication of guidance outlining the criteria on which the LSC fulfils its legal duties towards funding placements.

The arrangements for 2006/07 remain broadly the same as in previous years. It is likely, however, that arrangements for future years will change in line with *agenda for change*. *Funding Guidance: Placement for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities at Specialist Colleges 2006/07* is available on the LSC website [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk).

## Hardship fund for EMA learners

With the extension of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to young people on LSC-funded Entry to Employment, and on courses leading to an Apprenticeship beginning on April 10, it has been announced that these learners will now have access to a Hardship Fund worth £1.8 million in 2006/07.

The new funding means some learners on these two programmes will have the same kind of additional funding that FE learners benefit from under LSC Learner Support Funding. In the run up to the EMA extension, which is expected to benefit a further 65,000 learners, a major marketing campaign has been underway to raise awareness of the allowances among young people and their parents. The campaign running between February 20 and March 19 covers a range of activities, which include TV and radio commercials; colour advertisements in women's weekly magazines; web advertising and posters on BT phone kiosks at over 5,500 sites in England and on over 10,000 buses. Television adverts have been appearing on ITV, Channel 4, Channel Five and satellite channels. A central resource for all information relating to EMA and its extension is now available at [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema)

## LSC ensures stability

The LSC has successfully minimised changes to the 2006/07 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) specification, which will be issued in March for implementation by providers at the beginning of August.

The LSC applied a challenge process to the 49 changes in this year's ILR, which resulted in the withdrawal or rejection of 35 of them. The remaining requests resulted in only minor changes to the specification.

This challenge process is a forerunner to the type of process that will be used by the new Information Standards Authority, the creation of which is envisaged as part of the *agenda for change* data theme.

For the first time this year, the ILR will include a field for a Unique Learner Number, which will be prototyped towards the end of this year under the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) programme and introduced across the sector in September 2007.

MIAP has developed the concept of a Learner Registration Service to issue every individual in education and training with a unique number and to maintain information on their achievements. This will allow learners to track and prove their accredited qualifications.

"We have tried successfully to keep changes to the Individualised Learner Record to a minimum for the second year in a row," said Richard Clarke, ILR Specification Manager with the LSC. "This will save providers time and money because they will not be involved in a lot of extra work."

Further information is available at [www.miap.gov.uk](http://www.miap.gov.uk)

## MIAP now online

The new MIAP website containing information about the programme and links to partner organisations went live at the end of February.

The launch of the site gives MIAP its first public presence and will allow the 42 partner organisations and other stakeholders supporting the programme across the UK to keep up to date with progress. It will be replaced in the coming months by an interactive site with improved user features.

MIAP is about streamlining how information on learners and learning is shared across the education sector so that excellent services are made available to individuals, employers and communities. It is an important component of the data theme of *agenda for change*.

Further information is available at [www.miap.gov.uk](http://www.miap.gov.uk)

# Ending gender segregation

Further Education has a vital role to play in helping women to access learning, training, careers advice and guidance throughout their lives according to LSC Chairman, Chris Banks.

Chris was commenting on the Women and Work Commission's recent report *Shaping a fairer future*. A member of the Commission set up to examine the gender pay gap by Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2004, Chris has been examining issues affecting women's employment. These include how the education and skills of men and women affect which jobs they can get and their prospects for promotion and career progression. Implemented properly, the report's 40 recommendations would be a turning point for equal pay according to Chris.

"Stronger links must be made between the 'world of work' and education, from primary schools on, so that girls are exposed to a wider range of career options, including occupations that are traditionally seen as 'men's jobs' and which pay more." Chris stated.

"We need to build confidence within adult women too, so that they can change career direction later on in life. As Chairman of the LSC, I was really pleased that the Commission placed such emphasis on the role of lifelong learning in bringing about change."

The Commission has recommended that the Government fund pilot-measures to enable women to change direction and boost their skills.

These measures should include free skills coaching for women not in work who already have Level 2 qualifications and Level 3 training in the caring, clerical, cashiering, catering and cleaning sectors where women's employment is concentrated.

The report is available at [www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/women\\_work\\_commission/](http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/women_work_commission/)

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