

successforall

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Burton College

First edition of
Standards Unit
Newsletter enclosed

Success for All has four key themes:

Theme 1 Meeting needs and improving choice

Theme 2 Putting teaching, training and learning at the heart of what we do

Theme 3 Developing the leaders, teachers, lecturers, trainers and support staff of the future

Theme 4 Developing a framework for quality and success

The *Success for All* newsletter is produced by the Department for Education and Skills and the Learning and Skills Council to keep you up to date with the change programme designed to transform the quality and responsiveness of the learning and skills sector. [Send us your feedback on the newsletter or views on Success for All to successforallnewsletter@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:successforallnewsletter@lsc.gov.uk)

Helping deliver the Skills Strategy

The DfES launched its first ever Skills Strategy – *21st Century Skills Realising Our Potential* – on 9 July. You can access it at www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy. It builds on *Success for All* and shares the goals of increasing employer engagement, meeting regional and sub-regional skill needs and increasing Level 2 attainment for 19 year olds and above.

The Skills Strategy will:

- remove barriers which discourage providers from delivering the training employers want, providing flexible funding and reducing audit burdens;
- support colleges and providers to offer a wide range of support to business by developing Centres of Vocational Excellence and setting up new centres of excellence in business support in colleges;
- build a new network of specialist skills providers bringing together colleges dedicated to business, specialist business units within colleges and private training providers;
- make it easier for first-time learners

and employees in small firms to get training by unitising qualifications and introducing a credit system to build up towards skills qualifications;

- strengthen support for individual learners, with better information, clearer targeting of funds, and more help to return to learning.

Success for All aims to build a network of providers capable of delivering high quality learning for all post-16 learners. It already includes many elements to improve skills delivery including, through Strategic Area Reviews (StARs), an examination of post-16 provision with employers' needs in mind, a target for every college to improve its engagement with employers, and new teaching and learning frameworks for areas like construction and e2e.

The implementation of the Skills Strategy will be integrated with the conclusions of the DTI's innovation review, so that both skills and innovation work together to enhance UK productivity.

Focus on...

A monthly feature on *Success for All's* key players and good practice. This month: **Alan Johnson, new minister for Success for All**

Focus on...

Listening and learning

Alan Johnson, new Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education talks about the vital role that learning and skills have to play in the country's economic future.

Dinner with a group of FE college principals and then hot foot to a reception at No. 10 followed by a day of meetings in Westminster. Alan Johnson can spare a bare 15 minutes to talk before rushing off for an important Commons vote.

Tomorrow he is down in Hampshire, visiting a college and doing what he has done a lot of in a hectic first four weeks in post as Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education – listening and learning.

The former General Secretary of the Communication Workers Union, MP for Kingston-upon-Hull West and Hessle and, most recently, Minister for Employment Relations, Industry and the Regions at the DTI, has not been afforded the luxury of being able to feel his way into a new job.

Not that it seems to worry him. Having taken over from Margaret Hodge a bare month ago he has quickly developed a taste for what life these days is like in the Department for Education and Skills.

'I can certainly say that it has been a very interesting four weeks and yes, it is difficult to read your way into a job like this with so much going on.

'I am really enjoying it though. What I am particularly enthusiastic about is taking on this post at what must be one of the most exciting times ever to be working within the DfES. We are going through a period of enormous change for the whole sector with *Success for All*, the Skills Strategy and the Higher Education White Paper.'

He detects that same sense of excitement from the people he has met across the learning and skills sector in his short time in tenure. 'I have been going out of my way to talk to people in the sector and even those I have spoken to who have worked in it for 20, 30 and even 40 years say they cannot remember a more exciting time.

'I think there is a general consensus that we are taking the right way forward in further education but in higher education, you are very aware of the level of controversy surrounding change, particularly in areas such as tuition fees.

'Change is always difficult but I have found, even during my short time in post, that the changes taking place in the learning and skills sector are really welcomed.

'What is extremely important is that colleges and training providers realise just how important they are in driving these reforms forward.

'People have said to me that they never felt valued before – they never felt as though they were viewed as being significant in the scheme of things, certainly not by the Government and DfES.

'I believe that people in the sector are now feeling valued, which is one of the most important early achievements of *Success for All*. Government is giving them the credit and the recognition they deserve.'

The new Minister is clearly a fan of further education which, while recognising the need for further improvements under *Success for All*, he believes has a vital role to play in improving the country's skills base and, ultimately, our international competitiveness.

His dinner with the group of college principals was arranged by Margaret Hodge and was one of the events on his new diary that he was determined should not be cancelled.

'There will be lots of that over the coming weeks. I am keen to listen. I have some pretty firm views on some of the crucial problems we are facing at the moment – and I am talking here about higher education rather than further education.

'I come from four years in the DTI dealing with employment legislation. Everywhere I went, whatever the sector, there was a problem with skills. It came up over and over again.

'There is a real economic argument here. The future of the country really depends on getting the skills agenda right and, thank goodness, people are now really taking these skills issues seriously.

'I came here absolutely convinced that we were right to invest so heavily in the skills agenda, where education is key.

'No one reaches the number of students that colleges and other training providers reach. They also reach people from more disadvantaged backgrounds. This is the one sector that is directly engaged in all of our key strategies for 14 to 19 year olds.

'I hope and believe that people also recognise that we are in this for the long haul. This is a long term strategy, not an overnight fad.

'I recognise that we will not and cannot do everything at once and I certainly get the strong feeling that the sector is behind the reforms and feel we are moving in the right direction.'

Responding to the needs of employers

The way providers respond to the needs of business is a key theme shared by *Success for All* and the Skills Strategy.

Colleges and providers have a vital role to play in meeting the economic challenges and skills needs of the nation. Provision that is responsive to employers and the workforce will support the increased productivity, competitiveness and efficiency of individual organisations and the wider economy. Strategic Area Reviews will be critical in evaluating and re-aligning the provider network with employers' needs in mind.

Many providers already have good relationships with employers and plan their curricula to meet local, regional and national skills needs. Recent research into colleges' views on their links with employers found that while they generally feel they have good links, 90% of principals recognise that they will need to be more responsive in the future. You can access the research at www.successforall.gov.uk

Success for All sets out clear expectations of how colleges and providers should support employers to meet skill needs. These include expanding the CoVE network; raising the profile of provider responsiveness to employer needs in the inspection process; ensuring the pattern of provision matches local needs of individuals and employers and colleges signing up to targets for employer engagement through their three year funding and development plans.

The proposals in the Skills Strategy will help develop the capacity of providers to respond to skill needs, reduce bureaucracy and establish a more flexible qualifications framework. Employers make up at least 40% of local LSC Boards and will also be able to shape the supply of training through increased influence via the Regional Development Agencies and Sector Skills Councils.

Providers are already embracing this agenda. Elsewhere in this edition you can read about some of the approaches taken by Burton College in Staffordshire to meet the needs of employers in its area.

The Learning and Skills Development Agency has issued *Successful Engagement – Guidance for colleges and providers on effective employer engagement in post-16 learning*. Access it at www.successforall.gov.uk

CoVE programme develops

The CoVE programme, funded by the LSC, is a key part of *Success for All* and supports the implementation of Theme 1 'Meeting Needs, Improving Choice'. The programme has gone from strength to strength since its introduction and should exceed the original manifesto target that half of further education colleges have CoVEs by the end 2003. The CoVE budget is now £250 million and the programme

is placing a strong focus on meeting employer needs. The initial programme was extended under *Success for All* beyond further education colleges to work based learning providers and the target increased to 400 CoVEs by 2006.

The introduction of the Skills Strategy now develops the CoVE programme in three ways. First, regional partnerships, including Regional Development Agencies, will have an increased role in ensuring that there are sufficient centres in each region to meet priority skill needs. Second, the Sector Skills Councils will play a greater role in shaping the pattern of CoVEs in their sector. Third, the capability of colleges and training providers to offer a wider range of support for local businesses will be developed.

These steps will help to shape the supply of provision to better meet employer needs, expand choice for employers and reduce skill gaps.

Provider Mission Reviews

The LSC is working with partners and stakeholders to crystallise its policy guidance to local LSCs on mission review. The guidance will offer advice on minimum expectations for mission review, the role of the local LSC in working with providers to review missions and the placement of these reviews within a network of plan-led post-16 learning provision. The guidance will be published at the end of July 2003.

New group to cut tangle of red tape

The independent group set up to cut bureaucracy in the learning and skills sector is now up and running. Chair Sir Andrew Foster is joined by: Lynne Sedgmore, Guildford College; Frank McMahon, YH Training Services; Donald Rae, Derbyshire County Council; Tim Andrew, Chesham High School; Karen Hagan, Somerset College; and Peter Little, Birmingham Rathbone Society.

The Group will have the power to review and challenge the impact of new and existing policies imposed across the whole post-16 sector.

Speaking about the work of the group, Sir Andrew Foster said: 'The learning and skills sector has a key role to play in delivering the government's policy of life-long learning. In order for the sector to work effectively, the links between itself and central government, and the administrative structures that underpin it, must be robust without being overpowering. 'As a group we want to see how things can be managed differently. We want to hear from people at local level who are feeling tied up by too much red tape.'

The Bureaucracy Review Group can be contacted at bureaucracybusting@lsc.gov.uk

A winning formula

Staff at Burton College have no need to claim that they have developed a winning formula to meet the needs of local employers and stimulate demand for training. There are plenty of clients happy to do that for them.

The training co-ordinator at Unilever Bestfoods UK is typically glowing. 'The college's staff technical knowledge is second to none,' he says. 'Over time they have built an understanding of our working methods and requirements in terms of training. We have developed a great relationship with all of the assessors.'

The college provides a strong example of how the learning and skills sector can work with employers to develop the flexible programmes they need and meet the expectations of *Success for All* and the Skills Strategy.

Burton College has placed a strong emphasis on communicating with businesses and has developed a structure where employer representatives are directly involved in helping identify and design training solutions.

College business development staff and specialists in various subject areas work with local employers in a tripartite partnership to plan provision, agree a clear vision of expectations, adapt training to specific needs and business cultures and define skills baselines and needs. Burton College provides the engineering equipment manufacturer JCB with bespoke training for their graduate recruits, a training programme that bridges the gap between education and the workplace.

Burton College has been particularly successful in topping up LSC funded mainstream provision for employers with specifically tailored provision on a full cost recovery basis – giving a good training to cost ratio for local companies.

The college co-ordinates its activities with other providers through a consortium of Staffordshire colleges, formed to market the benefits of training, to engage with employers and to access funding through joint bids.

The result is a growing awareness by businesses that training is an investment rather than a cost and can be tailored to match their specific needs, improving the skills of their workforces, increasing competitiveness and profits. The LSC is working with the college to develop entrepreneurial support for fledgling businesses.

Burton College has also been working with Unilever Bestfoods UK. This long-term relationship has enabled the college to pilot new courses e.g. an 'Effective Food Manager' 10-week course, and training to multi-skill staff working in warehousing, distribution and manufacture. By experiencing the benefits to the business of provision such as this, the company has become open to new forms of learning and staff development.

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www.successforall.gov.uk

Calendar

The *Success for All* calendar is updated in each issue of the newsletter. The calendar as at the beginning of July is:

2003	Developments	Communications/consultation
May-July	Colleges and providers continue discussion with LLSCs on development plans and headline improvement targets	
July	LSC assessments for capital programme	
31 July	Providers and LSC agree development plans	
31 July	Floor and improvement targets in place	
September	Standards Unit pilots new teaching and learning frameworks	
September	LSC publishes criteria for measuring excellence and allocating premium funding	
15 September		Focus on Policy Seminar – <i>Success for All</i> and 14-19 Strategy
October	LSC publishes proposals for measuring success	
4 November		Standards Unit Teaching and Learning Conference
5 November		Focus on Policy Seminar – Qualifying the Workforce
11-13 November		AoC Annual Conference