

Strategic Area Reviews

Consultation on guidance to support Local Learning and Skills Councils (local LSCs) and their partners in undertaking Strategic Area Reviews of provision starting in 2003

Summary

This document consults upon the proposed guidance for undertaking Strategic Area Reviews of provision across local LSC areas from April 2003.

This guidance relates specifically to the Review of provision funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). However, the Strategic Area Reviews will need to take account of provision in the locality financed by other organisations.

This document sets out draft guidance. The LSC will issue in parallel a toolkit offering advice and further information on each stage of the Review process. Drafts of the toolkit can be found on the LSC and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) websites.

Foreword

The goal of a learning society is one in which everyone is well educated and able to learn throughout their lives. *Success For All* sets out the rationale for Strategic Area Reviews and the impact they will make on learning and skills provision across the country to enable us to realise this vision.

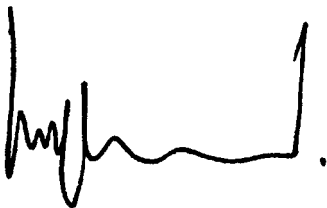
The Learning and Skills Council has a key role in achieving this aim and building success for all learners, communities and the economy. There is already a high standard of existing provision in many parts of the post-16 sector, which should be built upon, while improving weaker provision and filling gaps.

The purpose of Strategic Area Reviews is to ensure that learners in each part of the country have high quality, safe and accessible learning opportunities capable of meeting their needs and those of employers and local communities. In carrying out Reviews, local LSCs will work with providers to ensure provision is well planned, building on work which has already been undertaken in this area.

I strongly support this common, national approach to ensuring quality and cost-effectiveness which is complemented by considerable flexibility for local LSCs to design processes to take account of local conditions. Local LSCs are responsible for getting the balance right in their area and addressing the availability of a wide choice of 14–19 opportunities, the supply of provision to meet employer skills needs, basic skills needs and the challenge of improving progression to higher education.

Council and Committee members, local Council members, staff and partners have an important role to play in the Strategic Area Review process and their support and engagement is vital.

This draft guidance is designed to steer the Strategic Area Review process. I would very much welcome your views on how well it will meet your needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Harwood', followed by a period.

John Harwood, Chief Executive

Further information

For further information, please contact your local Learning and Skills Council and, where appropriate, the National Contracts Service, or contact:

Programme Manager/Goal 1
The Learning and Skills Council
Policy and Development Directorate
101 Lockhurst Lane
Coventry
CV6 5SF

Telephone: 024 7682 3202

Responses to this document

Responses to this document are requested by 21st February 2003

Contents

	Paragraph numbers
Executive Summary	
Section One: Context	
Introduction	1
Background	5
Consultation Timetable	23
Subsequent Sections	25
Section Two: Purpose	
What is a Strategic Area Review?	27
What Provision will be Covered by Strategic Area Reviews?	35
Specialisation, Choice and Provider Reviews of their Missions	41
What will the Outcomes of Strategic Area Reviews be?	43
What Values will Underpin the Conduct of Strategic Area Reviews?	47
How will Strategic Area Reviews be Carried Out and what is the Timetable?	48
Section Three: Local Planning of the Strategic Area Review process	
Introduction	55
Involving Learners, Employers and Communities	58
Stakeholder Involvement	59
Management of the Review	64
Overall Timetable to be Met	65
Resource Allocation	66
Staff Training and Development Needs	69
Contribution of Previous Review Work	72
Reviewing Provider Missions	81
Record Keeping of the Review Process	83
Section Four: Information Gathering and Analysis	
Introduction	85
Information Gathering	86
Analysis	93
Section Five: Developing and Appraising Choices and Formulating Strategic Options	
Introduction	96
Developing and Appraising Choices	97
Formulating Strategic Options	104

Section Six: Local Consultation on Strategic Options	
Introduction	110
Consultation Strategy	112
Section Seven: Publishing the Area Delivery Plan	
Introduction	118
Publication	119
Section Eight: Implementing the Area Delivery Plan	121
Section Nine: Evaluating the Strategic Area Review	
Introduction	127
Process	129
Outcomes	131
Section Ten: Cross Boundary Considerations	
Introduction	133
Considerations	134
London	136
Section Eleven: Next Steps	
Consultation	145
Further Development Work	147
Annex A	
Responses to Consultation	

Executive Summary

Date: November 2002

Subject: Strategic Area Reviews: Consultation on guidance to support local LSCs and their partners in undertaking the Reviews from 2003/04.

Intended recipients: Local Authorities (LAs)/ Local Education Authorities (LEAs), Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), Jobcentre Plus, schools with sixth forms, further education colleges, specialist colleges, adult education centres, training providers, **learnirect** hubs and Ufi Ltd, higher education institutions delivering further education, employers, Trade Unions, National Connexions Service, Learning Partnerships and heads of other key organisations. Comments from local LSCs would, of course, also be welcome.

Status: For consultation

- a. This document consults upon the proposed guidance for Strategic Area Reviews of LSC-funded provision starting in April 2003.
- b. This circular relates specifically to provision funded by the LSC. However, the Strategic Area Reviews will need to take account of provision in the locality financed by other organisations.
- c. This document sets out draft guidance. The LSC will issue in parallel a toolkit offering advice and further information on each stage of the Review process. Drafts of the toolkit can be found on the LSC and DfES websites.

Responses to consultation: The LSC would welcome comments on the specific consultation issues raised throughout this document, together with any other general comments. A pro forma for responses is

provided at Annex A. Completed response forms should be forwarded to the national office no later than 21 February 2003. The LSC will publish the outcomes of the consultation process in March 2003.

Consultation on Guidance to Support Local Learning and Skills Councils and their Partners in Undertaking Strategic Area Reviews of Provision Starting in 2003

Section One: Context

Introduction

1 This guidance is intended for local Learning and Skills Councils (local LSCs) and their partners undertaking Strategic Area Reviews. It describes what is involved in conducting a Strategic Area Review within a local LSC area.

2 The aim of the Strategic Area Reviews is to ensure that learners in each part of the country have high quality, safe and accessible learning opportunities capable of meeting their ambitions and those of employers and local communities. Local LSCs will work closely with LAs, LEAs, Jobcentre Plus, learners, employers, communities, schools, colleges and other providers in carrying out Strategic Area Reviews.

3 This guidance sets out the process local LSCs should follow in conducting a Strategic Area Review of the quality and cost-effectiveness of post-16 learning across the area. It is not intended to be too prescriptive, but rather outlines the core elements of the process around which local LSCs can build. Local LSCs should develop local plans taking account of local circumstances and previous reviews of provision, including Area Inspections. The core planning framework for Strategic Area Reviews ensures a consistent and coherent approach nationally.

4 Alongside this guidance the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will in due course issue a toolkit offering advice and further information on each stage of the Review process. This toolkit is currently under development. All parts of the toolkit are illustrative of the type of work that might be done and how issues might be tackled. Use of the material provided in the toolkit is not mandatory. However, where alternative approaches are used they must be consistent with the values for Strategic Area Reviews, and they must be capable of being justified if challenged. Drafts of the tools will be placed on the LSC and DfES websites. Further tools will be added to these websites, as they are developed.

Background

Success For All

5 *Success For All*, the Government's proposed reform strategy for further education, was issued for consultation in June 2002. This set out the rationale for Strategic Area Reviews and the impact they will make on learning and skills provision across the country.

6 Young people and adults, whatever their background, should have opportunities for progression to higher education, employment and for personal development. Learning

provided in an area must meet national, local, regional and skill needs, and should be responsive to local employers and communities. Local decisions on the organisation of learning and skills provision should be influenced by individual and employer priorities, geography and quality and pattern of provision.

7 *Success for All* aims to raise standards within the learning and skills sector, so that all learners can meet their potential regardless of where they live, or with which publicly-funded provider they are enrolled. Further education and training is absolutely central to successful delivery of the Government's education and skills priorities, in particular the four key objectives of:

- achieving excellence for all young people through the new 14-19 phase;
- increasing progression into higher education;
- helping people improve their basic skills and widening participation for adults; and;
- helping employers invest in the skills and productivity of their workforce.

8 The strategy for reform will raise standards and transform local provision so that learners have a wide choice of high quality provision; and providers are clear about, and focus on, their strengths and develop their education and training missions accordingly. It builds excellence through increased investment in new approaches to teaching and learning, supported by professional development of the workforce.

9 Reform covers every provider in the learning and skills sector. It recognises diversity is a critical strength of the sector, and does not assume one approach fits all circumstances. It tackles the legacy of problems such as the widely varying quality of provision, poor success rates and need for investment in the skills and development of the workforce, while building on existing strengths.

10 *Success For All* recognises that having the right mix of provision is the most critical step in strategic planning within the learning and skills sector. Thus each local LSC will carry out a Strategic Area Review of provision starting in April 2003.

11 Following the *Success for All* consultation, which closed on 30th September 2002, a subsequent publication, issued in November 2002, outlines the next steps to be taken in implementing the four key objectives. This document contains details on the implementation of the key objectives, progress that has been made to date and future proposals. It also includes details of consultations planned for specific aspects of the Success for All strategy.

LSC Corporate Plan

12 Strategic Area Reviews are a process which each local LSC will plan and carry out in the light of the challenge faced and the area addressed, building on previous work undertaken by the local LSC, and the results of any Area Inspections. Reviews will focus on the LSC mission to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training which puts learners first. The LSC vision is that, by 2010, young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world. The LSC is clear that it cannot make a reality of this vision by small changes to existing approaches. It needs a radical new approach. At its heart is the creation of an integrated learning and skills community.

13 The key objectives in achieving this vision are:

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

14 The LSC will set out in the Corporate Plan to 2005 the strategy to deliver these objectives and targets which will give priority to:

- changing learning cultures;
- engaging learners and employers;
- improving quality;
- reshaping provision;
- funding learning; and
- excellent management of the LSC.

15 This reflects the LSC's role in effective co-ordination and strategic planning at national, regional, sectoral and local levels. The LSC's statutory duty to encourage participation in education and training places the individual learner at the heart of the system. At the same time, the LSC has a statutory duty to encourage employer participation to ensure the skill needs of the economy and society will be fully met.

16 The LSCs central commitments to learners, employers, communities and providers will be outlined in the Corporate Plan. These commitments will be embodied in the Strategic Area Review process.

17 Following the outcomes of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, the LSC will revise its national targets (NB: the guidance issued in March will set out the new targets). Local LSCs will also update their plans.

18 These updated strategic plans will provide the starting point for Strategic Area Reviews in each local LSC area. Local LSC plans for 2003/04 will form part of a unified local planning process that flows seamlessly from the strategic to the operational. The plans will bring together in one document:

- a review of progress to date;
- updates to the local Strategic Plan;
- local responses to LSC-wide strategies

and plans, such as those for Basic Skills and Workforce Development; and

- an abridged version of the internal business plan.

Getting The Best From Each Other

19 *Getting the Best from Each Other* – the framework for Government relationships with providers of post-16 training, learning and community programmes, is currently under development. It aims to improve delivery by:

- focusing on outcomes;
- raising standards; and
- better procurement.

20 Development of the framework will include the publication of a detailed questionnaire – in the form of a structured aide-memoire – for use by Government officials and providers. This questionnaire is being designed to draw attention to key principles and guidance documents agreed by the Interdepartmental Oversight Committee of *Getting the Best from Each Other*. It is intended to help embed these principles into daily practice among Government Departments, Agencies and Offices, and within the provider community.

21 In addition, the guidance on Strategic Area Reviews reflects the LSC's commitment to the DfES Supporting Better Delivery Programme which aims to radically improve its capacity and capability to deliver. Key to this programme is a commitment to establish effective partnership working relationships by setting out key principles that provide a starting point for developing a partnership to reflect the responsibility for delivery of specific objectives. The principles are that partners:

- know, trust and value each other;
- recognise and respect each other's agenda, taking account of where this differs;
- make explicit the shared vision and objectives and each other's roles in delivery;

- work jointly through all stages of policy or product development through to delivery and beyond;
- systematically examine all activities to agree who is best placed to carry them out;
- share information and maintain good communication links;
- ensure regular feedback loops on strategy, plans, delivery and performance; and
- share success and agree goals for continuous performance improvement.

Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA)

22 Alongside the development of Local Plans, local LSCs have also worked in close collaboration with RDAs, LAs including the LEAs and Jobcentre Plus in helping to develop a shared FRESA. These incorporate the LSC's commitments to address the skills and employment needs of employers and individuals within each region. FRESAs recognise diversity and contain commitments to building opportunities to improve the prosperity and prospects of businesses and individuals within the region. The FRESA gives focus to what needs to happen in the region to maintain and grow a healthy labour market, in which:

- a wide range of quality job opportunities exist;
- every individual has the opportunity and skills to find and progress in employment;
- employers are able to recruit the people they need with the skills they require (including basic skills); and
- the workforce develops in order to improve productivity and enhance the employability of individuals.

Consultation Timetable

23 The LSC intends to formally commence the Strategic Area Reviews of provision from April 2003. The following timetable is planned:

Activity	Date
Launch of consultation circular	November 2002
Consultation ends	February 2003
Publication of report on consultation	March 2003
Publication of guidance	March 2003

24 The LSC will set in train the process of Strategic Area Reviews, building on work to date, from April 2003. Each area will develop an appropriate timetable, which will result in all areas having a clear vision of the way forward, and having identified themes for further work, by Summer 2004 to feed into the strategic planning process for 2005/06 and beyond.

Subsequent Sections

25 The contents of subsequent sections of this document are outlined below:

Section Two contains general information on Strategic Area Reviews, including their purpose and expected outcomes, and introduces the process for undertaking the Reviews.

Section Three looks at the elements involved in the first stage of the Strategic Area Review process, local planning.

Section Four outlines the information gathering and analysis local LSCs will need to undertake to complete the Reviews.

Section Five provides guidance on developing and appraising choices and formulating strategic options to shape provision in the local area.

Section Six includes details on the consultation process for the area delivery plan incorporating the strategic option determined as a result of the Strategic Area Review.

Section Seven looks at the arrangements for publishing the area delivery plan as part of the Local Strategic Plan.

Section Eight outlines information on the implementation of the area delivery plan, including arrangements for monitoring progress with the Strategic Area Review.

Section Nine provides information on the national and local evaluation strategies for the Reviews.

Section Ten looks at cross boundary considerations for Strategic Area Reviews, particularly in relation to London.

Section Eleven contains consultation questions and details of further development work.

26 Current plans are that the toolkit will consist of the following tools:

Tool 1 – Specialisation, choice and provider missions.

Tool 2 – Strategic Area Review process map.

Tool 3 – Project Management aide-memoire.

Tool 4 – Policy implications.

Tool 5 – Skills needed to complete Strategic Area Reviews.

Tool 6 – Previous Review work undertaken – case studies.

Tool 7 – Effective Partnerships Self-Assessment questionnaire.

Tool 8 – Getting the Best from Each Other questionnaire.

Tool 9 – Guide to information sources.

Tool 10 – Guide to assessing Value For Money of provision.

Tool 11 – What provision does the LSC currently have?

Tool 12 – What provision does the LSC need to meet the needs of learners, employers and communities?

Tool 13 – What provision does the LSC need to meet its targets?

Tool 14 – What choices does the LSC need to make?

Tool 15 – Legal considerations for Strategic Area Reviews.

Tool 16 – Organisational models.

Tool 17 – Appraising strategic options.

Q1 How do you think the proposed toolkit might help in carrying out reviews? Are there 'tools' for this process you would particularly recommend?

Section Two: Purpose

What is a Strategic Area Review?

27 Strategic Area Reviews are a process to fundamentally assess the provision both currently offered and required in each part of the country against:

- the emerging priorities and needs of learners, employers and local communities;
- the need to drive up the quality and success rates in many areas of provision and improve its cost effectiveness; and
- the volume and type of education and training needed to meet the LSCs targets and deliver the Government's four key policy priorities of 14-19 learning, entry to higher education, workforce development and adult basic skills.

28 This assessment will lead to the identification and appraisal of strategic options for improved delivery in each part of the country. The appraisal, using a standard approach set out in the toolkit, will lead to an area delivery plan with priority given to action having the greatest and largest impact on performance in meeting learner, employer and community needs. The full range of possibilities for performance improvement should be explored including possibilities for distinct 16-19 provision. Significant structural reorganisation of local provision, which is likely to be costly and time consuming, should only be considered if it will provide the changes needed. The work needed to implement the chosen options will be built into the Local Plan.

29 In order to deliver its strategic planning role the LSC is responsible for securing the best overall mix of provision for its locality with an appropriate choice of learning style, mode of delivery and ethos for learners and employers. Following the completion of Strategic Area Reviews, the local LSC will be:

- developing further the contribution of excellent provision;
- working with providers and the inspectorates to improve poor or under performing provision;
- drawing in and developing new provision and providers to fill gaps; and
- rapidly replacing unacceptable provision with poor prospects of improvement.

30 In parallel, providers will be identifying or updating their unique educational and training missions in light of the local assessment of provision. Each provider will be expected to concentrate on the areas of learning and types of learner they are best equipped to help. The approach will need to reflect differences in rural and urban areas.

31 The Strategic Area Review process will be carried out concurrently in all parts of the country to facilitate cross boundary work where this benefits learners, employers or local communities. They will enable the full potential of specialist national provision and national providers to be realised. The Reviews will also help the LSC to work effectively with Sector Skills Councils, the Sector Skills Development Agency and RDAs to secure the pattern of specialist provision needed to tackle sector and regional skills priorities.

Strategic Area Reviews should:

- result in new patterns of delivery that do not restrict learners or employers to a single style of delivery, provider or ethos;
- ensure that organisational barriers to the effective use of new learning technologies or progression for learners are not increased;
- focus on the interests of learners, employers or communities and not on the implications for providers to the exclusion of these;

- ensure that changes are not simply for the administrative convenience of the LSC, LA, LEA, Jobcentre Plus or providers; and
- prevent the introduction of additional burdens for collecting new information on providers, employers or individuals.

33 Strategic Area Reviews will draw on the local LSC Plans and targets for 2007, learner and employer views, provider inspections and regular performance reviews with providers.

34 Strategic Area Reviews will build on the experience of follow-up to 16-19 Area Inspections where they have taken place. However, the Review process will:

- be carried out by the local LSC working with the LA, including the LEA and Jobcentre Plus;
- cover all age groups not just those under 20;
- ensure full coverage of each local LSC area;
- include all LSC-funded provision;
- not involve direct observation of teaching and learning;
- not replicate work already completed by local LSCs and their partners; and
- not be subject to regulation.

What Provision will be Covered by Strategic Area Reviews?

35 Strategic Area Reviews will cover all LSC-funded provision in every part of the country for learners of all ability levels aged over 16. This will include provision delivered by a diverse range of providers including: school sixth forms, general further education colleges and associated sixth form centres, higher education institutions offering further education, adult and community learning

centres, Work Based learning including Modern Apprenticeships and other vocational routes, all **learnirect** provision and specialist colleges. It also includes provision aimed at a wide range of recipients such as refugees and asylum seekers and other minority groups.

36 While most provision is planned locally for local people the LSC will need to work nationally with providers in three areas:

- The National Contracts Service – which provides a service for large multi-sited national employers, specialist sector providers and national sector hubs.
- Planning the delivery of highly specialised services for learners with special learning needs requiring residential provision.
- Planning specialist provision, such as Centres of Vocational Excellence in smaller strategically important occupations.

37 In undertaking Strategic Area Reviews local LSCs should take account of the links with other provision in the locality including that financed by LAs/LEAs, Jobcentre Plus, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), employers, the RDAs, European Social Fund (ESF) and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB).

38 Learners, employers and local communities want a coherent approach to meeting their priorities regardless of the funding source. Strategic Area Reviews need to be alert to the implications for LSC-funded provision of changes in provision funded by other agencies in the locality, as this will impact on the local analysis of supply and demand. This awareness will minimise the risks of wasteful duplication, competition or confusion for employers and learners. Local LSCs should also be alert to the implications of strategic options identified in Strategic Area Reviews for provision funded by other public sector bodies. They should also seek to strengthen links with different funding agencies to provide a coherent approach to the learning and skills sector for learners and

employers. Local LSCs and Jobcentre Plus share providers, and a joint Review of provision could help improve quality and delivery.

39 The local LSC should carry out Strategic Area Reviews in the context of:

14–16 Key Stage 4 provision

Especially the implications for:

- learning in Key Stage 4;
- the capacity of post-16 learning institutions to contribute to the wider 14-16 curriculum;
- meeting the increased expectations of young people entering the post-16 sector as school standards rise; and
- progression routes into post-16 education and training and the time needed to address the challenges presented to young people by institutional transition.

Area Inspections have emphasised the importance of building close links between the local LSC and LEA. This will be imperative in the move towards a distinct 14 -19 phase of education.

14–19 education and training

Especially the implications for:

- greater flexibility and choice in the curriculum at Key Stage 4;
- creating new pathways of learning - general, specialist and work-based-to meet young people's needs and aspirations;
- making high quality vocational options available to all young people;
- entitling young people to continue until age 19 with study towards literacy, numeracy, and ICT awards until at least Level 2;
- allowing young people to develop and progress at a pace consistent with their abilities;

- promoting increased collaboration between education providers; and
- ensuring effective transition between providers, including school to college, college to university, school to work based learning.

Sixth forms in non-LSC funded institutions

Especially the impact of City Technology Colleges and City Academies on the nature and scale of LSC funded provision.

Higher Education

Especially the implications for:

- the delivery of Higher Education, especially in general further education colleges with HEFCE funding;
- progression to Higher Education and widening participation, particularly demand for new forms of Higher Education such as foundation degrees and the time needed to address the challenges presented to young people by transition into HE; and
- collaborative work with Higher Education to meet employer skill needs, especially intermediate work force development needs.

Jobcentre Plus provision

Especially the implications for:

- providers under contract to Jobcentre Plus;
- the nature and scale of LSC funded provision used by unemployed and economically inactive people on benefits;
- progression from Jobcentre Plus funded learning to LSC or HEFCE funded learning; and
- LSC funded provision of changes in Jobcentre Plus provision.

Connexions Service

Especially the implications for:

- Personal and social education and careers from 13–19.

Projects involving learning funded by ESF (projects without LSC matched funding), SRB, New Opportunities Fund and others

Especially the implications of proposed changes for:

- the capacity of project managers to meet their commitments;
- the quality of learning provision in projects; and
- opportunities for progression to post-16 and HEFCE funded learning.

Community/family learning centres

Especially the implications for:

- joint funding arrangements for provision.

Distance and e-learning provision

Especially the implications for:

- the implementation of e-learning strategies;
- the network of **learndirect** and UK Online Centres; and
- delivery, nature and scale of the significant contribution of **learndirect** to meeting local needs for LSC funded provision.

Learning purchased by individuals and employers

Especially the implications of:

- LSC funding on the availability and structure of learning available for learners and employers to purchase direct from providers.

Prison education and training

Especially the implications for:

- continuity of participation in education and training on release; and
- the drive across Government to develop a robust and coherent approach to the rehabilitation of offenders.

40 Although the focus of the Strategic Area Reviews is on LSC funded provision, it is not intended that this should create new barriers between this and other local provision. Rather, every opportunity should be taken to encourage collaborative working between different funding agencies and promote coherent 'offers' of learning to individuals and employers.

Specialisation, Choice and Provider Reviews of their Missions

41 Strategic Area Reviews and provider reviews of their unique educational and training missions, as outlined in *Success For All*, will be carried out in parallel. Guidance on specialisation, choice and provider missions will be contained in tool 1 of the toolkit. This has been prepared by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) drawing in best practice in the sector and more widely.

42 Local LSCs will have an initial discussion with providers as part of the Performance Review process in Spring 2003. This will initiate a dialogue on each provider's contribution to meeting the overall needs of learners, employers and local communities. By Spring 2004, local LSCs should be able to discuss in detail the potential role and mission of each provider – and the different provision they offer. The aim should be to have a clearer understanding of each provider's role by the end of 2004, as part of the local planning process.

What will the Outcomes of Strategic Area Reviews be?

43 By the end of 2005 the Strategic Area Review process will give the LSC and Ministers confidence that LSC Local Plans are on track for:

- the right mix of high quality provision to meet learner, employers and community needs; driving standards and success rates; meeting the LSC's vision for 2010 and delivering the government's education and training priorities;
- a confident integrated post-16 sector built on excellent provision with each provider clear about its unique contribution and working collaboratively to achieve educational and economic success;
- the rapid and rigorous implementation of action plans resulting from institutional and 14-19 Area Inspections;
- coherent use of capital, revenue, standards and other budgets to support priority local and regional needs; and
- a forward programme of detailed reviews of provision to tackle deep seated delivery problems in different parts of the local LSC area or in meeting the needs of different types of learner, employer or community effectively.

44 Success will be achieved by understanding and responding rapidly to the diverse learning cultures and priorities of each industry and locality. It will also have come from keeping a clear strategic focus on where each provider and the learning and skills community as a whole can make an effective contribution.

45 Changes will have been made to the mix of provision locally to contribute to a unified post-16 learning and skills sector. This will have involved the development and extension of excellent provision, improvement of poor or under-performing provision, the introduction

of new provision and/or new providers to fill gaps in need and the replacement of unacceptable provision with poor prospects of improvement. Within this picture, providers will have clear and unique educational and training missions, and be concentrating on what they do best.

46 Strategic Area Reviews will become an essential element of assuring the quality and range of the LSC's services to learners, employers and local communities. They will also help the LSC to develop its partnerships with those it funds.

What Values Underpin the Conduct of Strategic Area Reviews?

47 Local plans for Strategic Area Reviews should be based on a set of core values designed for maximum effectiveness and reduced risk of judicial review or other challenge. These are:

- A strong and sustained focus on the needs of learners, employers and communities, including active and continuing participation in Reviews by learners and employers.
- Collective ownership and steering of the Reviews, driven by local LSCs.
- Active promotion of equality and diversity in provision to meet the distinct needs of different groups of learners and employers.
- Active promotion of collaboration and co-operation between providers and localities in meeting the needs of learners and employers.
- Valuing and building on previous LSC review activity and other work on reviews of provision or institutions.
- Improving on excellent provision and driving up quality.

- Not imposing extra burdens or bureaucracy on employers, individual learners or providers.
- Open transparent and consultative decision making arrangements consistent with commercial confidentiality and security of personal data.
- Fairness between localities, different types of provision and providers.
- Consistency of approach across the country.
- Promoting safe, healthy and accessible learning environments.

How will Strategic Area Reviews be Carried Out and what is the Timetable?

48 The local LSC will be responsible for managing the process of Strategic Area Review within the framework set out in this guidance. In doing so they will have considerable flexibility to design the process used to take account of local conditions and previous work on local provision. Each local LSC will need to determine, in the context of past work and local need, how best to cover the totality of provision, differentiating the approach as necessary.

49 In designing the Review local LSCs should pay particular attention to the values underpinning Strategic Area Reviews.

50 There will be 7 key stages in the Strategic Area Review process. Tool 2 of the toolkit provides a process map outlining the stages involved in the process.

51 The overall indicative timetable broken down into key stages for Strategic Area Reviews is:

Milestones	Indicative Timescales
Stage 1 – Drawing up the local plan	Start in April 2003 Up to 4 months
Stage 2 – Information gathering and analysis	Up to 6 months
Stage 3 – Developing and appraising choices and formulating strategic options	Up to 6 months
Stage 4 – Local consultation	3 months
Stage 5 – Publishing local area delivery plan	At least by Spring 2005
Stage 6 – Implementing local delivery plan	As part of local strategies updated from Spring 2005
Stage 7 – Evaluating the Strategic Area Review	

52 Elements of the early stages of the Strategic Area Review process may be carried out simultaneously, to give local LSCs local flexibility and to ensure the Reviews are completed within the indicative timescales.

53 Local LSCs will need to work closely with neighbouring local LSCs to ensure cross boundary issues relating to the flow of learners across LSC boundaries is identified, understood and reflected fully in plans. This is a particular issue for London LSCs, who will need to work closely together to develop a pan-London approach to Strategic Area Reviews. Section 10 of the guidance highlights cross boundary considerations for all local LSCs, and will include details of how these issues may be addressed in London.

54 The following sections provide an outline of the work involved at each stage of the Strategic Area Review process.

Q2 Do you agree with the aims and scope of Strategic Area Reviews? Are there other aspects of provision they should cover?

Q3 Do you agree with the values listed in Section 2? Are there other values that should underpin Strategic Area Reviews?

Q4 Does the process give local LSCs sufficient flexibility? What aspects of the Strategic Area Review process do you think should be managed centrally?

Q5 The guidance proposes a seven stage process for reviews. Does this provide the right framework? Are there other actions you would like to see?

Section Three: Local Planning of the Strategic Area Review Process

Introduction

55 The first stage in the Strategic Area Review process is to draw up a Local Plan for carrying out the Review. This should build on the core national principles in this guidance, while reflecting local circumstances. Each local LSC should plan local Reviews to avoid duplication with previous work, while encompassing the wider perspective, core values and consistency of approach set out in this guidance.

56 Tool 3 in the toolkit provides local LSCs with a Project Management Aide Memoire to help plan the Strategic Area Review process.

57 The Local Plan needs to consider a range of issues to ensure the Strategic Area Review can realistically be completed within the timetable, including as a minimum:

- involving learners, employers and communities;
- arrangements for stakeholder communications and involvement in the Strategic Area Review;
- local management of the Review;
- timescales for the stages in the Review process;
- resource allocation;
- staff training and development needs;
- the contribution of previous review work;
- working with providers to review their missions; and
- record keeping of the Review process.

Involving learners, employers and communities

58 The Local Plan will need to include strategies for engaging and encouraging contributions from learners, employers and communities throughout the Review process. The engagement of these groups is central to Strategic Area Reviews as one of the key aims of the process is to meet their current needs and future priorities. The plan should ensure groups typically underrepresented in the learning and skills sector are included.

Stakeholder involvement

59 Strategic Area Reviews need to involve the full range of stakeholders in post-16 learning and skills. Stakeholders will include those who must be consulted, those who will contribute to the Review, those who will be affected by the outcomes and anyone who has expectations of, or an interest in, the work. Stakeholders from outside the local LSC area should be involved in the Review due to cross boundary issues relating to learning and skills provision.

60 Local stakeholders must be identified and involved in the Strategic Area Review from the planning stage to ensure they fully understand, and are committed to the process. Local LSCs may choose to invite stakeholders to an initial meeting as they begin to develop the local plan for the Review. This meeting would provide an opportunity to inform stakeholders about the Strategic Area Review, to seek their co-operation and contribution to the process and to address early concerns.

61 There are a number of key stakeholders who must be involved throughout the Strategic Area Review process:

- individual learners and potential learners, specifically underrepresented groups;

- employers, both directly and through RDAs, Sector Skills Councils, Chambers of Commerce, local Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Business Link operators and local/regional branches of the Federation of Small Businesses;
- community groups, including representatives from the Voluntary Sector;
- providers, including private and voluntary sector providers and employers;
- RDAs;
- Ufi/**learn**direct;
- LA/s including LEA/s;
- Jobcentre Plus;
- Connexions;
- local Strategic Partnerships and Sub-regional Strategic Partnerships;
- learning Partnerships;
- student/learner representative groups;
- trade Unions and employee associations; and
- leading local councillors and constituency MPs.

62 In seeking the views of stakeholders, local LSCs should also consult with:

- higher education;
- prison Service and other public sector bodies locally;
- major local employers; and
- representatives from the Voluntary Sector.

63 Tool 4 will provide information on the key policy areas that should be considered as part of the Review. This might help stakeholders to

think about the role they can play in the Strategic Area Review. This tool will form part of the toolkit held on the DfES and LSC websites and will be updated in line with new policy developments.

Management of the Review

64 The Strategic Area Review will be overseen in each local LSC area by a Steering Group, involving a member of the local LSC Board. This must consist of representatives from the LA/LEA, Jobcentre Plus, at least one major local private and public sector employer, and other stakeholders who the local LSC wishes to involve. The Steering Group will ensure that the Review process is carried out to timetable and outputs delivered. The group must consult with the local LSC Board and key stakeholders on the strategic options and the local area delivery plan. Each local LSC will have a clearly identified Lead Manager responsible for the Strategic Area Review.

Overall Timetable to be Met

65 Local LSCs should consider the national timetable for Strategic Area Reviews and plan in detail the individual tasks that need to be completed to enable these deadlines to be met. The work should be broken down into manageable chunks or phases, and the outcomes of each phase established. The length of time it will take to achieve these outcomes should also be established, and the relationship between the different phases should be considered.

Resource Allocation

66 There will need to be additional resources available to local LSCs to complete the Reviews. LSC and DfES are discussing the resource required and how they will be found.

67 Local LSCs will need to plan the amount and level of resource needed to carry out the Strategic Area Review process. Resources

include internal staff, external support, funding and IT/research support. Sufficient resource must be allocated to the different stages of the Review according to the agreed timetable to ensure delivery of strategic options and ultimately the implementation plan.

68 Local LSCs will also want to consider how they will integrate the use of specialist support such as training and development, secondees, specialist consultancy and networking arrangements into planning and resource allocation activities to help deliver Strategic Area Reviews.

Staff Training and Development Needs

69 LLSCs will need to build a project team to complete the Strategic Area Review. The Team might consist of secondees from partner organisations, people from other local LSCs, external consultants, and/or people with other responsibilities within the local LSC.

70 The Project Management Aide Memoire, included in tool 3 of the toolkit, provides information on project and risk management and project teams. Tool 5 of the toolkit includes a matrix of the stages in the Review process and an outline of the skills required to complete the work at each stage.

71 These tools will help local LSCs undertake Reviews and help identify the development needs of staff who will be involved in the Review process. Training will be available for local LSC staff undertaking the Strategic Area Reviews to help them to develop these skills. Formal or informal networking groups for staff involved in Reviews to share good practice will also be established.

Contribution of Previous Review Work

72 Local LSCs will need to meet the core national principles for Strategic Area Reviews, but will have the flexibility to reflect local

circumstances and build on previous work undertaken in this area.

73 Many local LSCs have completed reviews of particular provision in 2001 and 2002. The scope of these reviews varies, but they may have considered:

- categories of provider, such as colleges or work based learning;
- provision within learner age groups, such as 16-19 or adult;
- occupational sector services, such as construction or health care;
- thematic reviews, such as learner support; or
- types of provision, such as Basic Skills.

74 These reviews have usually been prompted by particular local issues, including 16-19 Area Inspections, inspection reports on individual providers, evidence of sector skill needs or re-structuring, or requests from other agencies such as LEAs or RDAs. Evidence may have been examined for part or all of the local LSC area, and depending on the timing, may have contributed to the strategic planning process. Issues across local LSC boundaries may not have been considered at the time. Therefore, each local LSC will be at a different starting position due to this previous work and the timing and coverage of inspections.

75 Local LSCs are fully encouraged to make use of valid evidence from earlier reviews. A major benefit of the Strategic Area Review process is that this will be the first time that the pattern of provision of all post 16 learning (other than Higher Education) has been assessed with a common national approach. Local LSCs will want to set evidence they may have from earlier reviews in this strategic context.

76 To gain the full benefits of earlier reviews local LSCs are welcome to match their outcomes against the general aim of Strategic Area Reviews and the policy objectives described in Section Two of this guidance. For

example, previous reviews may have focused on a single phase, such as 16-19, in one part of the area covered by the local LSC. Or, in considering the skills requirements of an occupational sector, an earlier review may have been focused more narrowly than a strategic review of the needs of that sector. In cases such as these, prior evidence should be matched against the aims of the Strategic Area Review and any additional work or analysis needed identified.

77 Local LSCs should also consider how far earlier reviews followed the stages of the Strategic Area Review process. These seven stages provide a framework for ensuring the Reviews are planned well and conducted using robust evidence, leading to well-informed decision-making. The importance of consultation, monitoring and evaluation are also highlighted, with the full involvement of local stakeholders emphasised.

78 The review work undertaken by local LSCs to date has often made an important contribution to improving provision and meeting local needs. Local LSC Boards should feel able to carry this work forward into Strategic Area Reviews where they are satisfied it meets the standards of this guidance. Tool 6 of the toolkit includes a series of case studies, highlighting examples of previous review work undertaken by local LSCs to aid the Review process.

79 Tool 7 is an Effective Partnership Self Assessment questionnaire which provides a structured analytical tool to test how well local LSCs work with partners.

80 In addition, tool 8, the *Getting the Best from Each Other* questionnaire, provides a structured aide-memoire for the use of officials and providers. It is designed to draw attention to key principles and guidance documents that have been developed by the interdepartmental project. It is designed to help embed these principles into daily practice and, in the context of Strategic Area Reviews, will enable officials and providers to check their procedures and practices against the

benchmark of *Getting the Best from Each Other* principles.

Reviewing Provider Missions

81 Local LSCs must begin working with providers to establish or review their unique educational and training missions. At this stage in the Strategic Area Review process this might involve asking providers who may not have undertaken previous work in this area to start thinking about their mission.

82 Tool 1 will provide local LSCs with information to help to review provider missions.

Record Keeping of the Review Process

83 The Project Management Aide Memoire, included in tool 3 of the toolkit, provides information on project documentation. Local LSCs must keep sufficiently detailed records of the Strategic Area Review process, including the development of strategic options, consultations and local LSC Board decision making. This will help the local LSC Board to minimise the risk of challenge.

84 Once the local plan for the Review has been produced, then local LSCs will need to publish the plan locally, including the key stages, milestones and expected outcomes.

Q6 Do you think the range of stakeholders to be involved is comprehensive? How can stakeholders be encouraged to contribute effectively?

Q7 Does the section 'building on previous work' give enough scope for use of previous review evidence?

Q8 Are there ways in which the LSC should work differently, either locally or nationally, to ensure that Strategic Area Reviews are effective?

Section Four: Information Gathering and Analysis

Introduction

85 The second stage of the Strategic Area Review process will involve the collection and analysis of information on the needs of learners, employers and communities; the quality and performance of existing provision; and value for money. When gathering and analysing this information, local LSCs will need to consider the impact of learning and skills policies and wider government strategies. Tool 4 will help local LSCs to think about these policies, their importance in the Review process and how provision in local areas should be strengthened to meet the policy objectives.

Information Gathering

86 Strategic Area Reviews must be carried out objectively and systematically to minimise the risk of legal challenge, and to ensure the Reviews instil Ministers with the confidence that the mix of local provision meets the needs of learners, employers and communities. The Reviews may recommend radical changes to provision locally, so it is essential they are based on robust statistical evidence. Local LSCs must collect accurate information on both supply (the scale, scope and character of current provision) and demand (what is needed over the next 5 to 10 years across the area and beyond, as appropriate) and ensure this data is used correctly.

87 Only readily available information sources should be used to inform Strategic Area Reviews, to avoid placing additional burdens for data collection on the LSC and providers. The active engagement of the local learning and skills community will help ensure that data and intelligence to be utilised are robust and valid. Jobcentre Plus has a great deal of information on the Labour Market, employers' needs, and the needs of unemployed people, and is also able to comment on the relevance of training provision.

88 As much of the information as possible used in the Review should be 'hard' data, as statistics are quantified, measurable and open to inspection and challenge. In certain situations it may be necessary for local LSCs to use less consistent and less complete data to inform the Reviews. Where this cannot be avoided, then local LSCs should ensure the use of this data is logical and able to withstand scrutiny.

89 Tool 9 of the toolkit provides a guide to data sources, produced by KPMG, to assist local LSCs with the information gathering process. It lists the data sources available, and provides practical details about each source, including how the data can be accessed, the cost of the data, its use, strengths and weaknesses within the context of Strategic Area Reviews. The guide also includes details of proposed changes to LSC data collection methods, definitions or presentation of the data coming on stream in 2003/04 or 2004/05.

90 Tool 10 will help local LSCs to assess the value for money of provision.

91 IT software packages are available which could potentially be used to reduce the costs of assembling and validating data. Some local LSCs have already used such packages for earlier work and can be contacted directly about their use. Tool 6 provides details of some contacts. Use of this type of package might help to ensure that a robust analysis is undertaken.

92 Local LSCs will want to draw on existing research, and may wish to undertake additional research in order to inform the Strategic Area Review process, possibly in partnership with others, such as RDAs.

Analysis

93 Once local LSCs have collected this information for the local area, they will then need to evaluate critically the information available on the needs of learners, employers and communities; the quality and performance

of existing provision; and value for money. This analysis of information must be transparent and robust to give learners, their communities and employers confidence.

94 Tools 11-14 will help local LSCs to analyse the existing supply of local learning and skills provision in relation to the current and future demands of learners, employers and communities, and to establish the areas where choices need to be made.

95 Following analysis of the information sources, the LSC will have established the areas where choices need to be made to ensure the right mix of provision is available. Section Five of this guidance will help local LSCs to develop and appraise these choices.

Q9 Are there approaches to information gathering and analysis you would recommend, or particular sources of evidence?

Section Five: Developing and Appraising Choices and Formulating Strategic Options

Introduction

96 Local LSCs will need to identify the key provision issues in meeting learner, employer and community needs over the next 5 to 10 years, to determine the scale and shape of provision needed locally to deliver policy priorities. Tool 14 will help local LSCs to think about the choices to be made to determine the scale and shape of provision needed locally. Once local LSCs have developed and appraised a series of choices, they will then formulate strategic options to ensure provision is able to meet these needs within this timeframe.

Developing and Appraising Choices

97 Local LSCs must work with their partners to analyse this information and develop clear choices for change to ensure the correct mix of provision locally. The benefits and risks of different approaches to meeting new needs, replacing poor provision, improving cost-effectiveness and filling gaps must be drawn up and evaluated. The impact of these choices should be assessed, in consultation with stakeholders, including:

- the risks;
- the benefits;
- the legal implications;
- the costs; and
- the timescales involved.

98 Local LSCs will develop and appraise these choices in conjunction with neighbouring local LSCs, due to cross boundary issues relating to travel to learn/work patterns, regional skills strategies and specialist provision, etc. These issues are outlined in more detail within Section Ten of this guidance.

99 Tool 15 will help local LSCs to ensure that Strategic Area Reviews are conducted effectively and efficiently and to minimise the risk of legal challenge.

100 To ensure the best overall mix of provision in the local area for learners, employers and communities, the local LSC will be:

- developing further the contribution of excellent provision;
- working with providers and the inspectorates to improve poor or under-performing provision;
- drawing in and developing new provision to fill gaps; and
- rapidly replacing unacceptable provision that has poor prospects of improvement.

101 Early engagement in Reviews will influence stakeholders' willingness to work differently on the basis of their outcomes, if required. These outcomes might point to a re-focusing of mission or services by some local providers including possibilities for distinct 16-19 provision. New ways of collaborating might be required if standards of provision are to be enhanced. Involvement throughout the process makes improvements of this kind more acceptable and, therefore, achievable.

102 When developing and appraising these choices, local LSCs should seek to reduce the existing inequalities in access to learning and narrow differences in success rates for people from different parts of the population. Diversity and equality must be actively promoted through Strategic Area Reviews. The needs of disadvantaged groups, who are typically under-represented in the learning and skills sector, should be fully considered. This includes those from socially excluded or minority communities, or with special needs. The future needs and priorities of individuals, employers and communities who are not currently participating in learning should also be taken into account when developing options for change.

103 Tools 1 and 16 within the toolkit will help local LSCs to develop and appraise choices and think about how provision could be organised in their area. Tool 16 includes a typology of organisational models and has been prepared by the LSDA to stimulate thinking about the organisation of provision locally.

this guidance will outline the details of the local consultation.

Q10 When developing strategic options, do the 4 points in paragraph 101 provide the right framework for making choices about provision? Are there other factors for the LSC to take into account?

Formulating Strategic Options

104 Based on this appraisal, local LSCs must then develop strategic options, taking into account the following points:

- priorities should be clearly established;
- when tackling any option, priority should be given to the simplest choice that will have an immediate impact;
- priority should be given to options producing the largest impact and affecting the most learners; and
- reorganisation should only be considered where other options are not possible and as a long-term option.

105 As part of LSC risk management processes, these points should be considered in the context of a local risk assessment of impact.

106 Local LSCs must ensure these options comply with the legal framework for making and carrying out decisions affecting schools, colleges and provider contracts. Tool 15 will help local LSCs to understand and comply with the legal framework for making decisions within the learning and skills sector.

107 Tool 17 includes a common method for appraising strategic options to help local LSCs with this stage of the Review process and to promote consistency nationally.

108 Following formulation and appraisal of the strategic options, local LSCs must develop an area delivery plan outlining these options.

109 Local LSCs will also need to incorporate these strategic options and choices into a document for local consultation. Section Six of

Section Six: Local Consultation on Strategic Options

Introduction

110 A local consultation on the emerging strategic options should be undertaken. A consultation strategy should be formulated, as there are key partners who must be included. These are learners, employers, community groups, providers, LA/s including LEA/s, Jobcentre Plus, RDAs, Connexions, Local Strategic Partnerships, Trade Unions and college and provider staff. Providers who must be included would be schools, colleges, deliverers of Adult and Community Learning (ACL) and Work Based Learning (WBL), and **learnirect** hubs and Ufi Ltd. Representative bodies for employees, such as trade unions or associations should also be consulted. People and organisations affected by proposed changes must also be consulted.

111 The local LSC Board, having identified Review outcomes for consultation, must then approve the consultation strategy. The participation of members of the Board in consultative events will provide a valuable input.

Consultation Strategy

112 The consultation strategy should:

- establish that the process covers all the Strategic Area Review policy aims;
- identify essential partners to be approached for views;
- determine the range and extent of the consultation;
- set a timeframe;
- ensure involvement opportunities for all stakeholders in the wider learning and skills community;

- establish modes of consultation appropriate to the diversity of individuals and groups involved;
- seek actively to take account of the views of employers;
- seek actively to take account of the views of learners;
- seek to engage those excluded currently from learning; and
- ensure the process promotes equality and diversity in obtaining responses.

113 Consultation across local LSC boundaries is encouraged due to the impact of travel to learn/work areas and the role of specialist provision.

114 Organisations and services that are not within the funding or planning responsibilities of the local LSC should be consulted where their services have a bearing on the LSC's policies or provision. This includes schools serving 14-16 year olds and local universities. There may also be local statutory or voluntary services whose work is important to the learning community, whether or not the primary focus is on education, such as Social Services, family support or disability groups.

115 In line with LSC processes, local LSCs should inform national office and DfES of any options involving structural change to organisational arrangements for school sixth forms or colleges.

116 This formal consultation process, including timescales and the process for considering its outcomes, should be publicised. Responses to the consultation must be considered by the local LSC Board, which will then decide on the way forward. Decisions on reorganisation of provision, or those with significant capital or revenue consequences, should be agreed with national office before confirmation.

117 The strategic options chosen will then be incorporated into a local delivery plan for the Review. This plan will be integrated into the Local Planning process. Elements of the plan

may be staged in order to minimise disruption to/for current learners, or due to resource reasons. These decisions should be reported through the Local Planning process.

Q11 Does the approach outlined for local consultation meet the requirements of learners, employers and the local community?

Section Seven: Publishing the Area Delivery Plan

Introduction

118 A local area delivery plan will set out actions already taken to improve local provision and incorporate decisions arising from the Strategic Area Reviews and this will be published as part of each Local Plan by early 2005. This will include timetables for actions and details of the implications for spending on capital projects, student support, travel and other forms of access. The delivery plan will include a rolling programme of local sectoral or cross-cutting reviews, focused on areas where the greatest gains can be achieved or the thorniest issues need to be tackled. It will address all DfES and LSC policy goals expected from the Review process, in contributing to the delivery of objectives towards 2010.

Publication

119 Publication should be in a format of most benefit to the local learning community. It may be done collaboratively with neighbouring local LSCs where there are common interests in the development of provision or services.

120 Publication should take account of equality and diversity issues in accessing information on Review outcomes including minority languages. Imaginative, innovative and responsive engagement with learners, employers and the wider community is encouraged. One of the main aims in publicising Review outcomes should be to reach those not currently participating in learning, through their communities or workplaces, including trade unions.

Section Eight: Implementing the Area Delivery Plan

121 The Strategic Area Review delivery plan will be incorporated into the Local Plan to produce a single planning mechanism. Implementation will be underway as soon as practicable and certainly during 2005. Actions will be phased according to learner need and the range and quality of provision, as well as planned to maintain the degree of stability needed in the sector at a time of change. However, implementation timescales must take account of one of the key aims of the Reviews; to give Ministers and the LSC confidence that, by the end of 2005, plans are in place for provision to meet local priorities and for the quality of provision to improve. Local Plans should set out, by this time, the right mix of provision to meet learners and employers' requirements and service standards.

122 Local LSCs should outline priorities in the delivery plan. Certain actions will require endorsement as appropriate by national office or the secretary of state. Effective implementation will require action on these priorities in the first instance, taking account of legislative and resourcing requirements.

123 Roles and responsibilities for implementation of the area delivery plan will need to be established. These will include arrangements for checking progress and adjusting the plan to reflect changing needs, policy priorities and new circumstances.

124 In co-ordinating implementation of Strategic Area Reviews around the country, national office will agree target dates for the completion of the main stages of implementation across the LSC network. This schedule will be finalised following consultation on the draft guidance. Views are particularly welcome from partners, stakeholders and local LSCs themselves on the scheduling of implementation, nationally and locally.

125 It is to be expected that Boards of local LSCs, having endorsed the delivery plan, will

monitor progress with the implementation of Reviews systematically as part of the normal planning process. First-year targets (likely to be 2005-2006) will be particularly important. Bringing greater coherence and focus of mission may well be first year actions. Where reorganisation of provision is agreed, then targets are likely to cover more than a single year, to safeguard provision for learners and to ensure resource availability. In most cases, timescales for implementation are likely to be detailed over at least a two-year period. Some estimation of timescales towards 2010 would also be helpful. National office will liaise with local LSCs on this process, so that a common format for implementation plans is developed.

126 Following consultation on the draft guidance, the final version will contain more details on the implementation arrangements.

Q12 What do you think are the most important factors for the LSC if it is to implement review outcomes successfully?

Section Nine: Evaluating the Strategic Area Review

Introduction

127 The LSC will develop a means of evaluating the nation-wide development and implementation of Strategic Area Reviews. This will be integrated with evaluation of existing programmes. Local LSCs will need to develop local evaluation procedures for reviews within the national framework.

128 Local evaluation will cover two aspects of the Reviews: process and outcomes.

Process

129 In evaluating the process followed by the review, a local LSC will consider the effectiveness of each of the stages undertaken. The local LSC will also evaluate the efficiency of the review process as a whole, including its impact on other elements of the local LSC's work. Strengths and weaknesses will be brought out, to enable lessons to be learned.

130 Local LSCs will need to consider the most appropriate procedures to be utilised so that an assessment of the process can be made. Some local LSCs may wish to adopt a formal project management approach to reviews. For others, a review will fit within their current procedures.

Outcomes

131 The outcomes of Strategic Area Reviews will be subject to formal evaluation. This is likely to have two components. The local LSC will evaluate outcomes through its management and Board and assess the fit of outcomes with Local Plans, which may need to be modified accordingly. The second component will involve the LSC nationally. Outcomes will be evaluated in their regional and national contexts, with assessments made of their contribution to LSC targets and objectives.

132 Detailed work will be undertaken by the LSC on the best means to evaluate Strategic Area Reviews. Local LSCs and other stakeholders will be fully involved in contributing to this work. Further guidance on evaluation will be provided following the consultation.

Section Ten: Cross Boundary Considerations

Introduction

133 Local LSCs should work closely with neighbouring local LSCs to ensure cross boundary issues relating to the flow of learners across LSC boundaries and other issues are identified, understood and reflected fully in plans.

Considerations

134 When examining the importance of cross boundary issues, local LSCs should consider:

- the pattern of migration of learners and potential learners on their areas;
- the local patterns of travel to learn;
- learner support and mechanisms to encourage individuals to take up and remain in education (for example, travel costs);
- workplace geography and travel to work patterns which can influence provision;
- distance and e-learning provision;
- expansion of providers beyond local boundaries and provision that has a regional and national impact, for example the Workers Education Association;
- the extent to which key regional and national providers span local LSC boundaries, especially ICT based providers (Ufi hubs and **learndirect** provision);
- the impact of national contracting service provision, including, for example, major national employers;
- specialist college provision;
- the impact of specialist vocational provision, for example CoVEs; and

- the impact of national long-term residential provision, for example, independent specialist and agricultural colleges.

135 The LSC has developed guidelines for addressing the issues of migration across boundaries. Local LSCs should ensure that the needs of learners who migrate across LLSC boundaries are being met through collaborative working.

London

136 London is unique due to the inter-relationships of local LSCs to each other and the impact upon them of very large movements of learners and workers across and into the area from a very wide geographic region. London LSCs will need to work closely together to develop a pan-London approach to Strategic Area Reviews.

137 London learning patterns are extremely complicated with significant import and export of learners, especially in central London. The patterns of travel to learn and travel to work are equally important as many learners (especially adult learners) link learning to the proximity to the workplace.

138 The five London LSCs have established an Executive group to examine pan-London issues which are also discussed at strategic and operational group meetings. Therefore Strategic Area Reviews should be built into these existing across London local LSC arrangements.

139 London Strategic Areas Review plans should be developed in the context of the London Schools plan, the FRESA, the RDA Strategic plan and should build upon Area Inspections and other reviews undertaken. London Strategic Area Review planning should also take account of the major role the region has in achieving the national target of 50% of young people entering higher education by the end of the decade and its impact on other key targets and strategies.

140 The approach to the London Strategic Area Review should include:

- establishing a pan-London local LSC Strategic Area Review networking group before March 2003;
- senior level pan-London local LSC group membership with clear terms of reference;
- involving pan-London stakeholders including setting up forums/groups to raise awareness, early in the process;
- co-operating across local LSCs on undertaking Strategic Area Reviews including assigning different aspects of work feeding into the process to each local LSC or using staff flexibly to ensure each local LSC has the right mix of staff in review teams;
- linking timescales and milestones for this work to national plans; and
- identifying appropriate resources to ensure the Strategic Area Review is undertaken effectively.

Section 11: Next Steps

Consultation

145 Comments are invited on the following consultation questions:

Q1 How do you think the proposed Toolkit might help in carrying out reviews? Are there 'tools' for this process you would particularly recommend?

Q2 Do you agree with the aims and scope of Strategic Area Reviews? Are there other aspects of provision they should cover?

Q3 Do you agree with the values listed in section 2? Are there other values that should underpin Strategic Area Reviews?

Q4 Does the process give local LSCs sufficient flexibility? What aspects of the SAR process do you think should be managed centrally?

Q5 The guidance proposes a seven stage process for reviews. Does this provide the right framework? Are there other actions you would like to see?

Q6 Do you think the range of stakeholders to be involved is comprehensive? How can stakeholders be encouraged to contribute effectively?

Q7 Does the section 'building on previous work' give enough scope for use of previous review evidence?

Q8 Are there ways in which the LSC should work differently, either locally or nationally, to ensure that Strategic Area Reviews are effective?

Q9 Are there approaches to information gathering and analysis you would recommend, or particular sources of evidence?

Q10 When developing strategic options, do the 4 points in paragraph 101 provide the right framework for making choices about provision? Are there other factors for the LSC to take into account?

Q11 Does the approach outlined for local consultation meet the requirements of learners, employers and the local community?

Q12 What do you think are the most important factors for the LSC if it is to implement review outcomes successfully?

146 A pro forma for responses is provided at annex A. This should be completed and returned to the Success For All Implementation Team at LSC national office by 21st February 2003 at the latest. Consultation responses only can also be emailed to SFA.implementationteam@lsc.gov.uk

Further Development Work

147 Following consideration of the consultation responses, the LSC will publish the final version of guidance to support local LSCs and their partners in undertaking Strategic Area Reviews of provision in March 2003. Local LSCs will formally commence the early stages of Strategic Area Reviews from April 2003.

Annex A: Responses to Consultation

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT
T 024 7682 3202
F 024 7682 3250

www.lsc.gov.uk
SFA.implementationteam@lsc.gov.uk

(Reference: Circular 02/21, Consultation on Guidance to Support Local Learning and Skills Councils and their Partners in Undertaking Strategic Area Reviews of Provision Starting in 2003)

Please photocopy, complete and return this proforma to the address above for the attention of the Programme Manager/Goal 1 by **21 February 2003** at the latest.

Early responses would be greatly appreciated.



Learning+Skills Council

Name of institution (<i>please print</i>)	
Contact officer for queries	
Tel	Fax
Email (<i>if applicable</i>)	Local LSC

Comments are invited on the following consultation questions

Q1 How do you think the proposed Toolkit might help in carrying out reviews?
Are there 'tools' for this process you would particularly recommend?

Comments

Q2 Do you agree with the aims and scope of Strategic Area Reviews? Are there other aspects of provision they should cover?

Comments

Q3 Do you agree with the values listed in section 2? Are there other values that should underpin Strategic Area Reviews?

Comments

Q4 Does the process give local LSCs sufficient flexibility? What aspects of the SAR process do you think should be managed centrally?

Comments

Q5 The guidance proposes a seven stage process for reviews. Does this provide the right framework? Are there other actions you would like to see?

Comments

Q6 Do you think the range of stakeholders to be involved is comprehensive? How can stakeholders be encouraged to contribute effectively?

Comments

Q7 Does the section 'building on previous work' give enough scope for use of previous review evidence?

Comments

Q8 Are there ways in which the LSC should work differently, either locally or nationally, to ensure that Strategic Area Reviews are effective?

Comments

Q9 Are there approaches to information gathering and analysis you would recommend, or particular sources of evidence?

Comments

Q10 When developing strategic options, do the 4 points in paragraph 101 provide the right framework for making choices about provision? Are there other factors for the LSC to take into account?

Comments

Q11 Does the approach outlined for local consultation meet the requirements of learners, employers and the local community?

Comments

Q12 What do you think are the most important factors for the LSC if it is to implement review outcomes successfully?

Comments

Other comments

Notes

© LSC November 2002

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

This publication is available in an electronic form on the Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk

The Learning and Skills Council offers an alerting service for any circular posted to our website, to subscribe to this service visit <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/subscriptions.cfm>

Publication enquiries: 0870 900 6800

Reference CIRC/0572/02