

Quality Improvement Strategy to 2006



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Foreword

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In *Success for All*, the Government showed its commitment to reforming and improving further education and training. In *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential*, it set that reform within its general strategy for tackling our long-standing skills gaps. The commitment is backed by the largest ever investment. Total planned funding for the learning and skills sector will increase by 19 per cent between 2002/2003 and 2005/2006. This represents over £1 billion of new money.

We, the Learning and Skills Council, share this commitment. We have a major role to play in making sure that the skills strategy is put into practice. We aim to develop new and productive ways of working with all college and training organisations to help them raise standards, build on strengths, tackle weaknesses, and increase and widen participation. In particular, we want to work with college and training organisations to develop new and better ways of planning and funding education and training.

Success for All and the skills strategy set out an exciting vision for the future. The action we need to take to make this vision a reality is the basis for our quality improvement strategy. This document sets out what that strategy is.



**Mark Haysom, Chief Executive
Learning and Skills Council**

Our mission is to increase participation and achievement by providing high-quality education and training which put learners first.

In November 2002, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published *Success for All, Reforming Further Education and Training – Our vision for the future* which sets out a radical programme of reform for the post-16 learning and skills sector. In July 2003, it published the skills strategy, *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential*, which sets that programme of reform within a new framework, that is designed to tackle our long-standing skills gaps and make a major contribution to raising national economic performance.

The reforms proposed in *Success for All* are to improve quality and raise standards across the learning and skills sector. We will achieve these aims by working with providers, employers and local communities.

Our mission is to increase participation and achievement by providing high-quality education and training which put learners first.

Our quality improvement strategy is based on five main principles.

- The experience and success of learners are at the heart of what we do.
- Colleges and other providers are responsible for the quality of their own services.
- The more successful a provider is, the less we will need to intervene.
- We will work closely with our partners to develop, put into practice and assess the strategy.
- Our ways of working with providers must be based on relationships of trust and a shared commitment to learners, and should reduce unnecessary administration.

The quality improvement strategy is a statement of our approach to improving quality and raising standards in the learning and skills sector. Providers, partners and stakeholders will find details of how we put it into practice in circulars and the guidance that the strategy refers to, and in the plans published by local Learning and Skills Councils.

We are grateful to everyone who took part in planning seminars and responded to the consultation draft of this strategy and the consultation circulars on *Success for All*. We are confident that our quality improvement strategy will lead to success for everyone who wants to improve their life through learning.

Our vision of excellence in education and training

1

Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England will have the knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world. We want to create a learning society, free from discrimination and prejudice, which encourages and helps all learners to reach their full potential.

2

We will achieve this by providing excellent education and training. Excellence means that all learners:

- can access a range of attractive and relevant learning opportunities;
- are able to make the best choice of learning opportunities;
- are well taught and supported to achieve their learning goals.

3

14 to 19 year old learners will have greater choice and higher standards of education and training, with progression routes to higher education and employment. Parents and guardians should be confident that their children have access to a range of excellent academic and vocational programmes.

4

Adult learners from all sectors of the community should have access to excellent services for improving basic skills, training for work and learning for personal development.

5

The national workforce should have higher-level skills, and skill shortages should be reduced or completely removed. Employers will have a more productive involvement with a transformed and responsive network of colleges and other providers committed to meeting regional and subregional skill needs. Employers should be confident that their providers are meeting their needs and offer high-quality, appropriate and relevant services.

6

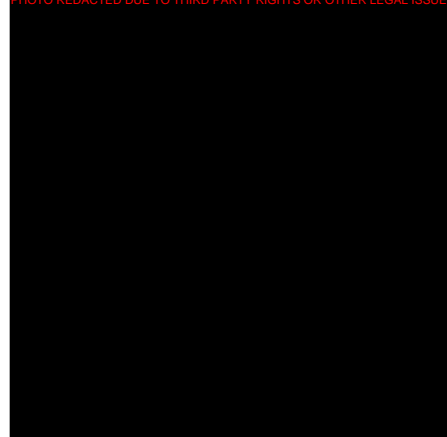
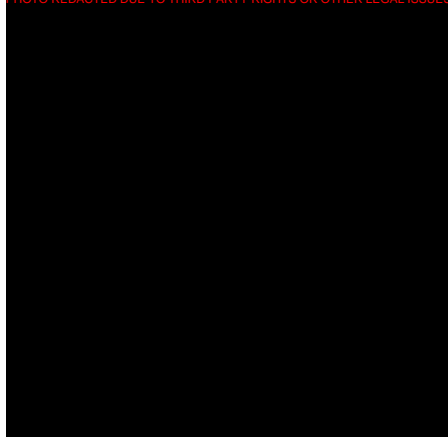
We will develop the skills and capability of teachers and trainers even more, and all managers will have strong leadership and management skills. The learning and skills sector should become an attractive, highly professional, fulfilling and rewarding place in which to work.

7

Destructive competition between providers should be replaced by a focus on the needs of learners, communities and employers within a better planned and more co-operative environment.

8

Excellence also means that unnecessary administration should be reduced so that providers can improve services and meet their targets, rather than account for every little action they take.



9

Success for All is an ambitious reform and investment strategy which has attracted overwhelming support from providers, employers and learners. The four main themes of *Success for All* are as follows.

- **Meeting needs, improving choice** by improving the responsiveness and quality of services in each area to meet learners', employers' and communities' needs.
- **Putting teaching, training and learning at the heart of what we do** by identifying and sharing best practice, which will guide learning and training programmes.
- **Developing the leaders, teachers, lecturers, trainers and support staff of the future**, including setting new targets for full-time and part-time college teachers to be qualified, and developing strong leadership and management through the Centre for Excellence in Leadership.
- **Developing a framework for quality and success** by putting into practice a planning, funding and accountability system, based on greater partnership and trust, including three-year funding agreements.

10

We are working closely with the DfES to put into practice *Success for All* through a jointly chaired programme board. The DfES leads on the themes of putting teaching, training and learning at the heart of what we do, and developing the leaders, teachers, lecturers, trainers and support staff of the future.

11

The DfES Standards Unit will introduce a coordinated approach to best practice, identifying how effective teaching, training and learning is currently delivered within post-16 education and training.

12

The Standards Unit will lead on the development of the leaders, teachers, trainers and support staff of the future by improving leadership and management, increasing the proportion of qualified teachers and trainers, and making teaching and training more attractive as careers.

13

We will work with the Centre for Excellence in Leadership to develop succession processes and help plan suitable development programmes for:

- the wide range of leaders and managers in the learning and skills sector; and
- quality improvement staff in provider and support organisations, including staff in the LSC.

14

We lead on the other two *Success for All* themes.

- Meeting needs, improving choice.
- Developing a framework for quality and success.

The next section sets out our general aims for the quality improvement strategy. These are to:

- develop local patterns of education and training to meet the needs of learners, employers and communities;

- recognise and reward excellent providers, and encourage them to share their good practice;
- improve the quality of education and training across the learning and skills sector so it becomes consistently strong;
- help the weakest providers achieve at least minimum levels of performance; and
- improve our ability to deliver *Success for All* and the quality improvement strategy.

15

The first aim describes how we will meet needs and improve choice. The middle three aims describe how we will put into practice the framework for quality and success. The last aim supports the others, and describes how we will develop our ability to deliver the quality improvement strategy.

16

The principles of the *Success for All* reforms will apply equally to school sixth forms as part of a coordinated learning and skills sector. However, because whole-school reforms already apply to schools, they will be applied in different ways.

17

Strategic area reviews cover all LSC-funded learning in an area, including all types of sixth form education. Sixth form education, like the rest of post-16 education, will be assessed against the priorities of learners, employers and local communities, and its contribution to wider targets and policies. Sixth forms will be covered by the whole-school arrangements for quality improvement and assurance.

What is the current position?

We have set challenging standards for long and short qualifications by type of college and other providers of FE, and two standards for WBL providers.

18

The quality of education and training in the learning and skills sector varies. Some education and training can justifiably be seen as excellent, and meets the highest national and world-class standards. At the other extreme, some education and training is poor and does not meet the needs of learners, local communities or employers.

19

Area-wide inspections have revealed:

- an overall lack of planning and coordination of education for 16 to 19 year olds;
- major variations in the quality of education and standards of achievement; and
- the need for increased co-operation between providers to increase learners' choices and to widen participation.

By 2005, all LSCs will have carried out strategic area reviews (StARs) and will take account of the results in local strategic plans to improve the quality of education and training.

20

In the first performance review in spring 2001, only 2 per cent of learners were with further-education (FE) providers which satisfied the conditions of excellence. Our target for spring 2006 is to increase that percentage to at least 12 per cent.

21

Across all providers, success rates vary widely. In 2000/2001, 59 per cent of qualifications started in FE colleges were achieved, and 56 per cent were achieved within local adult education institutions. There was major variation in success rates between colleges. For example, success rates in the middle 50 per cent of FE colleges ranged from 53 per cent to 64 per cent, and for local adult education institutions the middle 50 per cent ranged from 44 per cent to 69 per cent.

22

Our target for 2006 is that average success rates will have increased substantially to 72 per cent (colleges), 48 per cent (work based learning (WBL) providers) and 67 per cent (FE provided by local adult education institutions).

23

Success for All proposed minimum standards of performance (floor targets) for success rates, and we have consulted widely on setting these targets. We have set challenging standards for long and short qualifications by type of college and other providers of FE, and two standards (by areas of learning) for WBL providers.

24

Using 2000/2001 as the base year, one-fifth of FE colleges were below either one or both standards, and one-third of local adult education institutions (FE) were similarly below one or both standards. In 2001/2002, only 36 per cent of learners in WBL achieved a Modern Apprenticeship framework or an NVQ, and two-thirds of providers were below one or both standards. Our national target for 2006 is that all FE and 90 per cent of WBL providers will have improved enough to do better than or meet the relevant standards.

25

We are still a fairly new organisation. Most of our staff have come from the organisations we replaced and which had a very different role. Expertise in, and thorough knowledge of, the different parts of the learning and skills sector are spread unevenly across the LSC network. By 2005, we will have completed the reshaping programme and developed the LSC so that we can meet the highest standards of practice in everything we do and in delivering *Success for All*. The National Office will monitor progress in raising quality, and provide support where appropriate.

Achieving our aims

Aim 1 **To develop local patterns of education and training to meet the needs of learners, employers and communities.**

26
Learners should be entitled to high-quality and relevant programmes of learning which lead to outcomes which they value and are valued by wider society. The principles which should support our work to deliver learner entitlements include:

- quality;
- distinct education and training for 16- to 19-year-olds;
- many different courses to make sure the curriculum is as varied as possible;
- learner choice; and
- affordability, value for money and cost-effectiveness.

27
We have published guidance to develop a consistent process for strategic area reviews. Please see the website (www.successforall.gov.uk/contentList.cfm?contentSectionId=3) for more information. We have set up nine 'pioneers' which will assess the process. Every local area will have completed a strategic area review by March 2005. Outcomes will be reflected in local strategic plans. More reviews may be needed as policies develop and economic circumstances change.

28
We are asking all providers to be clear about their educational and training missions, to focus on their strengths, and to review their mission by April 2004.

29
We will develop collaborative working arrangements between providers through effective working relationships with local education authorities (LEAs) and other key stakeholders.

30
The Government has set a target that towards 50 per cent of 18 to 30 year olds will take part in higher education by 2010. To contribute to this target, we will work with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to put into practice the Aim Higher: Partnership for Progression (Aim Higher: P4P) initiative. In 2004/2005 and 2005/2006, we will target Aim Higher: P4P funding to improve learner success rates at Level 3, in areas where there has traditionally been low participation in higher education.

31
Excellent information, advice and guidance are essential to help learners make the best choice of learning opportunity. We will develop action research projects to explore new ways of working involving the LSC, schools, colleges, the Connexions services, and adult information, advice and guidance partnerships.

32
Initiatives to widen adult participation in structured learning have had relatively little effect. We have published our Widening Adult Participation Strategy. We will work closely with local authorities and other partners to improve the quality of processes

for planning adult learning by identifying and sharing the most effective practice.

33
We will expand the services of strong and excellent providers to meet local needs. We will encourage new providers to meet the standards we expect for our learners. Where appropriate, we will support mergers to create strong providers. We will no longer fund education and training which has no reasonable prospect of meeting minimum standards.

34
Some area-wide inspections have identified the need for changes in the way learning for 16 to 19 year olds is organised. Where appropriate, we will work with partners to develop proposals for new sixth form colleges, sixth form centres in colleges or new school sixth forms. We will develop reorganisation proposals for each individual case, in the light of the available evidence.

35
We will work with Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), Sector Skills Councils and providers to put into practice the Government's Skills Strategy. We will expect providers' three-year development plans to set out the actions they will take to meet skills needs, linking clearly with our local strategic plans and the Frameworks for Regional Employment Skills Action. Colleges and other FE providers must set targets to improve employer engagement within their three-year development plans.

36

We will extend the successful Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) network from 249 to 400 CoVEs by 2006, and encourage their work with higher education on developing and delivering foundation degrees and on transferring skills and knowledge to business.

37

We are currently exploring new ways of planning and coordinating funding for adult skills between local LSCs and RDAs. We set up four pilots in April 2003. Jobcentre Plus will also become involved from April 2004. These pilots explore opportunities for partners to plan more effectively to:

- increase employers' demand for skills;
- improve the responsiveness of training to business needs; and
- provide adults with the relevant skills they need within the framework of education and training opportunities.

Aim 2

To recognise and reward excellent providers, and encourage them to share their good practice.

38

We will set premium funding rates for excellent colleges and other FE providers from 2004/2005, develop simplified arrangements for monitoring performance for Learning and Skills Beacons in 2003/2004, and fund Learning and Skills Beacons and CoVEs to support activities to share best practice. We expect that by

2005/2006, 12 per cent of learners will be in colleges and FE providers who have achieved premium-rate funding status. We will also work with the DfES to review and extend the arrangements for Learning and Skills Beacons across the sector.

39

We will support Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (the inspectorates) in their review of the Common Inspection Framework. In particular, we will support the development of inspections based on an analysis of risk so that the inspections are appropriate to their intended purpose. With the inspectorates, we will investigate scheduling inspections to deal with our concerns and priorities, and focus the inspection on particular aspects of a provider's work. We will set up a joint working group with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) to make clear and strengthen the role of the link inspector within the quality improvement strategy.

40

We have set targets for improving inspection grades. By the end of the inspection cycle, we expect that the proportion of top grades (1 and 2) for leadership and management, and areas of learning, will have increased by three percentage points in colleges and six percentage points in WBL.

41

We often identify outstanding practice within colleges and other providers which do not have the status of Learning and Skills Beacons. We will support the identification of good and outstanding practice by working closely with the Standards Unit, inspectorates, the Centre for Excellence in Leadership and other key partners to share good practice through local and regional networks and partnerships. The Standards Unit will lead on good practice in teaching and the curriculum, the Centre for Excellence in Leadership on leadership and management and the LSC on organisation development including quality assurance, self-assessment and development planning.

42

We will provide as many opportunities as possible for people to learn from excellent and good practice by publishing new guides, reports and information packs, and by creating an easily searchable good practice area on our website. Our website will contain links to the Excalibur database of good practice that has been developed by the ALI.

43

We will support the work of the DfES to introduce the new STAR Awards for teachers, trainers, support staff, leaders and managers. These will recognise the work of individual members of staff who have made an outstanding contribution to the quality of learning.

We will encourage action research approaches to development projects to support professional development, create good practice case studies, increase capacity for continuous improvement and assess the effect of development funding.

44

Further opportunities to identify and learn from good practice arise in the development projects we fund through the Local Intervention and Development Fund and through development funding associated with the project for targets for Levels 2 and 3, education for 14 to 19 year olds, Modern Apprenticeships and Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships. We will encourage action research approaches to development projects to support professional development, create good practice case studies, increase capacity for continuous improvement and assess the effect of development funding.

45

We have extended the successful 'light touch' audit arrangements to 117 colleges with reliable management information systems.

Aim 3

To improve the quality of education and training across the learning and skills sector so it becomes consistently strong.

46

We will secure improvements in national success rates by supporting and challenging providers to improve. We will do this by asking providers to set targets for success rates in their three-year development plans which are challenging but achievable.

47

Our targets are that overall success rates in the country will show major improvement. In colleges, success rates will have risen to 72 per cent in 2005/2006, from 59 per cent in 2000/2001. In local adult education institutions that provide FE, success rates will have risen to 67 per cent in 2005/2006, from 56 per cent in 2000/2001, and in WBL, success rates will have improved to 48 per cent in 2005/2006, from 36 per cent in 2001/2002. We will work in partnership with Ufi/learnDirect, specialist colleges for learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, adult learning providers and higher education institutions that provide FE to agree suitable measures and targets where they do not already exist.

48

Providers must produce a three-year development plan for their local LSC to agree. It must be around the three goals to:

- increase customer focus;
- deliver consistently high-quality teaching and promote effective learning; and
- develop the skills and ability of their workforce.

49

Progress towards the goals will be shown in headline targets. Development plans for colleges and other providers of FE, for example, will contain headline targets for:

- learner numbers;
- employer engagement;
- success rates; and
- professional qualifications for teachers, lecturers and trainers.

50

Another target is that by 2006, 90 per cent of full-time and 60 per cent of part-time teachers in colleges will hold a professional teaching qualification.

51

There is detailed guidance for three-year development plans for colleges and for other providers on our website (<http://3dp.lsc.gov.uk/guidance.cfm>).

52

We have created incentives and actions for colleges and other providers through the funding system. From 2004/2005, colleges and FE providers which are not in the performance review category 'serious concerns' will receive either standard or premium funding. FE providers in 'serious concerns' will receive an inflation-only increase in funding. Targeted support will also be available where appropriate.

53

In many providers, success rates vary widely between different parts of their service. To achieve our third aim, local LSC quality managers, supported by Quality Link Advisers, will make sure that providers have development plans which show how they will improve performance in those areas of education and training where success rates are relatively low.

54

We will monitor progress through the performance review process and provide appropriate support. Support will vary according to local need, but will generally take the form of consultancy, sharing good practice, especially on improving completion and achievement rates, 'benchmarking arrangements' to learn from each other, action research and support for post-inspection action planning.

55

We will support the improvement efforts of providers through the LSC-funded Support for Success programme. The programme will:

- provide information and advice;
- set up regional quality improvement networks;
- create an extended consultancy resource;
- carry out action research projects; and
- provide training for curriculum team leaders.

The programme will have a strong regional emphasis, driven by local LSCs. In 2004, all providers will have access to local and regional quality improvement networks to identify and share good practice.

56

We will extend the information which is available to help providers in their self-assessment and three-year development planning to include extra information for:

- college performance, for example, by area of learning;
- WBL performance, by learning programme type, area of learning and type of provider; and

- the teaching workforce in colleges who hold professional teaching qualifications.

57

We will provide support to colleges and providers in their efforts to use management information and performance information for improvement purposes.

58

We will promote health and safety by a new strategic emphasis on outcomes for learners through our 'safe learner' initiative. With our partners, we will explore ways of creating health and safety networks for providers to share good practice. Our main responsibility is to the learner. If any problems with health and safety are identified, we will take immediate action to protect the learner's safety and welfare.

59

The DfES leads on the development of strategy and policies for post-16 e-learning. We will work with the DfES to develop a transformational programme to make sure the sector can get the maximum benefit from the huge investment being made in information and communications technology. Together, we will identify gaps in the availability of interactive services online and other e-learning materials to support teaching and learning. In partnership with the DfES, we will create a 'National Learning Network Online' for all post-16 providers to gain access to existing and new high-quality learning materials, support and advice. We will continue our programmes of staff development to make sure that teachers

can use the e-learning materials effectively. We will provide them with the tools and skills they need to produce and share their own high-quality materials.

60

We expect providers to respond to feedback from learners. We will make widely available the methods we use in our National Learner Satisfaction Survey to support them in this process. Colleges and providers which use the national learner survey method can compare their own findings with national data to identify priorities for improvement.

Aim 4

To help the weakest providers achieve at least minimum levels of performance.

61

Providers whose success rates are below the minimum standard will need to show how they will meet or do better than the standards in their three-year development plans. Progress towards meeting or doing better than the standards for success rates will be monitored closely by local LSC staff. If necessary, we will intervene. The more successful a provider is, the less we will need to intervene. At one end of the spectrum, our intervention will take the form of the support programme outlined above, and at the other end, we will no longer fund providers who have no reasonable prospect of meeting the standards.

62

The targets we will use to assess the achievement of this aim are as follows.

- By 2005/2006, all FE and 90 per cent of WBL providers will have improved success rates enough to do better than or meet standards.
- The proportion of unsatisfactory inspection grades for colleges will be reduced by three percentage points by the end of the inspection (2004/2005) compared with 2001/2002.
- The proportion of unsatisfactory inspection grades for WBL providers will be reduced by six percentage points by the end of the inspection (2004/2005) compared with 2001/2002.

Aim 5

To improve our ability to deliver *Success for All* and the quality improvement strategy.

63

We will reshape the LSC and make sure that our workforce changes to reflect the responsibilities set out in *Success for All* and the quality improvement strategy. Reshaping will involve:

- reducing the overall number of posts;
- creating a more efficient organisation by automating and streamlining processes;
- improving the skills of existing employees;
- recruiting specialist and professional expertise from our partner organisations; and
- developing more strategic partnerships with providers to deliver our joint agenda.

64

We have already streamlined our performance review process. We have carried out further work to improve the consistency of performance review assessments by strengthening moderation arrangements and introducing a procedure to sort out disputed assessments. We will continue to review the process.

65

In 2003/2004, we introduced a training and development programme for staff to deliver our improvement responsibilities. Short-term secondments, staff exchanges and work shadowing between the LSC and providers will be encouraged. Our specific goal is that our staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to help providers improve quality, and to make judgements on the progress which providers are making. We will also develop a toolkit for our staff which will provide a single guide and access point to relevant research, guidance, procedures and quality improvement documentation.

66

A Standards Unit Regional Network will advise on local action to deliver new approaches to teaching and learning, and associated staff development for teachers and trainers. We will work closely with this network through our regional networks for LSC quality improvement staff.

67

We have strengthened the two-way communication process between local LSCs and the National Office. We will also set up specialist networks for our staff to share good practice in the different sectors of education and training which we fund.

68

To make sure that our strategy is based on reliable evidence, we will:

- work with the *Success for All* Research Working Group to research effective practice both here and abroad; and
- review existing research, focusing on the effects this research will have on policy and practice.

We will monitor and assess the quality improvement strategy and carry out longer-term strategic research to influence its future development. We will also identify and share good practice in our quality improvement work and publish reports and guides.

69

We are working closely with the Learning and Skills Development Agency to develop a programme of international research to develop:

- our vision of world-class knowledge and productive skills; and
- our targets for world-class participation, achievement and success rates.

We will work with key partners to explore ways of comparing distance travelled, or value added, in different types of education and training.

70

We will develop the quality improvement element of our website to support the improvement efforts of providers and the LSC itself. The new 'investing in excellence and good practice' pages will contain easy-to-search case studies, reports, guides and tools.

New measures of success

71

We recognise that our framework for quality and success is not yet complete. We need to do more work to develop a national system of measures of success that is clear, consistent and focused on learner achievement.

72

To recognise the value of learner achievements and allow better comparisons to be made within and between different types of provider, we will work with the DfES, the inspectorates and other partners to develop a national system of performance measures that is clear, consistent and focused on learner achievement. This work has already started, with advice from key partners, and we published proposals for consultation. We will work with key partners to explore ways of comparing distance travelled, or value added, in different types of education and training, and will explore with the DfES ways of measuring value for money across different types of provider, and education and training.

73

We have developed ways of recognising and recording learners' achievements in non-accredited adult and community learning, and other training such as learndirect, and will pilot these in 2003/2004. We will also carry out a study on the information we collect about learners' destinations and, depending on the outcomes of the study, investigate using this information as a measure of success.

Strategies for specific sectors

74

There are over 4,000 providers in the learning and skills sector in five broad categories – colleges, school sixth forms, WBL providers, adult and community learning providers, and learndirect. Different categories of provider have distinct histories, strengths and weaknesses. Within the general approach of the quality improvement strategy, we have developed strategies tailored to the different categories of provider.

Colleges

75

The success rates of learners at colleges have improved dramatically from 2001/2002. Some of the improvement was associated with the introduction of Curriculum 2000 and will not happen again. The number of unsatisfactory inspection grades 4 and 5 has reduced, but so has the number of inspection grades 1 and 2. The overall picture is of rising standards, but there are continuing variations in quality, both between and within colleges.

76

To deal with the issue of internal variations in quality, we have designed a consultancy-based support programme for colleges, which will support their efforts to raise standards. The consultancy is delivered through the team of specialists recruited and quality assured by the Learning and Skills Development Agency through the LSC-funded Support for Success programme.

77

We will identify the strong colleges which have the potential to become excellent. Local LSC quality managers will work with these colleges to identify actions that are in their three-year development plan and appropriate to the circumstances of each college. Our target is that by spring 2006, the percentage of learners in colleges which meet the criteria of excellence will have increased to 12 per cent from 2 per cent in 2001.

78

We will support the weakest colleges to improve through our intervention strategy backed by a dedicated element of the Local Intervention and Development Fund. If necessary, we will provide more senior-management support, appoint more governors and, in the most extreme cases, recommend that the Secretary of State closes a college.

79

In many colleges with 'serious concerns', the main issue relates to their financial health. We will support colleges in the weakest category of financial health – category C – through an independent assessment of their organisation, systems and processes. This review will be carried out by experienced specialists. It will identify how the college should tackle the main causes of poor financial health.

Post-16 education in schools

80

We need assurance that all of the education and training we fund across the post-16 sector is of a good quality. However, there are a number of factors which influence our approach to the quality assurance of post-16 education and training in schools.

81

Our duty overlaps with the responsibilities of local education authorities (LEAs) and school governing bodies. Our approach to assuring the quality of post-16 education and training in schools is to recognise and build on existing arrangements. To avoid the introduction of unnecessary administration in schools, it is neither possible nor practical to introduce more monitoring of schools – instead, we will work with local authorities. We have developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Government Association (LGA). We will collect some information on schools' performance, including attainment and inspection outcomes. We are working with the LGA in developing practice following the area inspections of education for 14 to 19 year olds.

Work based learning

82

The success rates of learners in WBL are low compared with other types of training, although improvements are being made. Inspection grades are improving as well, but from a low base. Over 40 per cent of grades for leadership and management are unsatisfactory (grades 4 and 5), and over a

Different categories of provider have distinct histories, strengths and weaknesses. Within the general approach of the quality improvement strategy, we have developed strategies tailored to the different categories of provider.

third of inspection grades for areas of learning are unsatisfactory.

83 One of the major aims of the extended Entry to Employment programme is to prepare learners for Modern Apprenticeships to make sure that they achieve their goals. Other aspects of the strategy include workshops to improve good practice in processes which support and develop learners, seminars on improving learner retention and success rates, and staff development to improve providers' work on literacy and numeracy.

84 From January 2002, expert consultants have worked with individual providers on quality improvement developments. We have also provided training for our own staff and providers through workshops that have introduced providers to good practice across a range of processes, including:

- self-assessment;
- development planning;
- assessment and verification;
- initial assessment;
- learner induction;
- progress reviews;
- quality assurance;
- data management; and
- equal opportunities.

85 We will revise our guidance on self-assessment by providers. We will strengthen the help given to providers so that they carry out self-assessment and planning for improvement more effectively.

86 We will provide training for WBL providers on the techniques for improving retention and achievement, and the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework.

87 The literacy and numeracy skills of work-based learners will be improved by training WBL providers and our staff on good practice in assessing literacy and numeracy needs at the start of a learner's programme, and in identifying and delivering programmes to meet learners' needs.

88 Through three-year development plans, we will:

- monitor the staff of WBL providers who are qualified as teachers or trainers; and
- encourage staff to work towards the teaching, training or management qualification most suitable for their job role from among the many qualifications accredited to national standards.

89 We will closely monitor the achievement of providers' targets for learners' success rates in their three-year development plans. Providers who miss their agreed targets will be given appropriate individual support. We will focus this support on those providers who are already achieving high standards, and on those who are judged to have the potential to reach high standards. We will consider ending the contracts of those providers where standards are unacceptably low and where there is no reasonable chance of significant improvement.

Adult and community learning

90 Inspections of adult and community learning by the Adult Learning Inspectorate have shown that much teaching and learning is satisfactory and some is good. They have often concluded, however, that there is not enough good teaching and learning overall. Grades awarded for leadership and management are often poor. Weaknesses in providing and managing information, and in quality assurance arrangements, often contribute to the poor grades. Our performance review system has not yet produced information about the quality of the education and training provided. We are extending it to include adult and community learning from the end of 2003.

91 To strengthen education and training that is satisfactory, and to further strengthen good education and training, we will introduce a wide-ranging programme of activities. We will develop specific guidance on the three-year development plans and promote their effectiveness as a tool for improving quality. We will issue guidance on how the plans link with self-assessment reports.

92 We will produce a comprehensive guide to the training opportunities, training organisations, consultancy resources, support networks and agencies that promote improvement in adult and community learning (ACL), and make it available to providers and our staff.

We will increase specialist colleges' familiarity with good practice by making arrangements for them to join local networks so they can improve their performance.

93 We will build on the regional demonstration projects to run training events and create case studies of quality improvement in ACL. Also, we will prepare a national, regional and local training programme designed to tackle weaknesses in quality assurance, self-assessment and managing contracted education and training. We will publish guidance on setting targets and monitoring performance tailored to ACL providers. We will promote new systems for recognising and rewarding achievements in non-accredited adult learning services.

94 As part of the continuing support for adult and community learning providers in improving quality, we intend to combine the Department's ACL Quality Support Programme with our Support for Success Programme. This will make sure that we build on existing work and support quality improvement in line with both national and local needs and priorities.

Ufi/learndirect

95 Inspection findings on learndirect services have identified a number of issues concerning the quality of services offered to learners, including:

- effectively planning and monitoring learning;
- raising standards in the online learner support that is provided;
- using feedback from learners; and
- many learning centres which have

focused on learner numbers without necessarily dealing with the issues around the quality of services for learners.

96 As a result of the initial inspection outcomes, we produced a Memorandum of Agreement in the summer of 2002. This set out the responsibilities of local LSCs and Ufi Ltd in relation to quality issues and general management. Ufi Ltd and learndirect hubs are responsible for improving the quality of education and training if they are found to be unsatisfactory. Local LSCs are responsible for monitoring education and training and, where necessary, can offer hubs help, including financial support. Local LSCs can, if appropriate, end a contract for supplying the service.

97 As a result of the transfer of Ufi funding, which will take place from August 2004, we are making changes to the performance review process so we can monitor and improve the quality of education and training.

Specialist colleges for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

98 Inspections of specialist colleges for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have shown that some teaching and learning is satisfactory, but a lot needs to be improved. Inspectors have often found that there is not enough suitable education and training overall. Grades awarded for

leadership and management are often poor. Our performance review system does not yet include these colleges and providers, but will in the future.

99 In the immediate future, self-assessment reports and three-year development plans will contribute to creating agreed agendas for improvement. We will develop a framework for improving satisfactory education and training, and will carry out projects that help providers improve in areas of identified need.

100 We will increase specialist colleges' familiarity with good practice by making arrangements for them to join local networks so they can improve their performance.

101 To strengthen education and training that is satisfactory or better, we will help colleges to improve their self-assessment processes and reports by creating a team of consultants and advisers. We will prepare colleges for the introduction of performance reviews twice a year. We will make sure that colleges are part of the regional and local quality improvement networks, and we will support local quality improvement networks organised by the colleges.

102 We will intervene when education and training are poor. If it remains so for a period of time, we will make alternative arrangements.

Review and assessment

103

We will review our strategy through:

- research studies;
- seminars involving providers, the inspectorates, the DfES and other stakeholders and partners; and
- independent assessment of how effective our delivery programme is.

104

We will monitor progress towards our improvement targets:

- at provider level by reviewing performance and monitoring performance against standards and the headline targets contained in providers' three-year development plans;
- at local level by reviewing performance, developing area-wide inspection action plans and setting local LSC targets for improvements in success rates; and
- at national level through the Individual Learner Record, the learner and employer satisfaction surveys, performance reviews and inspection grades.

105

We will update the strategy every year in the light of progress towards targets and feedback from our research studies, seminars and independent assessments.

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The consultation revealed major support for the aims of the strategy and for the action that was proposed to deliver the strategy.

106

We are very grateful to providers, inspectors, the DfES, and other stakeholders and partners who took part in eight expert seminars during September and October 2002, and eight seminars to plan the introduction of the quality improvement strategy in November and December 2002.

107

The consultation draft of the quality improvement strategy was published on our website and by the Association of Colleges and Association of Learning Providers on their websites. Most local LSCs have commented on the draft, and many shared the draft with their providers and partners. 119 organisations and individuals responded to and made comments on the consultation draft. The consultation revealed major support for the aims of the strategy and for the action that was proposed to deliver the strategy. We have published a full report on the consultation on our website (http://quality.wwt.co.uk/quality/docs/Report_on_the_Consultation_Exercise.doc).

108

We published two consultation circulars on *Success for All* in January 2003. Over 1,000 people took part in 18 regional consultation events, and over 300 colleges, providers and other organisations made written responses as part of the consultation process. The consultation revealed major support for the proposals in the circulars. We have published a full report on the consultation on our website (<http://3dp.lsc.gov.uk/docs/Circular-0301.doc>) and (<http://3dp.lsc.gov.uk/docs/Circular-0302.doc>).

Timetable

What we achieved in 2003

- We published guidance for local LSCs and colleges on:
 - development plans;
 - standards;
 - improvement targets;
 - overall assessment of FE providers' performance for funding purposes; and
 - different FE providers' funding levels according to performance. **(May 2003)**
- We agreed provider budgets for 2004/2005 and 2005/2006. **(August 2003)**
- We proposed a range of new success measures and started the consultation process. **(November 2003)**
- We published our Widening Adult Participation Strategy. **(Autumn 2003)**
- We agreed three-year development plans for providers, depending on funding. **(Autumn 2003)**
- We confirmed targets in the three-year development plans for learner numbers. **(By 31 October 2003)**

Timetable for 2004 and beyond

- We will set up a strong network of Learning and Skills Beacons. **(2004)**
- We will publish a new framework for measuring success. **(2004)**
- Providers will complete reviews of their mission. **(April 2004)**
- We will report on the progress of the quality improvement strategy and identify further action in the 2004-2005 local annual plans. **(By spring 2004)**
- We will launch the new success measures. **(By March 2005)**
- Every local area will have completed a strategic area review. **(By March 2005)**
- Providers will meet or do better than certain standards and agreed improvement targets. **(2006)**
- We will set up 400 CoVEs. **(By 2006)**
- We will develop best-practice standards for planning adult learning. **(2006)**
- We will meet national improvement targets for success rates. **(2006)**
- Ninety per cent of full-time and 60 per cent of part-time teachers in colleges will have an initial teaching qualification. **(2006)**

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