

March 2002

Cutting Red Tape

The Learning and Skills Council is aiming to reduce the burden of bureaucracy in the further education sector by 25% within the next two years.

The Council wants colleges to concentrate on providing the best possible service for learners – not spend time filling in unnecessary forms.

We have created a taskforce under the chairmanship of Sir George Sweeney, a member of our National Council and the Principal of Knowsley Community College, to look at ways in which this can be done. It is seeking to reduce the time spent by colleges on non-essential work.

The initiative was launched by John Harwood, Chief Executive of the LSC last November. He said the Council was working towards a realistic approach to audit and inspection. "We need to cut significantly the burden of bureaucracy. By working with college principals and staff, we want to identify, target and cut unnecessary red tape."

- The burden of bureaucracy within the further education sector has been criticised by

college principals for a long time

- The Learning and Skills Council has listened and responded rapidly by establishing a task force to identify areas where bureaucracy can be reduced
- The LSC's Bureaucracy Busting Taskforce has been meeting regularly since January. It wants to make significant inroads in 2002 towards meeting our target to reduce bureaucracy by 25%. Its recommendations will be implemented by the LSC in a rolling programme
- An early success for the taskforce has been the removal of financial clawback from colleges for shortfalls in student numbers where student funding unit targets are met
- The taskforce is also working closely with other Government departments and agencies to identify areas where red tape can be cut

The taskforce has already organised a series of nine regional workshops involving college principals and senior staff across England. These will identify the key areas of concern of those involved at the sharp end of

further education.

The four areas of specific interest to the taskforce are:

- Audit;
- Funding;
- Monitoring
- Data collection.

"I want to encourage colleges to get involved; to highlight the unnecessary pinch points and work towards realistic solutions that are in the interests of the taxpayer and learner. There is a sensible balance between accountability and trust to be found," said Sir George.

An early success for the taskforce was welcomed in February when the Learning and Skills Council announced the removal of financial clawback from colleges for shortfalls in student numbers where student funding unit targets are met.

This sensible change means that colleges will no longer have to pay back funding for delivering education to different groups of learners when they have met or exceeded targets across the board. It will also free up colleges to be more responsive to demand in their local area – matching resources to needs.

Since then things have moved quickly.

Major improvements have now been made to the LSC's £185 million Standards Fund, used to improve quality and standards in post-16 education. It has been significantly streamlined for 17 categories to just three in order to meet colleges' and providers' wishes for a reduction in bureaucracy and the abolition of ring fencing.

Proposals to simplify the LSC's Performance Review system, used to identify colleges and providers

who are outstanding performers and those experiencing difficulties or in need of support, are now out for consultation.

The effect of changes put forward in this consultation, will be to significantly reduce the burden of bureaucracy by reducing of the normal reporting of performance reviews from three times a year to twice a year and streamlining the the Performance Review framework from ten to three key areas.

To get in touch with the taskforce with suggestions about how red tape can be reduced or for further information, contact **bureaucracy – busting@lsc.gov.uk**

For further information about the Learning and Skills Council, visit our web site (www.lsc.gov.uk) or call our help line on 0845 019 4170.

The Bureaucracy Busting Taskforce has 16 members. They are:

Chair	Sir George Sweeney	Principal	Knowsley Community College
Members	Lynn Sedgmore	Principal and Chief Executive	Guildford College of Further and Higher Education
	Mike Galloway	Principal	York College
	Reg T Chapman	Principal	Blackpool and The Fylde College
	Andrew Thomson	Principal	Long Road Sixth Form College
	Jackie Fisher	Principal	Newcastle College
	Catherine Fogg	National Chamber Training Executive	The British Chambers of Commerce
	Robert Raven	Principal	Leicester Adult Education College
	Gary Williams	Executive Director	Wiltshire and Swindon LSC
	Hilary Chadwick	Executive Director	Hampshire and the Isle of Wight LSC
	Dr John Brennan	Director of FE development	Association of Colleges
	Peter Lauener	Director Learning Delivery and Standards Group	Department for Education and Skills Sheffield
	Stephen Grix	Head of Post-Compulsory Education Provision	OFSTED
	Nicky Perry	Director of Inspection (Communications and QA)	Adult Learning Inspectorate
	Ken Pascoe	Director of operations	LSC
	Patrick Rooney	Assistant director FE support	LSC

