

Learning and Skills Council



Local Strategic Plan 2002-05

Cumbria



Our Strategic Objectives for Cumbria

| Key objectives | National Targets for 2004 | Cumbria Targets for 2004* | Cumbria Key Strategic Aims† |
|---|---|--|--|
| Extend/widen participation in learning | 80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 75%). | 684 additional learners (equivalent to 88.8%). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fund the delivery of a range of education and training that meets the needs of local learners and employers and allows a degree of choice. > Increase and widen participation among young people and adults. > Tackle inequality of opportunity. > Remove barriers to learning. > Improve tracking, destinations and feedback data. |
| | Set baseline and target for adults in next year's Plan. | | |
| Increase engagement of employers in workforce development | Develop measure of employer engagement in next year's Plan. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Build strong relationships with local employers/employer groups. > Target action in key sectors. > Identify skill needs through local labour market data. |
| Raise achievement of young people | 85% at level 2 by age 19 (2000: 75%). | 355 additional achievers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Promote and secure learning opportunities that are flexible, responsive and efficient. > Promote and support retention and achievement. > Advocate and foster progression through the qualifications framework. > Encourage a lifelong learning culture within local communities. |
| | 55% at level 3 by age 19 (2000: 51%). | 289 additional achievers. | |
| Raise achievement of adults | Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults. | 6,422 additional achievers. | |
| | % of adults at level 2: target to be set in next year's Plan. | | |
| | 52% of adults at level 3 (2000: 47%). | 11,088 more adults. | |
| Raise quality of education and training and improve user satisfaction | Set baselines and targets in next year's Plan. | | |

* See Chapter 2 † See Chapter 4

> Cumbria Learning and Skills Council Strategic Plan to 2005

Our key tasks

The Secretary of State has asked the Learning and Skills Council:

- > To raise participation and achievement by young people
- > To increase demand for learning by adults
- > To raise skill levels for national competitiveness
- > To improve the quality of education and training delivery
- > To equalise opportunities through better access to learning
- > To improve effectiveness and efficiency

> Our vision for Cumbria

Our vision is of a Learning County – a great place to grow individuals and businesses – so that, by 2010, young people and adults will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world.

Our mission, therefore, is to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training which puts learners first.

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> Foreword

The Learning and Skills Council in Cumbria is the local arm of the national Council, a non-departmental public body established by the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to plan, fund and quality assure (along with the Inspectorates) all post-16 learning below higher education.

Our overall mission – to raise levels of skills, knowledge and understanding for all adults and young people, to world class standards – cannot possibly be achieved on our own. It is a massive endeavour in which a very large number of organisations and individuals will need to be involved. Hence it is most important that we secure the widest possible engagement by our strategic partners, by schools, colleges and other training providers, by employers and trade unions, by the community and by our ultimate customers, young people and adult learners.

This Strategic Plan for Cumbria for 2002/05 sets out our vision and objectives as well as targets to deliver them. It contains, for our County, strategies to:

- > Extend/widen participation in learning.
- > Increase engagement of employers in workforce development.
- > Raise achievement of young people and adults.
- > Raise quality of education and training, and improve user satisfaction.

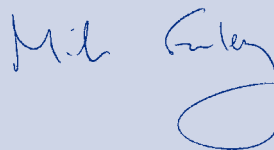
We have consulted widely on the draft and have considered carefully each and every comment we received.

We recognise that there is much to be done, and that success will be dependent upon excellence from all our people, our partnerships and our providers in everything we do. We know that effective planning and funding of post-16 learning will take time to evolve and will require a tremendous amount of collaboration and co-operation, with many challenges to be faced. But the prize of effective post-16 provision is not only attractive, it is fundamental to the continued growth and development of the economy and of individuals, communities and businesses in our County.

Some plans are useful only for the process which people went through to compile them: once written, they sit on bookshelves. At the other extreme, some plans are too rigid: they set performance measures which are quickly out of date, and they constrain the organisation from adjusting to new realities and requirements. We intend that our Strategic Plan will be different. It will be a dynamic, living plan, which guides all that we do over the next few years, yet delivers maximum flexibility at all levels.



ROB CAIRNS
Chair



MICK FARLEY
Executive Director

> Executive Summary

Introduction

The Learning and Skills Council came into being on 1 April 2001 as a result of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. The Council has been given a unique opportunity – to change the culture of post-16 learning in this country.

By March 2004, as the Secretary of State set out in the November 2000 Remit Letter, the Council is expected to have secured a step change in the performance of the learning and skills system in England through six key tasks:

- > To raise participation and achievement by young people.
- > To increase demand for learning by adults.
- > To raise skills for national competitiveness.
- > To raise the quality of education and training delivery.
- > To equalise opportunities through better access to learning.
- > To improve effectiveness and efficiency.

In Cumbria, the national Council is represented by its local arm, the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council, which is advised by our own local Council whose members are drawn from local employers and the wider community. We have set out our vision for Cumbria,

“our vision is of a Learning County – a great place to grow individuals and businesses”.

The major challenges

We believe that amongst the plethora of challenges facing the County, there are three over-arching ones. Firstly, to improve participation and achievement of all our young people. Secondly, to improve the levels of skills and qualifications of adults of working age. Thirdly, to ensure the delivery of high quality provision, available to all.

Success through partnership

We can only meet these challenges by working in partnership at all levels. At both strategic and operational levels we will strive to ensure that our activities are complementary to those of other agencies. A number of key partners include:

- > Education and training providers.
- > North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA).
- > Connexions Cumbria.
- > The Small Business Service (SBS).
- > JobCentre Plus.
- > Cumbria County Council.
- > Voluntary Sector and Equality Organisations.
- > Employers/Employer representative groups.

This list is far from exhaustive – we have identified at least another 150 organisations/ partnerships that we will work with.

Consultation

The draft Strategic Plan was consulted on widely. Each and every view/comment received has been given our full consideration and has helped to shape this Strategic Plan 2002/05.

Our firm wish is that this final plan will find acceptance by relevant agencies including the NWDA, Government Office North West (GONW), the County Council, the SBS, JobCentre Plus, Connexions Cumbria, the local Learning Partnership, as well as by other key partners – schools, colleges and other training providers, employer and employee organisations and the community.

Targets

The Government’s existing National Learning Targets run to the end of 2002. They are at the heart of the Government’s and, consequently, the Learning and Skills Council’s strategic purpose. The National Learning Targets cover attainment of both young people and adults and form the core of the Learning and Skills Council’s targets for 2004. These, together with proposed local targets for Cumbria, are set out in table 1.

| Key objectives | National Targets for 2004 | Current Position in Cumbria | Cumbria Targets for 2004 |
|--|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Extend/widen participation in learning. | 80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 75%). | 85%. 15,613 learners 2000. | 684 additional learners (equivalent to 88.8%). |
| | Set baseline and target for adults in next year’s Plan. | | |
| Increase engagement of employers in workforce development. | Develop measure of employer engagement in next year’s Plan. | | |
| Raise achievement of young people. | 85% at level 2 by age 19 (2000: 75%). | 82.7%. 4,700 achievers in 2000. | 355 additional achievers. |
| | 55% at level 3 by age 19 (2000: 51%). | 46%. 2,616 achievers in 2000. | 289 additional achievers. |
| Raise achievement of adults. | Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults. | | 6,422 additional achievers. |
| | % of adults at level 2: target to be set in next year’s Plan. | | |
| | 52% of adults at level 3 (2000: 47%). | 32.8%. 72,000 adults in 2000. | 11,088 more adults. |
| Raise quality of education and training and improve user satisfaction. | Set baselines and targets in next year’s Plan. | | |

Table 1

Once baselines were established we agreed targets for 2004, taking into account local priorities, variations in participation and achievement by different groups and employment sectors. We hope that all key partners will sign up to the targets that have been established.

Needs Analysis

Skills – Key Challenges

- > Agriculture and tourism are two of Cumbria's major employers, but many workers in these areas need to attain appropriate qualifications.
- > The impact of foot and mouth disease has affected farming and tourism in particular. Many farmers may need to diversify their activities or choose to leave farming completely. This will require the development of new skills. The County's Rural Action Zone (RAZ) proposals will be given high priority.
- > Generic skill gaps amongst those in employment have been identified in a number of areas including information and communications technology (ICT), interpersonal skills and management skills. These skills-gap areas need to be targeted in order for Cumbria to make progress in improving the skills of those already in employment as well as those entering the labour market.
- > Trends in the economy mean that those in employment and those seeking to enter the labour market will need to keep their skills up to date. This will be a continuous process and will require the development of a culture of lifelong learning across all sectors of the population.
- > There is a need to ensure that as many young people as possible continue into learning upon leaving compulsory schooling. This is essential if they are to develop the skills and abilities required for the labour market of the future.
- > Employers need to play their part in ensuring that their own workforces have appropriate skills. However, efforts to overcome obstacles to training also need to be addressed.

Participation – Key Challenges

- > Only through developing a lifelong learning culture will we manage to persuade all sectors of the population to engage and re-engage in learning. Particular efforts must be directed at non-traditional learners who may need extra encouragement to return to learning.
- > The participation rate in learning amongst young people in Cumbria overall must be maintained and improved. This can only be achieved through widening participation by under-represented groups and by providing appropriate support, particularly in parts of Cumbria where participation is lowest.
- > Establishing policies to deal with both obstacles and resistance to learning will be vital. Help with childcare and financial assistance will assist some groups, but the key areas identified by adults in Cumbria remain lack of motivation and lack of time. It is clear that we need to address these issues with rigour.
- > Promoting the benefits of learning to employers is important if a world-class workforce is to be developed in Cumbria and employees are to be encouraged to fully develop their skills.
- > It may be necessary to develop strategies to support boys, from 14 years old onwards, to encourage them to achieve their potential.

Learning – Key Challenges

- > It is important that providers offer learning opportunities which meet individual and employer needs. This means that those responsible for planning learning provision must make use of appropriate labour market information to ensure that local needs are taken into account.
- > More effective use of careers education and guidance must be made in areas where this has been highlighted as a weakness.
- > Learning offered in the County must take into account the specific issues which affect Cumbria such as rural isolation and transport problems which can be experienced in some parts of the county.
- > There is a need to improve the quality of learning available throughout the County in both the further education and work-based learning sectors. Progress on improving inspection grades will be a key challenge in the future and will be a test of Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's effectiveness.
- > We will work closely with further education providers, especially those categorised as 'serious concerns' to address current weaknesses.
- > The new approach to Standards Funds will provide an opportunity to develop and implement more coherent quality improvement strategies.

Strategies for Cumbria

Target 1: Extend/widen participation.

- > Fund the delivery of a range of education and training that meets the needs of local learners and employers and allows a degree of choice.
- > Increase and widen participation among young people and adults.
- > Tackle inequality of opportunity.
- > Remove barriers to learning.
- > Improve tracking, destinations and feedback data.

Target 2: Increase the engagement of employers in workforce development.

- > Build strong relationships with local employers/employer groups.
- > Target action in key sectors.
- > Identify skill needs through local labour market data.

Targets 3 and 4: Raise achievement of young people and adults.

- > Promote and secure learning opportunities that are flexible, responsive and efficient.
- > Promote and support retention and achievement.
- > Advocate and foster progression through the qualifications framework.
- > Encourage a lifelong learning culture within local communities.

Target 5: Raise quality of education and training and improve user satisfaction.

- > Improve the quality of all provision funded by the Council.
- > Ensure that both standards and the achievement of learners continue to rise.

Equality and Diversity

As a national organisation, the Learning and Skills Council has set four high-level objectives, which are the key challenges for equality and diversity and which form the basis for our local equality and diversity strategy.

These are:

- 1 To develop the Council as a champion of equality.
- 2 To embed equality and diversity into all policies, programmes and actions.
- 3 To develop the Council as a model equality and diversity employer/ organisation.
- 4 To report annually to the Secretary of State on progress towards equality.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council has due regard to the need to promote and ensure equality of opportunity between; people from different racial groups, men and women and people with a disability and people without.

Making it Happen

The Learning and Skills Council is a national organisation which aims to combine the advantages of a national programme and resourcing with local flexibility and initiative.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is advised by our own local Council, whose members are drawn from local employers and the wider community. The Council will be further guided by four committees:

- > Young People's Learning Committee.
- > Adult Learning Committee.
- > Equality and Diversity Advisory Committee.
- > Audit Committee.

The local office, based in Workington, is headed by the Executive Director Mick Farley, under whom there are three divisions, namely:

- > Workforce Development.
- > Education and Quality Improvement.
- > Finance and Corporate Service.

Budgets

It is critical that the targets set are realistic in terms of the budget available for the first year and the forecast of funding over the strategic period. We have now received the Secretary of State's grant letter for 2002/03 and await specific confirmation of the allocation for Cumbria. As an indication of the likely availability of funds for the local Council, the following is the most recent allocation for 2001/02.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| > Further Education Participation | £26,820,364 |
| > Young People | £10,163,654 |
| > Adults | £3,955,957 |
| > Infrastructure | £1,751,392 |
| > Administration | £1,930,697 |

In addition to this figure, an allocation for funding for school sixth-forms of £17.7 million will be administered by Cumbria Learning and Skills Council via the Local Education Authority (LEA) in 2002/03.

Co-financing

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council received approval to become a co-financing organisation in February 2002. We will be able to distribute European Social Fund (ESF) monies, under Objective 3, to projects that address policy measures as set out in the North West Regional Development Plan.

A Co-financing Plan 2002/03, developed around objectives adopted by the Labour Market and Skills Group (LMSG) and based upon the above policy measures, has been drafted, consulted on and approved by the Programme Monitoring Regional Committee (PMRC).

Formula Funding

Over the next few years the Learning and Skills Council proposes to move to a national funding formula covering further education, work-based learning, school sixth forms and adult and community learning. The formula will have five elements:

- > A national base rate.
- > A programme weighting.
- > An achievement element.
- > A disadvantage uplift.
- > A weighting factor.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is engaged in research to identify issues impacting on education and training in rural areas.

Further copies of the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's Strategic Plan 2002/05 can be found at www.lsc.gov.uk. Alternatively, please write to us as set out at annex 1.

> Chapter One: Introduction

The National Context

The Learning and Skills Council came into being on 1 April 2001 as a result of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. The Council has been given a unique opportunity – to change the culture of post-16 learning in this country. Whilst we will build on the best traditions of our predecessors, the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), we are a new organisation with a whole new remit, charged with engaging partner organisations, employers and individuals in the learning process in a way that has never previously been attempted.

By March 2004, as the Secretary of State set out in his November 2000 Remit Letter, the Council is expected to have secured a step change in the performance of the learning and skills system in England through six key tasks:

- > To raise participation and achievement by young people.
- > To increase demand for learning by adults.
- > To raise skills for national competitiveness.
- > To raise the quality of education and training delivery.
- > To equalise opportunities through better access to learning.
- > To improve effectiveness and efficiency.

In Cumbria, the national Council is represented by its local arm, the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council, which is advised by our own local Council whose members are drawn from local employers and the wider community.

The Regional Context

As part of the North West region, Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is keen to work with the NWDA and its learning and skills agenda and with the other four local Councils in the region.

The regional learning and skills agenda sets out a vision for a learning region and offers a framework for achieving that vision. The Regional Learning and Skills Action Plan embraces four strategic objectives which find resonance with those for our County. The Regional objectives are:

- > To raise the demand of employers for skilled people, to increase their skills investment and to improve their workforce development capacity.
- > To raise individual demand for skills.
- > To invest in equality of opportunity for learning in the region leading to increased social inclusion.
- > To invest in improvements to the regional labour and learning market.

The Local Context

As the Cumbrian arm of a national non-departmental public body, the local Council shares the national Council's key roles, responsibilities and tasks. In Cumbria, we are keen to make our contribution to meeting these but we have also set out our vision for Cumbria, "our vision is of a Learning County – a great place to grow individuals and businesses".

The local Council's aim is to provide leadership in developing the culture of learning through promoting learning, raising the aspirations of individuals, business and communities and improving the availability and quality of learning.

This aim gives rise to a number of objectives, namely:

- > To develop a purposive, customer focused organisation which works in effective partnerships and recognises that its staff are its most valuable asset.
- > To promote workforce development, understand the needs of employers and employees and support economic development.
- > To increase and widen participation, improve achievement, raise standards, increase demand and promote collaboration.
- > To promote equality of opportunity.
- > To evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's strategies and plans.

There are themes which will underpin our work.

We need to find effective ways of working in collaboration with partner organisations and with providers of education and training in order to put learners at the heart of the system and to achieve real reform of our post-16 learning system. We need the help and input of practitioners, experts and learners to ensure that our plans will work.

We need to find effective and innovative ways of breaking down barriers to learning associated with gender, race and disability, overcoming the disadvantages of living in a rural community and tackling social exclusion. Our approach will be to mainstream equal opportunities and support to this with special projects.

We need to engage employers fully in the whole process of reform, identifying current and future skills needs, how these can be met and in developing those people who are in employment to maximise their potential.

We are well aware of the challenges faced in Cumbria. We are a large, sparsely populated County with all the associated problems of transport and access and we need to diversify and develop new industries alongside our traditional industries such as agriculture, tourism and manufacturing. The foot and mouth crisis has demonstrated only too clearly the need for us to develop new skills, new attitudes and to attract and grow new types of business and employment opportunities.

As a new organisation, it is essential that we establish our culture and identity, but this will take time to achieve. However, at its heart the Learning and Skills Council aims to be an exemplary public service organisation and locally we have identified a number of principles that will underpin all our actions. We will strive to:

- > Operate with integrity and professionalism at all levels.
- > Manage relationships with others in an open and consultative manner.
- > Recognise and value the expertise and contribution that others can make to our mission.
- > Work with providers in a fair and considerate manner, robust in encouraging high performance and supportive in tackling development issues.
- > Place learners at the heart of our thinking, decisions and actions and seek to encourage the same of our partners.
- > Positively encourage the drive for quality and inclusiveness within post-16 learning, as a core theme in all of our work.
- > Develop and value the skills of our people.

The Major Challenges

We believe that amongst the plethora of challenges facing the County, there are three over-arching ones.

- > Firstly, to improve participation and achievement of all our young people.
- > Secondly, to improve the levels of skills and qualifications of adults of working age.
- > Thirdly, to ensure the delivery of high quality provision, available to all.

Success Through Partnership

We can only meet these challenges by working in partnership at all levels. At both strategic and operational levels we will strive to ensure that our activities are complementary to those of other agencies. A number of key partners are identified below:

- > Education and training providers – further education colleges, private training providers and schools are clearly central to the process of reforming the system of post-16 learning and training.
- > The NWDA has identified skills and learning as essential to the success of the North West region. This means equipping people with the skills and adaptability to underpin a modern, developing and inclusive economy and we will take into account the priorities identified by the NWDA in our own activities.
- > Connexions Cumbria is another important strategic and operational partner. Its Chief Executive is an observer on our Council and at an operational level staff from both organisations work closely together to ensure that learning opportunities funded by the Council provide appropriate and attractive progression routes for young people.
- > The SBS is a key partner in engaging employers in the process of creating a learning culture in the County. We need to work with employers to identify and begin to address current and future skills needs. This is particularly important when small businesses employing fewer than 5 people make an important contribution to our local economy.
- > JobCentre Plus is a key partner in providing learning and employment opportunities for adults and young people aged 18 to 24 and is represented as an observer on our Council.
- > The County Council is a key partner in the planning and delivery process and we must ensure that our activities relating to learning are complementary. The Director of Education is on our Council.
- > The voluntary sector and local equality organisations are vital to our work with socially excluded people and to the equal opportunities agenda.

Whilst it is not practical to list them all here, we have identified in excess of 150 other organisations, agencies or representative bodies with whom we will need to work in partnership. In addition, we will work to support other partnerships, programmes and initiatives; for example we have identified local staff to attend and support meetings of the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). We have also established a partnership agreement with the local Learning Partnership.

Consultation

The draft Strategic Plan 2002/05 was consulted on widely. In excess of 1,000 copies were circulated to external partners, providers, employers, local colleagues, other Learning and Skills Councils in the North West and the national office. A Microsoft Word version was published on the Council's website (www.lsc.gov.uk) and a number of copies were e-mailed as requested.

In addition to this, a series of consultation events were held in order to:

- > Gain feedback and input to the local Council's final Strategic Plan from partners, education and training providers, individuals, employers and others.
- > Promote awareness and understanding of the local Council and its role and responsibilities.
- > Achieve shared ownership of the Council's Plan with key partners and promote joint working.

Each and every view/comment received has been given our full consideration and has helped to shape this Strategic Plan 2002/05.

Our firm wish is that this final plan will find acceptance by relevant agencies including the NWDA, GONW, the County Council, the SBS, JobCentre Plus and Connexions Cumbria as well as by other key partners – schools, colleges and other training providers, employer and employee organisations and the community.

> Chapter Two: Local Targets for 2004

Introduction

The Government's existing National Learning Targets run to the end of 2002. They are at the heart of the Government's and, consequently, the Learning and Skills Council's strategic purpose. The National Learning Targets cover attainment of both young people and adults and form the core of the Learning and Skills Council's targets for 2004. One of the National Learning Targets, covering level 2 attainment by 19 year-olds, is included in the Treasury's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for 2004. The Learning and Skills Council inherits responsibility for advice on future National Targets and will be represented on a Government Working Group to discuss these.

Disaggregating National Data

Progress in disaggregating the available national performance data to local Learning and Skills Council level is variable. Some datasets covering young people aged 16-19 are already available for local areas. However, this data is numeric and not expressed as a percentage of the target population. Data for adults will be provided this year for the first time through a boosted Labour Force Survey (LFS). Colleagues in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) have provided data that has informed the targets for both young people and adults at local Learning and Skills Council level.

Baselines

The national Learning and Skills Council will use outturn figures as baselines for local Learning and Skills Councils. The baseline for adult attainment at level 3 will be the disaggregated boosted LFS data. The baselines for young people aged 19 and 21 will be the 1999/2000 academic year data analysed by both academic and vocational qualifications.

Participation in Learning

The national Corporate Plan sets out the measurement of participation by young people in terms of the proportion of 16 to 18 year-olds engaged in education and training. Numbers of learners in further education are measured three times a year through the Individualised Student Record (ISR). Numbers in work-based training have to date been measured through a variety of data sources maintained by TECs. This data is being converted into an ISR-compatible format. Baseline numerical data at local Learning and Skills Council level will therefore be available. However, participation rates are dependent upon the availability of accurate population data.

From August 2002, an enhanced Individualised Learner Record (ILR) will replace the ISR and eventually become the prime data source for participation in education and training by this age group.

Adult participation in learning covered by the current National Learning Targets will continue to be measured at national level through both the National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) and, for the first time this year, through the boosted LFS.

For adult basic skills, the Government's current PSA target (a reduction of 750,000 in those needing to improve their basic skills by 2004) has been disaggregated to local LSC level using a national survey dataset from the Basic Skills Agency (BSA).

Establishing Local Targets

In November 2001, using the appropriate National Learning Target as the starting point, the national office provided a proposed bandwidth comprising an upper and lower figure for each target.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council has set local targets for 2004 based on the national targets. However, we have taken into account the most recent data from the boosted LFS, our own sources and those of others to map the baseline for Cumbria.

Now that our targets have been confirmed by national office we have entered into further dialogue with our provider network to set targets for participation and achievement at an institutional level.

Monitoring our Progress

The Learning and Skills Council will publish its first annual report in 2002. This will include progress towards the achievement of targets during its first year of operation.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will pay careful attention to the monitoring of our progress and we will evaluate this on a regular basis. The outcomes of our interim evaluations will determine our future strategies to ensure that targets are met.

In monitoring the achievements of our targets, we will make use of many sources of data, including:

- > **ISR/ILR** – we will consider achievement of target at the time of each return made to the Council and our dialogue with providers will take account of these.
- > **Annual LFS** – on an annual basis we will monitor our progress in relation to this key survey.
- > **Core System (J1)** – we will consider the achievement of our work-based learning targets using the findings of Core System (J1) to inform decisions in relation to re-profiling and where necessary, re-contracting in-year.
- > **Employer and Household Surveys** – these surveys will inform the nature and volumes of the provision that we will wish to purchase.

Where appropriate, we will also undertake our own research and monitor our response to the needs that are identified. We have already conducted a survey into the impact of foot and mouth disease on post-16 learning in Cumbria. Our response included support for a summer learning programme for young people designed to meet identified needs. This approach will provide the basis for future developments, all of which will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

We will report on a regular basis to our local Council on the achievement of our targets and we will analyse and publish information which relates to our progress on an annual basis.

Our key objectives and targets for 2004

| Key objectives | National Targets for 2004 | Cumbria Targets for 2004 |
|--|---|--|
| Extend/widen participation in learning. | 80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 75%). | 684 additional learners (equivalent to 88.8%). |
| | Set baseline and target for adults in next year's Plan. | |
| Increase engagement of employers in workforce development. | Develop measure of employer engagement in next year's Plan. | |
| Raise achievement of young people. | 85% at level 2 by age 19 (2000: 75%). | 355 additional achievers. |
| | 55% at level 3 by age 19 (2000: 51%). | 289 additional achievers. |
| Raise achievement of adults. | Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults. | 6,422 additional achievers. |
| | % of adults at level 2: target to be set in next year's Plan. | |
| | 52% of adults at level 3 (2000: 47%). | 11,088 more adults. |
| Raise quality of education and training and improve user satisfaction. | Set baselines and targets in next year's Plan. | |

Table 2

> Chapter Three: Local Needs Analysis

Local Needs Analysis

This chapter provides an area profile of Cumbria and looks at three areas relating to analysis of skills issues, participation and achievement, and the learning infrastructure. Key facts and trends relating to each of these three areas are highlighted, before looking at the key challenges which face us. These three broad areas are all inter-linked. Only by developing the right skills and qualifications through participating in learning in quality providers, can a competitive workforce be developed which will bring continued success to Cumbria.

Area Profile

- > Cumbria is England's second largest County, covering 6,810 square kilometres. It represents 48% of the North West region's land-mass.
- > The County has boundaries with Scotland to the north, Northumberland and County Durham to the east, North Yorkshire to the south east and Lancashire to the south. It has a western coastline border along the Irish Sea and the Solway Firth.
- > There are approximately 491,800 people in Cumbria accounting for 7.1% of the North West region's population and almost 1% of the population of England (0.85% of GB population).
- > Demographic trends mean that an increasing number of people in Cumbria are in the older age groups. For example, there are 54,900 people in the 20-29 year old age group compared with 66,100 in the 40-49 year old age group.
- > At the 1991 Census of Population, less than half of one percent of the population of Cumbria were from a minority ethnic group. Demographic trends and the increasing number of asylum seekers from abroad suggest that the number of people from an ethnic minority will have now increased.
- > Cumbria is divided into six local authority districts – Allerdale, Barrow, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland.
- > The County is predominantly rural with almost half of its land area, 3,139 square kilometres, being covered by the Lake District National Park. There are urban centres primarily around Carlisle in the north, Barrow in the south and in West Cumbria.
- > The geographical size and rural nature of Cumbria means that transport is an issue. Particular parts of the County are comparatively isolated and sparsely populated. Transport issues are exacerbated by the topography of the County and this makes access to learning facilities more difficult.
- > The M6 motorway provides the main north-south route for Cumbria with links to the North East region being provided through the A66 and the A69. These links mean that Glasgow, Manchester and Newcastle can be reached in journey times of less than two hours from many parts of Cumbria.
- > Port facilities are provided at Barrow, Workington and Silloth. In addition, the West Coast main line runs through Cumbria, providing rail links with the rest of Great Britain.

Analysis of Skills Issues

Key Facts

- > Approximately 219,000 Cumbrian people are in employment. 194,000 are employees, of whom 89,000 are female and 105,000 are male. 25,000 are self-employed. 156,000 work on a full-time basis and 64,000 work on a part-time basis.¹
- > A breakdown of the employed workforce by occupation shows that, compared with the national average, Cumbria has lower proportions of people employed in managerial, professional and associate professional and technical occupations. (See Diagram 1).

Comparative Occupational Structure of Employment in Cumbria – 2001

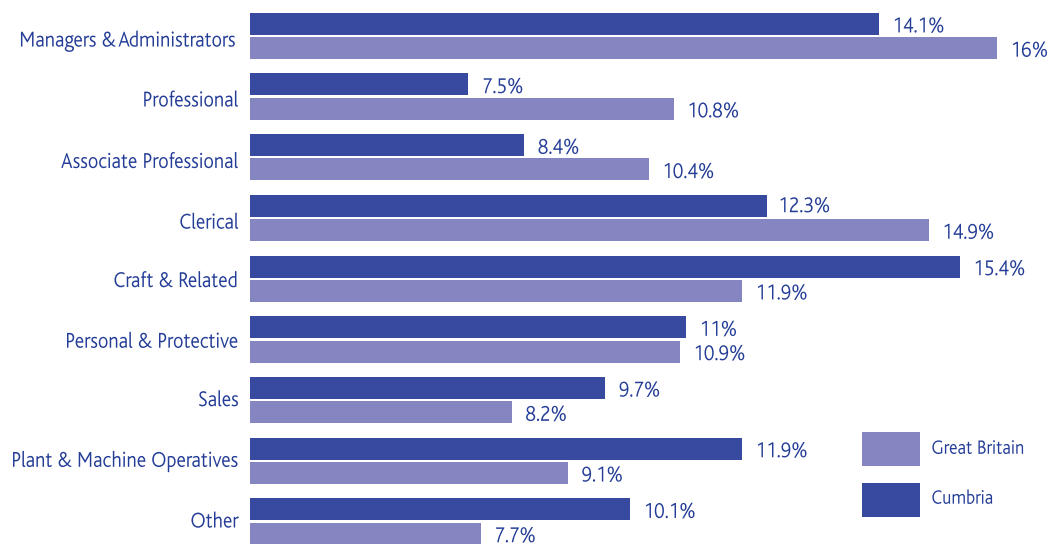


Diagram 1 Source: LFS (2001)

- > Cumbria has a higher than average proportion of people employed as sales staff, and as plant and machine operatives. In addition, many of these occupations are in decline in terms of the numbers employed.
- > Average hourly earnings in Cumbria are £9.10 compared with a national average of £10.28 and a regional average of £9.56. This lower rate may be, in part, a reflection of the structure of employment and also of Cumbria's peripheral location in relation to the wider economy.
- > There are 18,224 businesses in Cumbria. Small business units employing 1-10 people account for over 83% of all business sites across the County. 15.5% of businesses employ 11-99 people and only a small minority (1.3%) employ 100 or more.
- > 27.5% of employees work in small businesses, with a further 38.8% of employees working in medium-sized firms. Although large firms are few in number, they employ 33.7% of employees. Irrespective of the size of employer, these figures include the 23.8% of employees in Cumbria who work in the public sector.
- > The unemployment rate in Cumbria is 3.2% (as at August 2001), which represents 7,403 people registered as unemployed. This matches the national rate and is lower than the regional rate of 3.8%. However, there are significant variations in unemployment rates throughout Cumbria, ranging from under 1% in Keswick to 5.7% in Workington.

¹ Labour Force Survey 2001

Comparative Industrial Structure of Employment in Cumbria - 2001

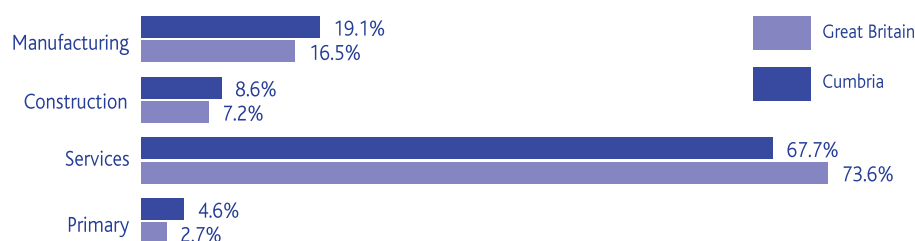


Diagram 2 Source: LFS (May 2001)

Note: Primary includes agriculture. Data relates to Cumbria as a whole and therefore does not illustrate the wide variations which exist between districts within the County.

- > 67.7% of the local workforce are employed in services. Were Cumbria's proportion in this area to match the national picture, an additional 13,000 people would be employed in service industries. (See Diagram 2).

Key Trends

- > Areas that are reliant on manufacturing, such as Cumbria, are not expected to see overall employment growth in the near future. Pressure on manufacturing to shed labour will continue, due to both the application of labour-saving technology and increased competition.
- > 9% of employers in Cumbria have identified a gap between the skills possessed by their workforce and those needed to meet business objectives. This is particularly apparent at the lower and intermediate occupational levels. Lack of management skills is also recognised.
- > The need for a higher skilled workforce is leading to a growth in managerial, professional and associate professional workers nationally. However, Cumbria lags behind the rest of the country in these areas.
- > It is forecast that around a quarter of new jobs created in the next ten years will require skills at level 3 and over half of all new jobs will require skills at level 4 or higher.
- > Recent developments in ICT have resulted in its widespread use across many sectors and occupations. An ability in ICT is increasingly a basic requirement in the modern labour market. This has widespread implications for learning.
- > Front-line staff in particular parts of the service sector including retail, tourist related services and call-centre services are increasing. These jobs require well-developed customer care skills and they are often flexible and/or seasonal in nature. In the current labour market these are more likely to be taken by women.

Key Challenges

- > Agriculture and tourism are two of Cumbria's major employers, but many workers in these areas lack appropriate qualifications.
- > The impact of foot and mouth disease has affected farming and tourism in particular. Many farmers may need to diversify their activities or choose to leave farming completely. This will require the development of new skills. The County's RAZ proposals will be given high priority.

- > Generic skills-gaps amongst those in employment have been identified in a number of areas including ICT, interpersonal skills and management skills. These skill gap areas need to be targeted in order for Cumbria to make progress in improving the skills of those already in employment as well as those entering the labour market.
- > Trends in the economy mean that those in employment and those seeking to enter the labour market will need to keep their skills up to date. This will be a continuous process and will require the development of a culture of lifelong learning across all sectors of the population.
- > There is a need to ensure that as many young people as possible continue into learning upon leaving compulsory schooling. This is essential if they are to develop the skills and abilities required for the labour market of the future.
- > Employers need to play their part in ensuring that their own workforces have appropriate skills. However, efforts to overcome obstacles to training also need to be addressed.

Participation and Achievement

Key Facts

Participation

The numbers of new 16 year-olds potentially entering the learning and labour markets is expected to be broadly similar in the next few years, ranging from 6,140 in 2001 to 6,400 in 2002. (See Diagram 3).

16-Year-Old Cohort Projections – Cumbria 2000/04

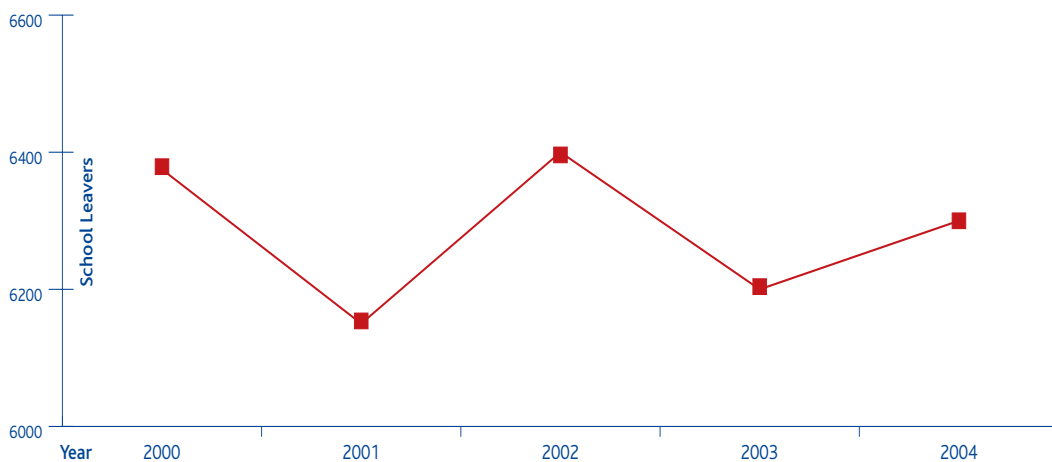


Diagram 3 Source: Connexions Cumbria (2001)

- > During 1999/2000 there were 7,143 full-time learners and 28,791 part-time learners studying in further education (including Barrow in Furness Sixth Form College) in Cumbria giving a total of 35,934 learners.
- > It is forecast that around 4,460 people will take part in work-based training programmes funded by the Learning and Skills Council during 2001/02.
- > The majority of school leavers in Cumbria enter full-time education upon leaving compulsory schooling. However, this masks significant local variations, with 66% of school leavers in Workington and Barrow in Furness entering full-time education, compared with 79% in Ulverston and Penrith.

- > Currently, in terms of the percentage of 16 to 19 year olds in full-time education, Cumbria lies 33rd (out of 47) amongst local Learning and Skills Councils – 56% compared with the highest at 76%. The England average is 60.4%.

Comparative Destinations of Year 11 School Leavers - 1999

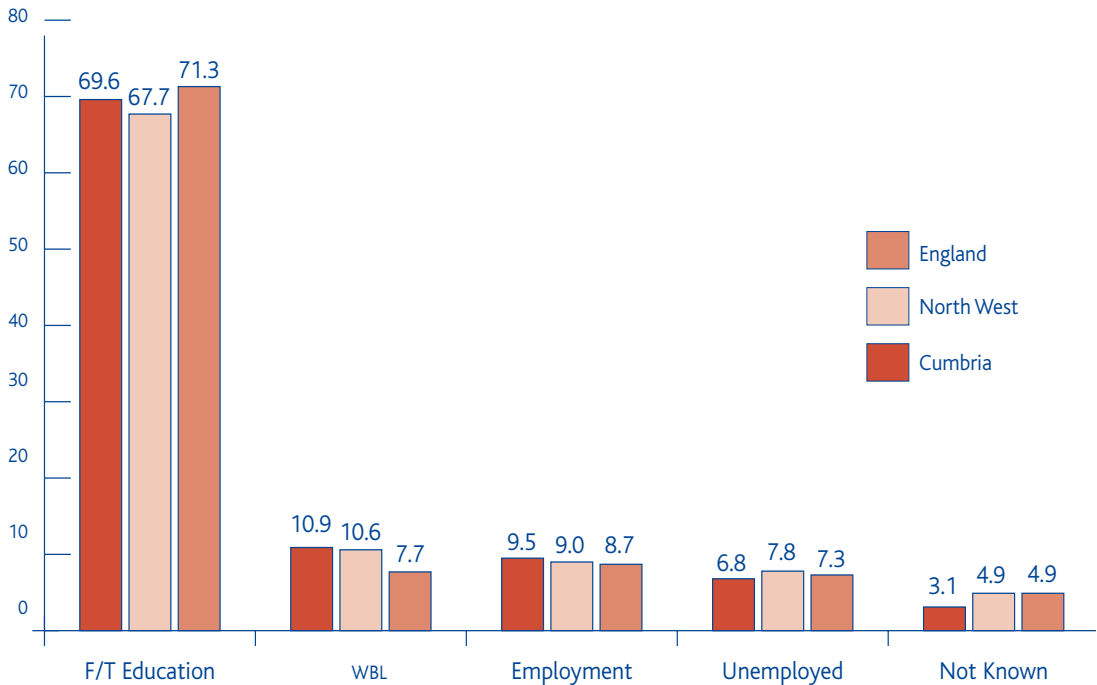


Diagram 4 Source: Connexions (2000)

Note: Due to rounding figures do not add up to 100%.

- > The Cumbria Household Survey shows that, of those who had not been involved in learning in the last three years, the major reason given by over 30% was lack of time. Over 20% said that they were not interested. Issues relating to childcare were also a barrier to participation in learning for over 17% of women. For the female 25-34 age group this reached almost 22%.

Distribution of 16-18 Year Olds across Cumbria Districts - 2001

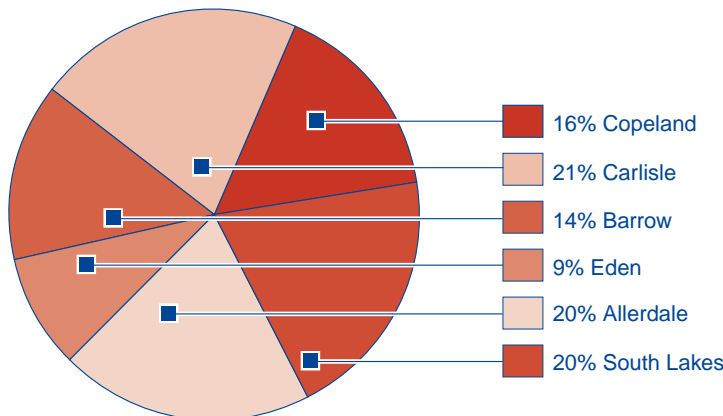


Diagram 5 Source: Learning and Skills Council estimates based on Cumbria County Council data (2001)

Achievement

- > General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) achievement at 16 in Cumbria continues to be ahead of the national and regional average, with 50.6% of school leavers achieving 5 or more A-C grades. However, almost 5% of young people are still leaving school without any qualifications.

Comparative Achievement by Highest Qualification Level 16-24 Year-Olds - 2000

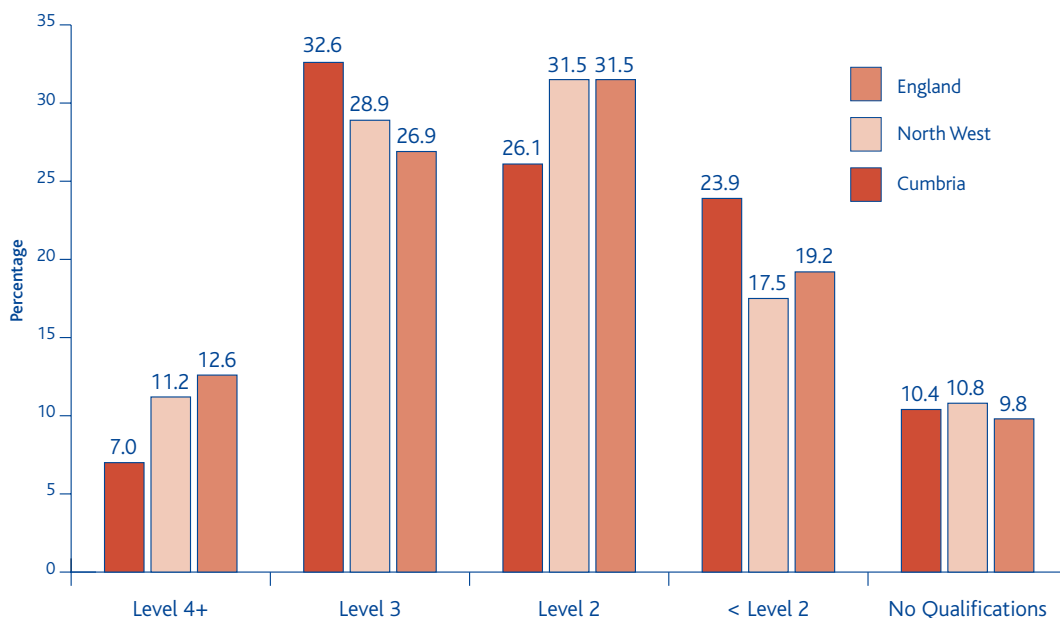


Diagram 6 Source: Cumbria Household Survey (2000) & LFS (2000)

- > The Household Survey has identified that 30% of adults in Cumbria have attained at least a level 3 qualification. However, this figure is likely to increase as a result of new data from the enhanced LFS.
- > The proportion of adults with level 4 (graduate level) or above qualifications stands at 19% against a national average of 26.6% and a regional level of 25%. Cumbria is 36th (out of 47) amongst local Learning and Skills Councils. It is clear that some work needs to be done to catch up with the regional and national comparators.
- > A great deal of on-the-job training does not lead to recognised qualifications. We will carry out an employer survey to identify the extent to which uncertificated training takes place in Cumbria.
- > The BSA report that the proportions of adults with poor numeracy skills in Cumbria range from 23.6% in South Lakeland to 29.1% in Barrow. This compares with a national level of 24% and a regional level of 26.5%.
- > The proportions of adults with low literacy skills in Cumbria ranges from 25.7% in Carlisle to 28.4% in Eden. This compares with 24% nationally and 25.6% regionally.

Adult Achievement in Cumbria by Highest Qualification Level - 2000

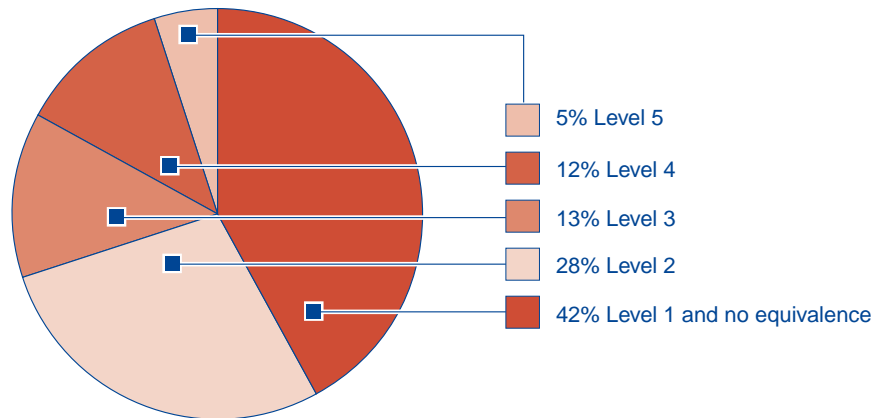


Diagram 7 Source: Cumbria Household Survey (2000)

Comparative Adult Achievement at Levels 3 and 4 - 2000

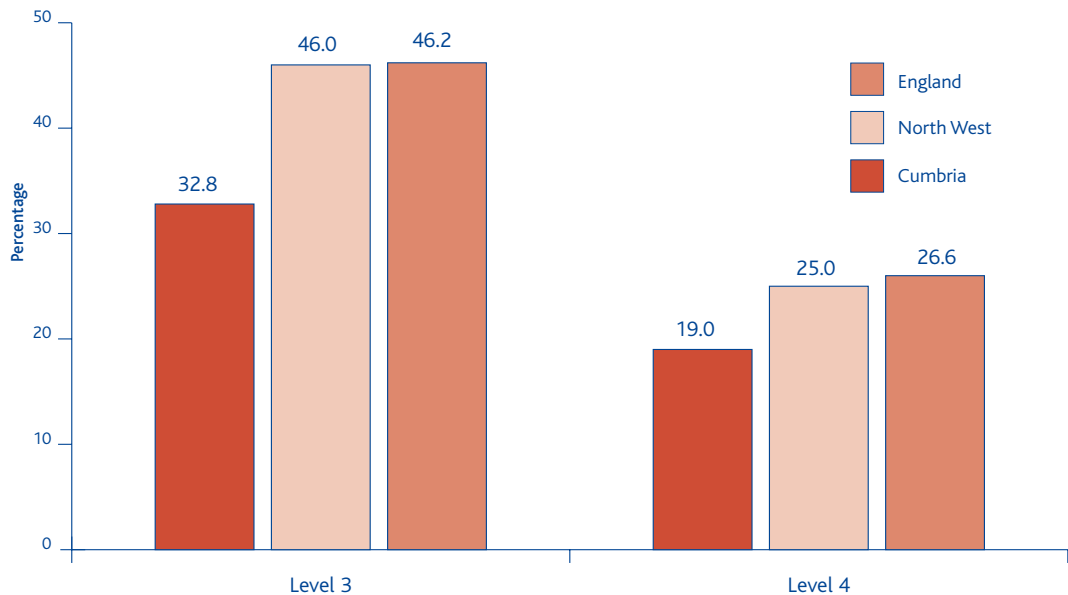


Diagram 8 Source: Cumbria Household Survey (2000) National Learning Targets Annual Report 2000 & LFS Autumn 2000

Key Trends

- > Older people form an increasing proportion of the Cumbrian population. This will have implications for employers in terms of recruitment and training.
- > Despite an increase in the proportion of young people continuing their learning after post compulsory schooling, a significant number of young people do not.
- > Girls have been outperforming boys for some years now, particularly at aged 16. This trend is beginning to filter through into the proportions entering further and higher education and also at entry level in a number of professional occupations.

Key Challenges

- > Only through developing a lifelong learning culture will we manage to persuade all sectors of the population to engage and re-engage in learning. Particular efforts must be directed at non-traditional learners who may need extra encouragement to return to learning.

- > The participation rate in learning amongst young people in Cumbria overall must be maintained and improved. This can only be achieved through widening participation to under-represented groups and by providing appropriate support, particularly in parts of Cumbria where participation is lowest.
- > Establishing policies to deal with both obstacles and resistance to learning will be vital. Help with childcare and financial assistance will assist some groups, but the key areas identified by adults in Cumbria remain lack of motivation and lack of time. It is clear that we need to address these issues with rigour.
- > Promoting the benefits of learning to employers is important if a world class workforce is to be developed in Cumbria and employees are to be encouraged to fully develop their skills.
- > It may be necessary to develop strategies to support boys, from 14 years old onwards, to encourage them to achieve their potential.

Learning Infrastructure

Key Facts

- > There are 296 primary schools, 42 secondary schools and five special schools in Cumbria. These schools are responsible for the education of almost 75,000 children.
- > There are 35 schools, including technology colleges, making provision for 16-18 year olds. These institutions were responsible for 4,530 full-time learners in the 16-18 age range in 1999/2000.
- > There are four colleges of further education and a sixth form college in Cumbria; Carlisle College, Furness College, Kendal College, Lakes College - West Cumbria, and Barrow Sixth Form College. These colleges employed 1,283 staff, including 798 teaching staff and 569 support staff and provided for 4,558 full-time learners aged 16-18 in 1999/2000.
- > Further education provision is also provided by Cumbria Institute of the Arts and the Cumbria Campus of the University of Central Lancashire at Newton Rigg.
- > A network of 108 adult and community learning (ACL) centres deliver a wide range of learning throughout the County.
- > 33 training providers contract directly with Cumbria Learning and Skills Council offering work-based learning to 4,460 learners during 2001/02, 3,188 of whom are in the 16-18 age group. Training is also provided throughout the County by a range of other trainers.
- > The location and variable physical condition of some education and training facilities may contribute to non-participation by potential learners.
- > Higher education provision is made available largely through four institutions in the County, namely the University of Northumbria - Carlisle Campus, the Cumbria Campus of the University of Central Lancashire at Newton Rigg, St Martins College and Cumbria Institute of the Arts. In addition, the Open University delivers courses to over 1,300 learners in Cumbria. There is also a significant volume of higher education provision available from colleges of further education.
- > The four higher education institutions have agreed a memorandum of understanding in order to facilitate the planning and development of higher education in the County.

- > The overall performance of colleges of further education in the County in terms of inspection grades is relatively weak, with two of the four colleges of further education being categorised as 'serious concerns'.
- > Key areas of weakness in colleges of further education identified include management, governance and quality assurance. In addition, there are issues regarding the financial viability of some colleges of further education.
- > Inspection grades show that there is room for significant improvement in the quality of learning available from Cumbrian work-based learning providers. Of the four ALI inspections carried out to date, 56% of grades awarded were unsatisfactory. Leadership and management issues scored particularly badly.
- > Evidence from Performance Reviews shows that 45% of work-based learning providers that have contracts with the Learning and Skills Council, were categorised as having 'some concerns' or 'serious concerns'.

Key Trends

- > Widening the participation in learning of under-represented groups, particularly non-traditional learners, is a key policy objective of the current Government.
- > There will be a rationalisation of funding streams between the further education and work-based learning sectors. This coincides with the promotion of a partnership culture. The development of joint ventures and collaborative arrangements are increasingly a feature of the modern learning infrastructure.
- > There is an increased emphasis on improving the quality of staff responsible for delivering learning. All teaching staff are now being encouraged to achieve teaching qualifications, and new teaching standards are being developed.
- > There is a declining trend in inspection grades awarded by ALI to work-based learning providers nationally which is reflected locally.
- > There is evidence that retention and achievement rates are declining in some colleges of further education in Cumbria.

Key Challenges

- > It is important that providers offer learning opportunities which meet individual and employer needs. This means that those responsible for planning learning provision must make use of appropriate labour market information to ensure that local needs are taken into account.
- > More effective use of careers education and guidance must be made in areas where this has been highlighted as a weakness.
- > Learning offered in the County must take into account the specific issues such as rural isolation and transport problems which can be experienced in some parts of the County.
- > There is a need to improve the quality of learning available throughout the County in both the further education and work-based learning sectors. Progress on improving inspection grades will be a key challenge in the future and will be a test of Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's effectiveness.

- > We will work closely with further education providers, especially those categorised as 'serious concerns' to address current weaknesses.
- > The new approach to Standards Funds will provide an opportunity to develop and implement more coherent quality improvement strategies.

Monitoring Arrangements

- > The Research Team at Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will work with local partners through the Cumbria Economic Intelligence Partnership (CEIP) to identify research needs and pool resources to ensure that these needs are met via a co-ordinated approach.
- > An economic assessment of Cumbria and a biennial employer and household survey will be carried out in association with the CEIP. These will provide the basic information required for planning purposes.
- > We will also maintain close links with the national Quality Improvement Research and Good Practice Team and contribute to national research projects as appropriate.
- > We will carry out additional activities including an annual needs assessment and ad-hoc specific studies in order to provide more detailed specialist information required for strategic and operational planning purposes. This will help ensure that decision-making is carried out in an informed manner.
- > Links with local employers and employer associations will be developed in order to facilitate research on skills issues. This will involve collecting information from employers and working with them to ensure that research activities are relevant to the issues affecting them.
- > We will undertake research and collect data on participation issues. This will involve mapping the numbers of learners, their characteristics and the programmes they are engaged in. In addition, research on learner feedback will also be undertaken so that the views of learners can be taken into account in terms of policy and planning.
- > We will also carry out work on drop-out, retention, achievements and destinations. This will enable us to identify good practice with a view to supporting its dissemination and can also be used to help inform decision making.
- > We have secured resources from the national Council to enable us to carry out a survey to assess the suitability of the physical infrastructure currently available, for the delivery of the full range of learning for which we are responsible. This survey will identify issues of concern and consider possible solutions. A local asset management plan will then be developed and progressed.

> Chapter Four: The Strategies for Cumbria

Target 1:

Extend/widen participation in learning

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will raise participation by funding a wide range of high quality education and training that puts learners first. This section of the strategic plan identifies high-level strategic aims to achieve these. The national and local targets for participation are as follows:

| | National | Cumbria |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Young people between 16-18 | 80% (75% in 2000) | 684 additional learners (equivalent to 88.8%). |
| Adults | Set baseline and targets in next year's plan | |

The Learning and Skills Council is still in the process of producing the most accurate baseline for adult participation. When baselines are set and targets for Cumbria confirmed, we will consult on these when the Strategic Plan is rolled forward to 2006.

Key Aims

- 1 Fund the delivery of a range of education and training that meets the needs of local learners and employers and allows a degree of choice.** Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is responsible for funding post-16 education and training, other than higher education, from April 2001, to include school sixth forms from April 2002. We aim to ensure that the learning opportunities available relate to the aspirations and support needs of learners and the needs of employers, and that the volume and range of programmes strike a balance between these.
- 2 Increase and widen participation among young people and adults.** The Learning and Skills Council has a statutory duty to increase and widen participation among young people and adults. To do so, Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will promote post-16 education and training and encourage all individuals to engage in lifelong learning. There is much work to be done in order to stimulate learner motivation and reach out to excluded groups/individuals. Our aim is to drive up participation rates by engaging with those young people who are unemployed at 16, but do not enter into any form of education and training (approximately 4% in 2000).

We will aim to increase the proportion of adults taking part in learning and skills training. We will fully support the national adult basic skills strategy. Our Basic Skills Action Plan, which has been produced in collaboration with local providers, voluntary agencies and the local Learning Partnership, outlines how we propose that the needs of those who lack the skills of literacy, numeracy and/or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) will be met. We will build on the success of Learndirect provision, Adult Learners' Week and other initiatives.

We will encourage employers in Cumbria to recognise the value of education and training. Through promoting Investors in People (IIP), we will support employers who engage fully in training and invest in identifying training needs. We also recognise the role that employers can play in making programmes more up-to-date and appropriate in terms of their relevance to work.

3 Tackle inequality of opportunity. Nationally, the Learning and Skills Council will work with a number of equality organisations, including the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (SKILL), Equality North-West and organisations representing age diversity, to embed equality of opportunity into all policies and activities.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will actively promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all our activities. This work will be underpinned by an Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan that will include targets and measures to address under-representation. This has been drawn up in partnership with a range of Cumbrian agencies.

4 Remove barriers to learning. The identification and eradication of barriers to participation in learning amongst Cumbria's geographically widely dispersed population is a key strand in our strategic plan. A continuing barrier to learning for many Cumbrian people is that of access and the issues around public transport, particularly in the current economic climate where foot and mouth disease has had a very large impact on rural industries, tourism and associated businesses. We will actively seek out and resource opportunities to widen access for remote communities and encourage providers to deliver outreach projects. The potential of ICT will be exploited to this end. This will require a careful assessment of the particular needs of identified groups and of the capacity of existing and new providers to meet them.

5 Improve tracking, destinations and feedback data. The Learning and Skills Council's ISR/ILR will be utilised as one of the main sources to track learners. In addition, we will work in partnership with organisations such as Connexions Cumbria to share information and monitor progression routes. We will ensure that this information is fed back to our key partners for dissemination to learners and others so that they have a clearer perception of the benefits of education and training.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will monitor providers' success in tracking learners' destinations and will support providers to increase the efficiency and scope of their returns.

Delivery

The Learning and Skills Council in Cumbria has identified a number of mechanisms to extend participation in education, learning and training and these are set out below

Plan education and training with providers.

In delivering the Government's key aims as set out in the Remit Letter, we recognise that to truly enhance local communities, businesses and the lives of the people of Cumbria, we must work in partnership with others. In particular we recognise the importance of developing effective working relationships with our provider network and potential new providers.

We will work with local providers to agree challenging yet realistic targets and will monitor these on a regular basis.

We will map local provision and support providers in developing their own plans through the Learning and Skills Council's planning process as it is broadened across the provider network. Growth agreed through planning and budgeting processes will need to reflect local targets and providers' ability to deliver.

We will build on the statement published jointly by the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council and the LEA, **Learning (14-19) in Cumbria**, by undertaking an area by area review of provision. The first phase will focus on the 16-19 age group. Subsequently, the 14-16 age group will be added to give an overall view of 14-19 learning opportunities. The starting point for this review will be the travel-to-learn Carlisle area.

Following the national Learning and Skills Council's lead we have already embarked on a plan to establish memoranda of understanding between ourselves and other key partners in Cumbria. This work will continue over the strategic period.

Provide support for all learners.

We will encourage employers and education establishments to work together to enhance the learning experiences of young people. This will allow businesses to promote themselves and their industry sector and will be particularly useful where skills shortages or gaps exist.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council has established a partnership agreement with Connexions Cumbria to support the services provided to young people and to share expertise and information. We will also support the Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership in its work to assist adults to choose the course/qualification that best meets their needs and aspirations.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council has arrangements in place to support learners including:

- > Access funds for young people and adults.
- > Childcare support for young people and adults.
- > Residential bursaries.

Encourage new and returning learners.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council has produced a Level 2 Action Plan outlining a range of innovative strategies and proactive initiatives, including financial, to encourage young learners to participate and achieve at level 2. We will also support and provide funds for the continuation of non-schedule 2 programmes for adults that were previously funded by the FEFC.

We anticipate and will support the launch of a new Individual Learning Account (ILA) mechanism to attract and support new and returning learners.

Promote learning and skills.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will utilise its resource to actively promote learning and training in order to deliver our strategic objectives and the lifelong learning agenda. We have a specialist Marketing and Public Relations Unit that reports directly to the Executive Director to minimise lines of communication and maximise speed of response. This unit also works closely with the Planning and Research teams and liaises regularly with the other teams to support the achievement of specific business objectives.

Local marketing and public relations activity is co-ordinated with a network of key partners – including Connexions Cumbria and learning providers. The strategic intention is to combine and align the marketing activity of a wide range of complementary partners to maximise the impact on the learning market.

Our local marketing activity also builds on national campaigns generated by the national Learning and Skills Council and others, adding local 'spin' where possible to add relevance and impact.

We have already started to undertake these activities by publishing a leaflet **Cumbria: Learning County – a great place to grow individuals and businesses**. This will be supported by the production of the Business and Strategic Plan, in addition to other subsidiary plans including the Equality and Diversity Action Plan, the Level 2 Action Plan, Basic Skills Action Plan and Co-financing Plan.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council, together with Connexions Cumbria, has employed a local touring theatre company, 'CragRats', to travel the County promoting a range of post-16 learning in schools.

Encourage and support the use of new technologies.

We acknowledge that ICT offers the opportunity to revolutionise both quality of life and economic prosperity. We will ensure that funded activities employ appropriate ICT in the provision and delivery of courses and other services. Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's aims are to:

- > Improve the ICT skills base for all people.
- > Encourage the effective use of ICT to combat rural isolation and provide access to the widely distributed geographical population.
- > Encourage the appropriate use of Learndirect.
- > Develop the Cumbria workforce ICT skills to support investment and growth of new businesses with ICT specialisms.
- > Improve business use of e-commerce technologies.
- > Promote Community Regeneration through the Development of Information Technology (CREDITS) and ICT centres.
- > Encourage co-operation and partnership activities that promote inclusion of communities.
- > Target resources to help improve the fabric of ICT facilities in those providers where help is needed most.

Ensure equality of opportunity.

The national Learning and Skills Council has produced an Equality and Diversity Strategy. This strategy has four high level objectives:

- > To develop the Council as an equal opportunities employer/organisation.
- > To develop the Council as a champion of equality.
- > To embed equal opportunities into all policies, programmes and actions.
- > To report to the Secretary of State on progress towards equality.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council supports these objectives and will mainstream and integrate equal opportunities into all aspects of its work. We will ensure that equality and diversity are embedded into all priorities, programmes and actions. We are in the process of producing a local Equality and Diversity Strategy that will cover issues of recruitment and employment practice, gender, race, disability, age and harassment underpinned by the relevant legislation for these areas (see Chapter 5). We have established an Equality and Diversity Advisory Committee, chaired by a Council member, to oversee all issues relating to equal opportunities.

Of particular importance to Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is our responsibility to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in accordance with section 14 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Target 2:

Increase engagement of employers in workforce development

The Learning and Skills Council is responsible for engaging employers and employer representative organisations. The aim is to foster better links between local, regional and national sector training needs, in order to influence the education and training programmes that are delivered. The Learning and Skills Council is in the process of developing memoranda of understanding with employer representative bodies such as the SBS, National Training Organisations (NTOs) and Learndirect in order to share in ideas, information and best practice.

The Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) report "**In Demand – Adult skills in the 21st Century**" has been welcomed by Ministers. It identifies some key issues in the development of workforce development provision and has been further tasked to take these forward by producing a detailed action plan setting out agreed policy which will be published in the summer of 2002 alongside the spending review. Furthermore, the Chancellor has also identified a number of measures which will be piloted from September 2002 to encourage employers in raising skill levels up to Level 2, derived from recommendations within the above report and that of the joint CBI/TUC "**Skills for Productivity and Employment**" report. Therefore, additional or modified activity will be developed when appropriate to reflect outcomes of the above.

The review of National Training Organisations was concluded at the end of 2001 and the implementation of the Sector Skills Development Agency and Sector Skills Councils announced from April 2002. These will replace the NTOs but for the purpose of this strategy the references made remain consistent.

A measure of employer engagement has yet to be defined at a national level and, therefore, local targets will be set for Cumbria when this Strategic Plan is rolled forward to 2006.

For Cumbria

The Learning and Skills Council has a statutory duty to encourage employers to participate in the provision of post-16 education and training, and to ensure that they contribute financially. Furthermore, many more employers now engage in training and developing themselves and their workforces than a decade ago. However, in order to continue to develop the skills of the working population as a whole and sustain a competitive and prosperous economy, it is essential that continued investment is made in the workforce.

Without a united effort to develop our people, the danger is that Cumbria will become a 'skill-poor' area where existing businesses will have poor productivity and low profit and will fail to survive and grow, whilst new businesses will not be attracted to invest. Without workforce development large numbers of our people will be unable to find or retain satisfying work.

It is our intention to raise the profile of learning in the workplace by developing a comprehensive provision of services, delivered through partners, that meet employers' needs. The following key aims will give direction to this and provide the framework for a wide-ranging number of activities to deliver real, positive and measurable outcomes.

Targets to measure effective employer engagement are yet to be finalised, but through such outcomes as IIP recognitions, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) achievements, participation in management development activity, training needs analysis completed and many others, consistent measures will be defined and baselines set in 2002 to reflect local and national performance.

Key Aims

- 1 Build strong relationships with local employers/employer groups.** Cumbria Learning and Skills Council aims to build long-term relationships with local employers, engaging with them in defining skill needs and developing their workforces. Close links will be established with larger employers and both directly and indirectly with small employers through the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), NTOs, the SBS (Business Link), trade groups (Chamber of Commerce) and the local provider network including further education colleges and higher education institutions.
- 2 Target action in key sectors.** Employer commitment will be sought for specific targeted action in key sectors, as well as cross-sector working to define and deliver generic skills. Sectors identified in the Regional Strategy will be targeted with a priority to address those that are particularly relevant to Cumbria, for example, tourism. Relationships will be developed at a local level with appropriate NTOs to build on their Workforce Development Plans and maximise resources to meet specific needs of their sectors. Additionally, in light of the impact on training brought about by the on-going implications of foot and mouth disease, targeted support will be developed to support and maintain the skills necessary for related businesses.
- 3 Identify skill needs through local labour market data.** A wide range of data on the labour market is available from Government sources in particular. However, there are some areas, in particular data on skills issues, that are not readily available at local level. It is intended that the current gaps in data will be identified during the local needs analysis and a strategy to obtain the necessary data will be implemented. It is intended that the majority of additional data required will be made available through a biennial employer and household survey and through additional industry specific projects.

Delivery

To support the key aims the following summarises the activities that we believe will provide real outcomes and value-added support to employers. They are based around direct employer involvement supported by local partners such as Business Link for Cumbria, further education colleges, private providers, Cumbria Education Business Consortium (CBEC), and the TUC.

Supporting the provision of work-based learning

Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) and Graduate Apprenticeships build the skill levels of young people. They do so by amalgamating three features which form an attractive learning route for both young people and employers. The bringing together of 'on the job training', experience of work-life and the opportunity to earn are an enormously powerful mix which will facilitate increased participation, retention and achievement. We will work with Business Link in Cumbria, emerging Sector Skill Councils and other employer-engaging groups, such as Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, to actively promote the benefits of work-based learning so that more employers are actively engaged in their delivery. This is good business sense for employers and employees alike.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council currently contracts with 33 providers across the county with an annual average of 4,202 young people in training. Appropriate support will continue to be given to local employers to ensure they are aware of and can deliver their roles and responsibilities in the provision of training. Furthermore, accurate and up to date advice and information is available from Cumbria Learning and Skills Council, Connexions Cumbria and all providers. This will help young people and employers to make decisions that are right for them and thus gain the best from programmes that meet their combined needs.

Modern Apprenticeships

MAs are the preferred work-based learning route for all young people aged 16 to 24 who are capable of achieving NVQ Levels 2 and 3. Approved frameworks are produced by sector NTOs, and include meeting NVQ standards at level 2, Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMA), and level 3, Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (AMA), and Key Skills at specified levels. Modern Apprentices are generally expected to be employed by the employer offering the training. Within Cumbria, we will utilise a number of mechanisms including networking and sector specific support to encourage employers to continue to engage Modern Apprentices in the following occupational sectors: Agriculture, Business Administration, Construction, Engineering, Hair and Beauty, Hospitality, Leisure, Management, Manufacturing and Retail. Currently an annual average of 1,673 individuals are on the FMA programme and 1,711 on AMAs. In addition to the FMA and AMA programmes, Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will continue to support the development of Graduate Modern Apprenticeships.

Promoting and supporting National Vocational Qualifications

The Cassels report recommended a number of activities to increase the take up of MAs. It also recognised that a MA might not be appropriate in every case. Therefore, we intend to provide support for individuals and employers where MAs are not appropriate. There will be high quality, flexible training to NVQ levels 1, 2 or 3 for young people in the same occupational sectors. Additionally, employers will be encouraged and supported in the use of NVQ units and qualifications. Relationships with NTOs will be developed locally and, with the support of the local provider base, vocational standards will be promoted across all sectors and sizes of employer.

Basic Skills

We will encourage Cumbrian employers to identify the basic skills needs of their workforce and to make provision to meet these needs in the workplace in a number of ways. In December 2001 we hosted an awareness-raising training course for part-time basic skills tutors organised by the Workplace Basic Skills Network. We intend also to work with a NTO to pilot on-line basic skills screening some of which will take place in the working environment. In addition, our Local Initiative Fund (LIF) is supporting 2 project workers to work with trades unions to identify and address basic skills needs among their members and to this end a group of learning representatives with a basic skills remit will be established. We will also encourage our college providers to increase their links at basic skills level with local employers and to work in collaboration to address the identified basic skills needs of employees.

Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE)

The Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) initiative is at an early stage in Cumbria. As we work to support appropriate colleges to undertake the necessary developments to achieve CoVE status, we will encourage employers to participate and in due course to use the vocational expertise as fully as possible. (See page 42 for further details of this initiative).

Ensuring work experience for 14-16 year-olds

Our objective is that all Year 10 and 11 eligible pupils within Cumbria will receive at least 2 weeks of quality work experience with an employer before the end of their compulsory education. This activity will be co-ordinated through CBEC which will be responsible for ensuring the quality of work experience as well as the development of key life skills and for preparing young people for the world of work. CBEC will also work with sector groups e.g. tourism to produce appropriate information and advice packs for individuals and employers. Participation in work experience should also bring about benefits for employers as establishing links with schools can provide businesses with a better understanding of the education system and play a part in promoting the company profile and image, as well as identifying potential recruits.

Promoting and supporting Investors in People

liP has helped many organisations to invest more successfully in learning. In Cumbria some 400 employers are currently working with the National Standard and 200, having been independently assessed, are recognised as an "Investor in People". Support with implementing and maintaining the Standard is provided through a combination of Business Link Advisers for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Learning and Skills Council staff and associated consultants – all of whom are licensed against national criteria through the North West Quality Centre. Assistance with diagnosis, action planning, preparation for assessment, and post-recognition support will continue to be provided through a mixture of direct individual consultation, sector specific programmes, access to networks and various toolkits and materials.

Work-Life Balance (WLB)

Increasingly employers are recognising that it makes good business sense to provide opportunities for their workforce to achieve a better work-life balance; recruitment, retention, customer service, return on investment in training, a more diverse workforce, reduced absence, improved productivity, improved morale and commitment along with flexibility, innovation and creativity are all possible outcomes. Therefore, as there is much synergy with the Investors in People standard and other strong links to the key tasks of the LSC, the principles of applying the framework for WLB established with support from the Department for Trade Industry (DTI), will be explored. A pilot programme will be developed in 2002 involving a group of liP recognised organisations to implement the framework whilst adding value to the liP process through a joint assessment.

Producing a Management Development Strategy

Management development and leadership skills are a recurrent need from many areas, The National Skills Task Force, NTOs and the Centre for Excellence in Management and Leadership (CEML) are examples of employer-led bodies who have all expressed a priority to put in place resources and mechanisms to:

“ensure that the UK is able to develop the managers and leaders of the future to match the best in the world”.

Therefore, in Cumbria, a dedicated Management Development Strategy will be produced to meet current and future management and leadership needs. It will adopt the focus of CEML in that it will aim to address:

“the gaps and barriers which inhibit the development of more and better managers and leaders at all levels in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It will look at the provision of business education, its take-up and its relevance to managing in the workplace and pay particular attention to large corporates, SMEs and to the professions”.

A working group set up to provide input from partner organisations including professional institutes, employer bodies and providers, to determine that which is currently in place or available was established in 2001. Through a process of research and gap analysis, a draft countywide Management Development Strategy has been produced and will be available from April 2002 for consultation. The PIU report mentioned previously, recommends a national management strategy produced by CEML. The draft countywide Management Development Strategy will be adjusted where appropriate to reflect this as it emerges during 2002.

European-Funded Projects

Where appropriate, Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will seek to access European funding to support its activities and those of partners, for example, Business Link. There are currently three skills related projects in place, which have a life span until July 2002. They cover lower and higher level skill needs for employers and technical upskilling for the unemployed. Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's status as a 'co-financing organisation' will enable other such projects to be established to meet local need, supplement and complement existing funding to give an overall enhanced value of service to individuals and employers.

Fostering collaboration between providers

The resources within the Cumbrian further education colleges have significant potential to contribute to address skills needs. The colleges can play a vital role in servicing the learning needs of employers in their local area, and, with the NWDA, are also involved in the development and implementation of regional skills strategies designed to respond to employers' needs to meet skills shortages and raise the skills levels of the workforce. However, it is widely recognised that more needs to be done and that through effective collaboration, greater impact will be made and more positive outputs achieved. Therefore, a County-wide approach from the four colleges will be co-ordinated through a partnership of college Business Development Managers, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria Learning and Skills Council and the SBS. Links will also be established to a similar group established by the higher education institutions to facilitate comprehensive coverage and avoid duplication.

Fostering collaboration between further education providers and other providers

Building on the approach above, a County-wide portfolio of provision will be produced which will aim to give a comprehensive view of opportunities available for employers from the further education sector and other private or independent training providers. Any unnecessary duplication will be discouraged and any gaps identified addressed in the most efficient manner between the cohort of local provision.

Supporting Trades Union Congress (TUC) Learning Services

Two TUC Learning Services project workers covering the County are supported by Cumbria Learning and Skills Council. Their main role is to support Union Learning Representatives and help them access the training, information and resources they will need to carry out their role effectively. They also provide briefings, information and advice on most issues that affect the workplace for Trade Union members including: basic skills, key skills, NVQs, liP and setting up learning centres.

Delivering other Workforce Development

Whilst the above represents a focus on identified activity, a priority will be to address the specific needs of employers and individuals. Employers will be encouraged and supported in designing and implementing structured approaches to improving their business performance through the development of people. This may be done in many ways and support for outcomes sought where possible from within Learning and Skills Council resources or partnership activity. Training needs analysis, specific project-related programmes and customised development packages are examples of that which may be available either directly from Cumbria Learning and Skills Council or in conjunction with partners for example, Business Link, colleges, higher education institutions, private providers, JobCentre Plus and many others. Networking and the sharing of good practice will be encouraged through employer groups in partnership with support agencies, providers and professional bodies for example, Business Link. The opportunity to develop and establish employee development schemes will be explored – where appropriate these will be encouraged to facilitate Learndirect provision and offer support to others outside the workplace including employees' families and the local community.

Promoting the Benefits of Learning and Skills Development

All of the above activity will be promoted through mechanisms which will raise the profile of learning, enable employers to be aware of its benefits and encourage them to access the most appropriate provision. High quality support, promotional materials and case studies highlighting good practice will be produced and achievement and success will be celebrated. Roadshows around the County will take place annually demonstrating availability of support and application of workforce development. Particularly during "National Investors in People Week" held annually in October, a series of workshops, seminars and presentations will be co-ordinated by the Council and our partners – information, advice and recognition of exemplar organisations will be featured around the County and culminate in the launch of the annual "Excellence in Cumbria Awards". These awards will also lead into the National Training Awards about which information and workshops will be made available to Cumbrian employers. NTOs will be engaged on a local basis to help employers with their specific sectoral needs. They will assist in promotion by using their resources and participate in local awareness raising activity with

our partners. Wherever possible maximum coverage will be sought in the media and other publicly available material to celebrate success, good practice and positive achievements from the application of workforce development in employers.

Targets 3 and 4:

Raise achievement of young people and adults

The Learning and Skills Council's vision is that, by 2010, young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world. It is Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's aim to ensure that this vision is turned into a reality at a local level. We are currently engaged in mapping provision and attainment by different levels as a first step to improve our ability to meet skill and industry needs.

National targets for young people and adults are set out below and over the coming months Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will establish baselines and consult with all partners and key stakeholders on targets for Cumbria.

| | | National | Cumbria |
|--------------|--------------|--|----------------------------|
| Young People | Level 2 | 85% by age 19 (75% in 2000) | 355 additional achievers |
| | Level 3 | 55% by age 19 (51% in 2000) | 289 additional achievers |
| Adults | Basic Skills | raise literacy and Numeracy skills of 750,000 adults | 6,422 additional achievers |
| | Level 2 | Set baselines and targets in next year's plan | |
| | Level 3 | 52% of adults (47% in 2000) | 11,088 more adults |

Key Aims

- Promote and secure learning opportunities that are flexible, responsive and efficient.** In the past, education and training courses and qualifications have proliferated to the extent that it has been sometimes difficult for learners and employers to select provision that best meets their needs. Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will be responsible for implementing work being undertaken at a national level with the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to rationalise the number of courses on offer and to identify, with NTOs, areas of education and training not covered by accredited qualifications. By analysing the needs of learners and employers and by working with our providers to develop their curriculum offer, we will ensure that the range of available provision is appropriate to individual and local needs.
- Promote and support retention and achievement.** Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will work with key partners to ensure that all people who access post-16 education and training receive the appropriate information, advice and guidance. We believe that this is fundamental in improving retention and increasing the likelihood of learners achieving

their qualification/course aim. We will use our resources firstly to attract potential learners and then to support them throughout their learning experience and we will work with providers to develop effective strategies for retention and achievement, making use of the Councils Standards Fund where appropriate.

- 3 Advocate and foster progression through the qualifications framework.** We will strive to facilitate learner progression, so that all individuals can turn their aspirations and potential into reality. To do this, we will encourage the providers we fund to identify and map progression routes from pre-entry and entry levels to level 3, and to share these across the County. In this way, learners at all levels will become more aware of the choices available to them on completion of their learning programme. Whilst we have identified a particular need for adult progression to level 3, and have mechanisms to tackle this, we must ensure that all people receive support to help them progress on to the next level in their learning journey. We must also ensure a better transition and more transparent progression routes for year 11 school leavers.
- 4. Encourage a lifelong learning culture within local communities.** We will encourage a demand for learning among all age-groups in Cumbria by ensuring that a wide range of varied learning opportunities are funded both directly by the Council and/or indirectly through our partners. This will be crucial if we are to achieve our central goal of, 'a learning society in which everyone can share in the benefits of learning, enabling people to discover new talents, stretching their creativity and widening their opportunities'.

Delivery

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will undertake the activities identified below in order to achieve these key aims. Success will depend in forging and maintaining good working relationships with our providers and other key partners.

Work with Connexions Cumbria and support the Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership.

In Cumbria the Learning and Skills Council has established a partnership agreement with Connexions Cumbria to ensure that young people are informed of all the opportunities available to them. We will share with Connexions Cumbria information on the programmes currently on offer, the achievement of young people and how this relates to likely job opportunities and relevant labour market information. Connexions Cumbria will provide information on the needs and aspirations of young people and also destinations and tracking data. This will help us shape the volume and range of learning opportunities we fund.

We will also support and promote the Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership in all aspects of its work, so that potential adult learners are fully aware of the learning opportunities available. At the same time we will strongly encourage providers to expand the range of learning opportunities they provide.

Our partnership with both Connexions Cumbria and the Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership, will mean that, over time, all people in Cumbria will have access to the most up to date and relevant information, advice and guidance they need to make important decisions about their future.

Responding to the National Strategy for Adult Basic Skills

It is estimated that as many as one in five of the adult population experiences some difficulty with the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and/or ESOL. The Learning and Skills Council at national level and in Cumbria, has a key role in reducing this figure in line with the Government's targets, that by 2002 an additional 500,000 adults nationally will be involved in provision to improve their skills and that by 2004 the number of adults experiencing difficulties in this area will be reduced by 750,000 nationally.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council has developed a Basic Skills Action Plan. This sets out the ways in which, working with partners and through the providers we fund, we will contribute proactively to the National Strategy for Adult Basic Skills to be launched from autumn 2001. Using data derived from a variety of sources, targets for increased participation and achievement will be set and closely monitored. The new national standards for literacy and numeracy will provide a mechanism for such monitoring. We will work closely with the local Learning Partnership, the newly appointed basic skills co-ordinator for Cumbria and the regional co-ordinator of the national Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit in DfES. A key focus of our early work will be to build the capacity of existing and new providers (including the voluntary sector) to deliver the innovative programmes that will be necessary to reach those most in need.

We will build on the developmental work funded by the seven Basic Skills in Local Communities projects from April to October 2001 and work already in progress via the Basic Skills Quality Initiative (BSQI) in further, adult and higher education providers in Cumbria.

Supporting the establishment of the Centre of Vocational Excellence initiative

The CoVE initiative, announced by the Government in November 2000, aims to improve vocational skills by encouraging further education colleges to enhance the quality, flexibility and responsiveness of their specialist vocational provision by working in close partnership with local employers and other business interests and communities.

The first 16 CoVEs were announced in July 2001 and the Learning and Skills Council is committed to supporting other further education colleges to achieve CoVE status. It is anticipated that by 2003/04, half of all colleges in the country will have developed at least one such centre.

In Cumbria we will build on the regional seminars organised by the national Learning and Skills Council in October 2001. We will actively support our providers to develop their plans for achieving CoVE status. These discussions are already under way and we have set in place a programme of support to encourage these providers to make rapid and successful progress.

Level 2

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council has produced an action plan to enhance individuals' qualifications and skills to level 2. The aims of this are to increase the numbers of young people aged 19 in 2002, who successfully acquire level 2 qualifications to meet our local target, make a local contribution to the national target for level 2 and thereby ensure that more young people have the potential to progress onto a level 3 qualification.

We have received specific resources, of almost £0.5 million to progress this work. A

number of local coordinators have been appointed. They are developing local action plans and employing a range of strategies to encourage young people to achieve at level 2.

We also fully support the development of the vocational curriculum, with schools having the ability to offer GCSEs in vocational areas. This should be a huge benefit to learners who leave school and progress on to work-based learning or other vocational study. In addition, we are supporting the development of the four 14-16 Increasing Flexibility projects in Cumbria that have successfully submitted bids for 2002-04.

Level 3

Achievement at level 2 forms the foundation for further achievement at level 3. We will work in collaboration with Connexions Cumbria and providers to ensure that individuals who achieve level 2 qualifications receive advice and guidance to access appropriate education and training and then receive support whilst on level 3 programmes.

We will also work to undertake further research to identify how to best raise skills and qualifications at level 3. We will work with providers to ensure that there are varied level 3 opportunities available and that these can be accessed in different modes of study, including the use of ICT. We also aim to address the specific needs of adults who undertake level 3 programmes and to identify support that will encourage successful achievement for this group.

Lifelong Learning

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is in full support of the development of a culture of lifelong learning ie. That learning is lifelong and is essential to the continuous development of our people/community and to the economic prosperity of our area/nation.

We will work with the LEA, Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funded initiatives (such as CREDITS) and voluntary agencies (such as the National Association for the Resettlement of Offenders and the Workers Educational Association) to develop a flexible and responsive County-wide programme of learning opportunities for adults that will:

- > Actively engage local people and communities to promote relevant learning and encourage wider participation.
- > Organise learning in a way that is flexible and which promotes access by addressing the different needs, activities and aptitudes amongst the local population.
- > Develop new partnerships to deliver learning opportunities, pooling resources and expertise.
- > Ensure that opportunities for progression to more advanced levels of learning are in place.
- > Continue to raise the quality of teaching and learning.
- > Provide opportunities for adults to learn for pleasure throughout their lives.

In developing opportunities for adult and community learning we will wish to fully exploit the potential for e-learning and ICT.

Target 5:

Raise quality of education and training and user satisfaction

The Learning and Skills Council has a clear remit to raise standards in funded providers to ensure that the learning experiences of young people and adults meet their aspirations. In Cumbria, we will work in conjunction with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED), to support providers in improving the quality of education and training opportunities that are available.

National targets for raising the quality of provision have yet to be set and therefore local targets will follow when this Strategic Plan is rolled forward to 2006.

Key Aims

- 1 Improve the quality of all provision funded by the Council.** To achieve Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's vision of Cumbria as a Learning County 'a great place to grow individuals and businesses' a detailed strategy to raise the quality of the education and training available to learners and potential learners of all ages, will be developed and implemented over the period of the plan. The extension of the Standards Fund to include work-based learning providers will accelerate improvements across the County. In working to ensure that the quality of the learning that we fund is steadily and systematically improved, our focus will be on learners' experiences. Our aim will be to ensure rapid improvement where provision is poor and that significant improvements are also made in provision that occupies the middle ground between that which is outstanding and that which is poor.
- 2 Ensure that standards and the achievement of learners continue to rise.** A top priority for Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is to raise standards while continuing to widen participation. It is clear that, although some improvement has been made in rates of learner achievement, there is room for much more to be done. We aim, by ensuring that the needs of individuals are identified and appropriately met, to raise levels of attainment and satisfaction among those who use the services that we fund. We will take full account of policies and processes developed by the national Learning and Skills Council and refine our own in order to progress Government policy for the reform of post-16 learning in Cumbria and to respond locally to national priorities such as the Skills for Life Strategy.

With regard to young people, in taking forward the objectives outlined in the statement published jointly by the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council and the LEA, **Learning (14-19) in Cumbria** we will place particular emphasis on raising participation and attainment levels.

Underpinning these aims is our determination to find innovative ways to promote equality of opportunity by widening and increasing participation, eliminating discrimination, ensuring that learning becomes more inclusive and promoting diversity. We intend to develop in Cumbria a learning society in which everyone has the opportunity to go as far as their talents and efforts will take them, is encouraged back into learning and is appropriately supported in doing so, wherever and however individuals choose to learn.

Delivery

In order to achieve this target we will need both to build on existing partnerships and to forge new ones. Our success will depend on our ability to work collaboratively and creatively with colleagues within the Learning and Skills Council, in partner agencies such as the ALI and the OfSTED and with a range of organisations, agencies and providers in Cumbria.

Working in partnership with providers to raise the quality of learning and attainment

Existing providers

Our relationship with Cumbrian providers of education and training will be ongoing and developmental. We will work with our existing providers over an annual cycle of activity. This will include supporting their annual self-assessment process and production of development plans, the planning of provision to meet identified needs, the funding of a range of learning opportunities and our evaluation of this provision against our key objectives. We will ensure that Standards Funds are effectively deployed to support systematic and speedy improvements in the quality of learners' experiences and we will aim, over time, to contract only with providers who can deliver provision that is not only satisfactory but of high quality.

We will encourage providers to build their capacity to respond rapidly and flexibly to emerging needs. We will work with them to ensure that maximum use is made of any available initiative funding in order to meet the needs of existing and potential learners more effectively and we will deploy our LIF to this end. Our success in achieving co-financing status will enable us to support a wider range of learning opportunities that will combat disadvantage and promote social inclusion by enabling those who have benefited least from education to achieve and progress.

As required by the Learning and Skills Act 2000, we will pay particular regard to the needs of Cumbrian young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There will be two linked elements to our strategy in this area. We will contribute actively to the LEA's review of post-16 provision and take forward the outcomes of this review in relation to the providers that we fund. We will also work energetically with providers to encourage them to develop more customised programmes and support arrangements to meet the needs of individual learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and thus to improve their achievements and their progression on to employment, further learning or other appropriate provision. Support for the development of annual Disability Statements by all providers and analysis of the impact of these on the development of provision will be a key part of this process.

In working with the specialist residential colleges where we fund individual placements for young people, we will require that closer attention is paid to the quality and relevance of learning programmes and their outcomes for individuals' future life plans. We will also require that progression routes for all young people who we fund at these colleges are planned, recorded and reported to us each year.

New Providers

In seeking to raise the quality of learning opportunities available in Cumbria, we intend over time to develop relationships with new providers who:

- > Can offer high quality learning programmes that meet identified need.
- > Complement other funded provision.
- > Are able to meet our criteria for funding.

We will support potential new providers in the process of developing any necessary systems, in applying for Council funding and, over time, in systematically improving the quality of the provision that they offer.

Collaboration between providers of further education

An important strand of our strategy to raise standards will be to work closely with the director of the Cumbrian Colleges' Collaboration Project. This project is funded jointly by the Learning and Skills Council's rationalisation fund, Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's LIF, the four further education colleges the sixth form college the two higher education institutions that provide further education, for twelve months from September 2001 in the first instance. The aim of the project is to accelerate improvement in the capacity and performance of participating providers via strongly supported collaborative activity in targeted areas. We will encourage colleges to combine their forces wherever we believe that this will lead to the raising of standards of teaching and learning, levels of attainment and the enhancement of progression opportunities.

The CoVE initiative provides one such opportunity and we will both encourage a Cumbria-wide approach to development and support individual colleges as they make progress towards CoVE status.

A strategy for systematic quality improvement

There is much to be done if we are to secure rapid and measurable improvements in the quality of the learning available in Cumbria. We will achieve this in a number of linked ways.

Supporting the inspection process

We will use every opportunity to collaborate with the ALI and OfSTED as they jointly work within the Common Inspection Framework to make judgements and report on the quality of the experience of learners attending Council-funded providers. We will maintain and foster regular links with both inspectorates via the inspectors assigned to work with and support Cumbria Learning and Skills Council. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the inspection process in Cumbria by the provision of information, advice, the analysis of data and other expertise as outlined in the Concordat between the Learning and Skills Council, OfSTED, the ALI and JobCentre Plus. We will give regard to inspection findings in reaching decisions on contracting with providers.

We will support providers in the production of post-inspection action plans and evaluate these so that Standards Funds are used as efficiently and effectively as possible to secure necessary improvements. We may wish to draw on the advice of the Quality and Standards directorate of the national office where serious weaknesses are identified. We will regularly monitor the implementation of these plans to ensure that improvements are made as rapidly as possible and we will measure the impact of these improvements on learner satisfaction rates.

Our local asset management plan (see page 29, final bullet point, for further details) will provide a vital lever to enable further improvements to be made.

Where good practice in improving quality is identified by the inspection process, we will encourage providers to disseminate this within Cumbria and further afield. Where appropriate we will seek to contribute to research and dissemination activities coordinated by the Quality Improvement Research and Good Practice team within the Quality and Standards Directorate of the Learning and Skills Council.

Performance Review

The regular reviewing of the performance of providers will be a key element in our strategy for promoting continuous improvement and raising standards. Performance Review takes place twice a year and will bring together evidence gathered by teams from across the Council. On the basis of this evidence judgements will be made in respect of a number of key areas which include the quality of provision, leadership and management, financial assurance, data management, equality of opportunity, health and safety and continuous improvement. Close attention will be paid to levels of recruitment, retention and achievement as elements of performance against target.

Providers will be categorised by level of performance and where concerns are identified we will agree an action plan with the provider and offer support to implement it. Where major concerns are identified, we will work closely with the national office's Provider Review Board and we will welcome the support of the national Quality Improvement and Intervention team.

The Standards Fund

The Standards Fund enables the Learning and Skills Council to provide financial support for providers to improve quality and thus raise standards of achievement. The Standards Fund includes various categories for funding for eligible providers. Those categories which provide opportunities for professional development are managed from the national office, while those which are concerned with provider improvement and the dissemination of good practice require the submission of costed action plans to the local Council. Substantial funds are available to Cumbria through the Standards Fund, and we are determined that they will work to make significant progress across the county within the medium-term.

We will work with our providers to ensure that the action plans for which we are responsible contain strategies likely to effect the necessary improvements and represent good value for money. We will agree such plans and monitor and review them with providers on a regular basis. We will be concerned that the various strands of funding available in this way complement each other and that funded activity across all eligible providers in Cumbria is used to best effect to support a coherent improvement strategy.

Audit

All providers/programmes/processes will be subject to local audit processes within a national audit framework. The local Provider Financial Assurance (PFA) function will provide, within their plan, reviews of the above. The function is shared with auditors who have prior experience of auditing education and training programmes. The audit plan will be based on risk and materiality analysis.

The Executive Director of Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will produce a statement of internal control about the effectiveness of local internal controls and this opinion will be based, to a large extent, on the level of assurance provided by the PFA function. In addition, Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's internal processes and controls will be reviewed on a regular basis by a national team of internal auditors based in Coventry. The processes and controls of the Learning and Skills Council, nationally, will be reviewed by the National Audit Office (NAO) and this process will include visits to review local processes and controls. The Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will review the process for identifying, evaluating and managing the significant risks faced over the strategic period.

Learner Health and Safety

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will integrate health and safety legislation and best practice into all activities. The National Council's Health and Safety Mission is:

'To seek to influence and promote health and safety good practice across all LSC activities'.

For Cumbria, this will be at the forefront of all contractual and partnership arrangements and will be achieved by the introduction of suitable and sufficient key stages of health and safety training focussing on raising quality standards to meet individual learner needs, irrespective of training or educational route.

Best endeavour will be used to ensure that learners in Cumbria can achieve their aims within a safe and supportive working environment, characterised by well-motivated, competent supervision and making full use of sound health and safety management methodology.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will act as a support mechanism, becoming a catalyst for change and continuous improvement through the sharing of good practice and dissemination of information throughout the provider network. There will be an emphasis on accident reporting and reduction, based on the Health and Safety Executive report '**Revitalising Health and Safety**'. Statistical analysis will identify trends that will become the focus for improvement.

It is understood that the provider has the primary duty of care for learner health and safety. The 'safe worker' concept will be targeted through adherence to the 'provider good practice guide' that sets the benchmark to which providers must aspire. Demonstrations of appropriate levels of duty of care will be expected from those at the forefront of learner activity.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will work in partnership with the Local Education Authority and government bodies, including the Health and Safety Executive, to facilitate the introduction of 'risk education' at all levels.

There is a strategic commitment that as part of raising standards and promoting continuous improvement, health and safety will be fully integrated into Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's processes and procedures, with regard to new contacts and re-contracting. We view health and safety as playing a vitally important and pro-active role in self-assessment, action planning and the performance review process, to promote the 'safe learner' concept.

The health and safety team within Cumbria Learning and Skills Council prioritises resources by paying minimal attention to providers who have proven low risk organisational status and placing more emphasis with those who are encountering health and safety problems.

Accident statistics are produced on a quarterly basis and publicised to the executive team. Yearly statistics and an analysis report will be presented to our Council. Partnership arrangements, set up with the Health and Safety Executive in the North West region, aim to be pro-active regarding '**Revitalising Health and Safety**'. A key area in this initiative is reducing the high degree of accidents attributed to 'slips, trips and falls', which Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will be taking forward through its provider and employer networks.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council recognises that the supervision of learners is of paramount importance in providing support for the learner in the workplace. The supervisor is a crucial element when ensuring the learner is working and training in a safe environment. To this end, Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will take on board the 'Supervision Initiative' produced by DfES, when published.

Strategic local objectives regarding ensuring competence of training provider staff have been addressed by Cumbria Learning and Skills Council health and safety team, facilitating the setting up of a training provider consortium, who will provide training for provider staff, NVQ units covering managing placement employers, accident investigation and basic health and safety awareness. A proposal is being drawn up by a lead partner in the consortium to support this activity from our Local Initiative Fund.

Health and Safety of Learning and Skills Council employees

The national Health and Safety Policy is currently being consulted on with local Council staff. The health and safety team are in the process of formulating local appendices against all the national policies as and when they are produced.

Risk assessments are carried out on an annual basis by the health and safety team. Team leaders sign them off for implementation if required. A quarterly review process is to be introduced to monitor performance of health and safety issues.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council considers the welfare of staff to be of paramount importance regarding their performance towards meeting their objectives and those of the Learning and Skills Council.

> Chapter 5: Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity

Introduction

It is now a statutory requirement of the Learning and Skills Council that it provides for equality of opportunity. The Government expects the Council to create:

“A learning society - a society in which everyone can share in the benefits of learning, enabling people to discover new talents, stretching their creativity and widening their opportunities”

The statutory duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- > People from different racial groups.
- > Men and women.
- > People with a disability and people without.

It is also a responsibility to report annually through the national office to the Secretary of State on:

- > The equality arrangements made during the preceding year.
- > How effective the equality arrangements were.
- > Equality plans for the following year.

Meeting the diverse needs of individual learners and becoming a model employer are the two cornerstones of the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's equality and diversity policy.

Law and Regulation

The Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act 2001 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 will require public sector bodies to prepare equality schemes (action plans). The Human Rights Act 2000 also has significant implications in the learning context. The Learning and Skills Council will meet all regulatory and legal requirements and wishes to be proactive in setting the standard and agenda for accessible high quality education and training.

The Mission

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's vision is therefore to become a Learning County – a great place to grow individuals and businesses – so that, by 2010, young people and adults will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world.

Our mission therefore is to raise participation and attainment through high quality education and training, which puts learners first.

If this vision is to be fulfilled we need to ensure that Cumbria is a place:

- > Free from discrimination and prejudice.
- > Where all learners are encouraged to reach their full potential.
- > Where everyone can share in the benefits of learning.

The Commitment

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council aims to give everyone the chance, through education, training and work, to realise their full potential and thus build an inclusive and fair society and a competitive economy. We are committed to:

- > Making learning more inclusive.
- > Widening participation.
- > Identifying and helping stamp out unlawful discrimination.
- > Promoting equality of opportunity for all learners.
- > Recognising and celebrating diversity.

Equality and diversity will be mainstreamed and integrated into all aspects of the Council's work. The strategic objectives for equality and diversity have been integrated into the local strategic plan and include not only those issues relating to inequality in race, gender and disability but also those of ageism, geographical isolation, rurality, social inclusion, deprivation and those groups facing multiple disadvantages.

We have established an Equality and Diversity Advisory Committee to support us in our work in driving the equality and diversity agenda throughout Cumbria. The membership of the committee is drawn from a variety of agencies and organisations representative from across Cumbria and a member of the local Council chairs it.

The Challenges

Cumbria presents a challenging and exciting remit. The geographical size and rural nature of Cumbria means that particular parts of the County are comparatively isolated and sparsely populated. There are urban centres primarily around Carlisle, Barrow, and in West Cumbria. One of the first challenges will be to understand the local communities that make up Cumbria and identify where key equality gaps exist. We will consult and work with a variety of agencies, organisations and community groups to identify those gaps and develop appropriate strategies for improvement. It is our objective to make learning more inclusive, to widen participation and promote equality of opportunity for all learners and potential learners.

People from different racial groups

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 strengthened the Race Relations Act 1976 by making race discrimination unlawful in the carrying out of public authority functions, and by placing a duty on public authorities to promote racial equality. The Lawrence report and the Home Secretary's Action Plan place 'institutional racism' high on the policy agenda, both for employment and service delivery. The report's education recommendations apply mainly to schools; however, they can be applied to the post-16 school sector.

Cumbria has approximately 0.5% of its total population from an ethnic minority background; only 0.35% would be described as 'non-white'. This is far less than the regional and national average. It is likely that the proportion will increase over the next decade, more in line with regional and national proportions. It is vital that we consider the needs of people from these communities and we will actively promote cultural diversity and anti-racism in all our work to better reflect the needs of a diverse society. Evidence collated for the Learning and Skills Council Induction Event January 2001 showed that:

- > 16-35 year olds from minorities are nearly twice as likely to remain unemployed than their white counterparts.
- > Among youth trainees, young people from ethnic minority groups are less likely to obtain qualifications and jobs after they complete their training.

We will encourage providers and employers to adopt standards that uphold the principles of fairness and challenge unfair discrimination. We will actively endorse the wider benefits of embracing diversity and advise employers in Cumbria of the negative impact discrimination can have upon business performance.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will work with JobCentre Plus, Connexions, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Constabulary, voluntary bodies and the wider community as a whole to develop a cohesive strategy within the County.

Men and women

Although there have been improvements in recent years, sex stereotyping remains evident in many professional occupations.

Key gender trends in Cumbria include:

- > 12.5% of women employees work in manufacturing compared with 31.9% of male employees.
- > 34.8% of women employees work in public administration, education and health compared with 11.5% of male employees.
- > 1.3% of women employees work in construction compared with 8.1% of male employees.

Interestingly, 19.1% of the workforce in Cumbria are self-employed males, which is significantly greater than the national average of 14.8%. We believe that this can be partly attributed to the high proportion of self-employment in agriculture and construction sectors, which form a higher proportion of employment in Cumbria than the national trend. Conversely, only 5.2% of the workforce who are female are self-employed, which is less than the national average of 6.8%. An initial survey also indicates that there are six times as many men as women in top management positions in the County, and almost twice as many men in the second tier of senior management.

This heavy occupational segregation by gender and the apparent under-representation of women at both top and second tier management that has been identified has an impact both on the economy and on individual economic prosperity. In Cumbria, 6% of women

are qualified to degree level or equivalent compared with 13% of males and women are more likely to have no qualifications than males, by seven percentage points (LFS 2000).

In response to these statistics, we have set up a working party to examine factors, which may be disadvantaging women in Cumbria and to consider ways in which gender issues can be progressed within a reasonable timescale in the County. The group has identified three issues, which they believe are of key concern:

- 1 The low percentage of women in senior roles/public office in the County.
- 2 The low aspirations of a number of girls in some areas of the County.
- 3 The above average teenage pregnancy rate in some areas of the County.

Three sub-committees have been formed to examine these concerns and develop strategies for raising awareness and innovative ways of beginning to address the issues.

Manufacturing Decline in Cumbria

| | Cumbria | Great Britain |
|---------------|---------|---------------|
| Manufacturing | 19.1% | 15.5% |
| Construction | 8.6% | 7.2% |
| Services | 67.7% | 73.6% |
| Primary | 4.6% | 2.7% |

Table 3 Source: LFS (2001)

Areas that are reliant on manufacturing, such as Cumbria, are not expected to see overall employment growth in the near future. Pressure on manufacturing to shed labour will continue, due to both the application of labour saving technology and increased competition.

The unemployment rate for Cumbria was 3.2% of the workforce, the same as the national rate and 0.6% below the North West. However there are specific wards in Cumbria within the districts of Allerdale, Barrow, Carlisle and Copeland where the unemployment rate ranges from 4.9% - 13.2%. 75% of the claimants are male.

Trends in the economy mean that those in employment and those seeking to enter the labour market will need to keep their skills up to date. This will be a continuous process and will require the development of a culture of lifelong learning across all sectors of the population.

We believe that particular efforts must be directed at men who are economically inactive and to developing strategies to support boys, from 14 years old onwards, to encourage them to achieve their full potential.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will work with employers, JobCentre Plus, Connexions, voluntary bodies and the wider community as a whole to promote the benefits of learning in the County. Only through developing a lifelong learning culture will we manage to persuade all sectors of the population to engage and re-engage in learning.

Teenage pregnancy

Barrow in Furness has a pregnancy rate amongst 13-15 year olds which is at least 5% greater than the national average. Eden and South Lakeland both have rates far lower than the national and regional median.

Lone parents

There were 5,862 lone parents in the County in 1991 (Census 1991), with over 5,400 of them being women. 54% of the women were economically inactive, as opposed to 26% of the men. The Cumbria household survey 2000 reveals the following two reasons why unemployed respondents were prevented from working.

| | Male | Female |
|-------------------------------|------|--------|
| Childcare responsibilities | 3.3% | 40.5% |
| Other family responsibilities | 3.6% | 13.8% |

Table 4

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will work with JobCentre Plus, Connexions, Cumbria County Council, voluntary bodies, and the wider community as a whole to encourage lone parents to participate in learning. The lack of affordable childcare appears to be the most common barrier preventing lone parents from taking up part or full time opportunities.

People with a disability including people with a learning difficulty

Based on the 1991 Census of Population data, approximately 12% of the total population of Cumbria considered they had a limiting long-term disability. Cumbria Learning and Skills Council aims to work towards the elimination of inequality in learning participation and achievement. In terms of learning difficulty and/or disability our objectives are:

- > To improve access to learning opportunities for people with a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- > To improve participation of people with a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- > To improve retention and achievement of people with a learning difficulty and/or disability.

We have developed a joint County Council, Connexions Cumbria and Cumbria Learning and Skills Council policy statement on inclusive learning and a cross-County group has been formed to advise on the development of a County strategy for supporting young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability in Cumbria.

We are particularly keen to provide individualised learning programmes for students/trainees with a learning difficulty and/or disability and in partnership with Connexions, we have begun to support the development of some individualised programmes. The indications are that this type of programme is very successful in

providing the student with a meaningful educational experience. Therefore, we intend to grow this provision and provide more opportunities for young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability to take advantage of this type of learning programme. We will work in partnership with organisations involved with supported employment to ensure that there are ongoing routes for those with people with a learning difficulty and/or disability.

We are conscious of the requirements on providers of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 amendments and will consider plans from colleges in the subsequent allocations process. We have provided some awareness-raising seminars on the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act and have asked all our providers to produce disability statements, having provided the training to support them with this requirement.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is dedicated to its work with people with a learning difficulty and/or disability and we will actively work with our providers to effect change. We will offer information, advice, and guidance to them on improving access to their learning opportunities and we will encourage providers to set realistic and challenging targets for the achievement of people with a learning difficulty and/or disability in line with those clients without a learning difficulty and/or disability. Providers will also be encouraged to find supportive employer placements for learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability.

Section 13 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 places duties on the Council to fund residential placements for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, aged 16-25 at specialist colleges. We will endeavour to ensure that all placements of this nature are monitored and reviewed through our placement process and our learning difficulty and disability advisor will ensure that the placement is appropriate to the needs of the individual learner. Cumbria has one specialist college that receives funding for learners from the Learning and Skills Council.

People with low basic skills or no qualifications

Based on data from the Basic Skills Agency (2000) all local authority districts in Cumbria have at least 20% of the working age population (16-60) with poor basic skills of literacy and numeracy. We consider lack of basic skills to relate directly to the equality and diversity agenda and are working alongside the Learning Partnership to develop an Adult Basic Skills Action Plan in response to the Government's '**Skills for Life**' national strategy.

A cross-County stakeholder group has been formed to share practice, advise and monitor actions towards the implementation and achievement of the plan. The plan identifies a need for considerable capacity-building if Cumbria is to meet the targets for improved literacy and numeracy which we have accepted. We have assigned a widening participation manager to co-ordinate all activities related to the basic skills strategy.

Rural isolation

Over the past 50 years, the resident population in Cumbria has shown slow growth. Consequently, Cumbria remains one of the most sparsely populated counties in England with an average of 72 people per square kilometre (UK average is 244 people per square kilometre). We are well aware that, because of the geographical size and rural nature of Cumbria, transport is an issue and is exacerbated by the topography of the County which makes access to learning facilities more difficult.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will try to combat rural isolation in the County by actively encouraging the use of Information Communication Technologies to provide access to the widely distributed geographical population. We will also work with providers to encourage them to promote and provide learning opportunities that promote the inclusion of the more isolated communities.

Social Inclusion

The index of deprivation 2000 is the most comprehensive source of ward level information that is comparable across England. In total, there are 168 wards in Cumbria with rank of multiple deprivations ranging from 84th to 8134th. Barrow in Furness has six wards (from a total of 13) in the 20 most deprived areas in Cumbria. Nevertheless, areas in Allerdale and Copeland also suffer considerable social deprivation. The measure of multiple deprivation takes into account a number of different indicators that provide information about the quality of life of local people.

There is a strong correlation between the overall rank of deprivation and the rank of education. The education measure takes into account:

- > Working age adults with no qualifications.
- > Young people aged 16 and over who have successfully applied for higher education.
- > Key stage 2 primary school performance data.
- > Primary school children with English as an additional language.
- > Absenteeism at primary level.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will work with JobCentre Plus, Connexions, the local Council, voluntary bodies and the wider community as a whole to encourage participation in learning from people living and working in areas ranked high on the index of deprivation.

Age Diversity

Age discrimination issues are complex and the Government intends to introduce age legislation on a longer timetable than other legislation. It is the intention to implement the age provisions of the Employment Directive before the end of 2006. However, the population in Cumbria is ageing – 20.8% of the inhabitants of Cumbria are retired compared to 18.2% nationally.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will work towards the elimination of inequality in learning participation and achievement in terms of age. We intend to increase promotional activities to change attitudes to age in the workplace and to challenge age discrimination and unthinking prejudice.

Young People Leaving Care

Nationally, 70% of those leaving care at 16+ had no qualifications and only 14% of those leaving care had five or more GCSEs graded A* - C (or equivalent), compared to a national average of nearly 50%. In later life, young people and adults who were in care are more likely to be socially excluded than those from almost any other background. Research indicates that between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been looked after by local authorities as children. Children who have been in care are two and a half

times more likely to become teenage parents. Young people who have been in care disproportionately likely to become unemployed and are disproportionately likely to end up in prison (26% of prisoners have been in care as children, compared with just 2% of the total population).

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will liaise with Cumbria County Council, Connexions, Social Services and the Health Authority to formulate a strategy and action plan as to how we can best use our resources to assist in tackling this issue in the County

Ex-offenders

Reliable data on the number and need of ex-offenders in Cumbria is difficult to obtain. However, based on the information available from the Probation Service (1998) there were approximately 3000 supervised offenders in Cumbria, of whom 72% were classified unemployed – the highest proportion in the North West. Indeed, the North West Regional Development Plan suggests that a typical unemployed offender is likely to:

- > Be long term unemployed (approximately 20% of unemployed people in Allerdale, Copeland, Barrow in Furness, Carlisle and Eden have been unemployed for longer than 12 months).
- > Have little or no work experience.
- > Have functional literacy and numeracy problems (46% and 60% of supervised offenders respectively).
- > Have few or no qualifications.
- > Have poor personal/social skills.

A recent survey of short term and remand prisoners carried out by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) revealed the following statistics regarding ex-offenders:

- > 47% had lost their home.
- > 15% had lost their job.
- > 45% had lost contact with family and friends.
- > 60% had been permanently excluded from school.
- > 29% had gained a qualification at GCSE level.
- > 53% were heavily in debt.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council recognises the diverse needs of this group of people and will work with NACRO, Cumbria Probation Service, Cumbria Constabulary, Connexions and relevant voluntary organisations. It is our intention to gain a better understanding of the skill needs and behavioural problems of young ex-offenders to encourage them to participate in learning.

Sexual Orientation

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council recognises the particular issues experienced by those women and men who are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or because they are transsexuals. We will work with employers, providers, relevant organisations and the wider community towards the elimination of inequality in learning participation and achievement to change attitudes on sexual orientation in the workplace and to challenge discrimination and unthinking prejudice.

Objectives

As a national organisation, the Learning and Skills Council has set four high-level equality objectives, which are the key challenges for equality and diversity and which form the basis for our local action plan included within this equality and diversity strategy.

1 To develop the Council as a champion of equality.

We will promote equality and diversity and establish a range of partnerships, working with key agencies to identify ways of challenging discrimination and stereotyping. As part of our work in promoting equality and diversity, we are supporting providers to implement and integrate equality and diversity in all their work.

Working with Equality North West, we have arranged an initial training session with all providers on equality and diversity as part of an on going programme of development.

2 Embed equality and diversity into all policies, programmes and actions.

We will develop and analyse appropriate data and ensure funding systems promote, support and develop equality of opportunity. We will identify through continuing research stakeholder consultation and customer feedback across all programme areas, key equality issues and barriers to successful participation, and strategies for positive change.

3 To develop the Council as a model equality and diversity employer/organisation.

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council recognises that equality and diversity underpins all the work of the Council and that in order for the Council to discharge its statutory responsibilities every member of staff employed by us needs to understand their responsibility in delivering the equality and diversity remit.

As an employer, we will show clear organisational commitment to equality and diversity, which will be reflected at all, levels within our organisation. We will consult and train staff on the content of our Equality and Diversity Strategy. We will ensure that all policies and procedures are equality proofed and support all who work for Cumbria Learning and Skills Council to become advocates for equality and diversity. All staff have undertaken some equality and diversity training and we intend an on going programme of development to build on this development

4 To report annually to the Secretary of State on progress towards equality.

We will consult with partners on the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy and annual Action Plan and submit a report both to the local and national Council summarising the arrangements made to achieve equality and diversity in our work.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We will ensure appropriate monitoring and evaluation of our Equality and Diversity Strategy by developing a management information system that adequately collects, analyses and informs our provision in relation to equality in participation, retention and achievement. Challenging and realistic targets will be set for the provider infrastructure with clear monitoring and reporting procedures.

Impact Measures

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is aware of the challenges it faces in addressing the equality and diversity agenda in the County. We are conscious that in order to measure the impact of our work we will need to appropriately analyse available data, surveys, targets and link closely with partners, agencies, providers and employers to measure the impact of our work. We will establish baselines in line with national guidelines for equality and diversity impact measures in readiness for the strategic planning process planned for September 2002.

> Chapter Six: Making it happen

Organisation

The Learning and Skills Council is a national organisation which aims to combine the advantages of a national programme and national resourcing with local flexibility and initiative.

The highest statutory form is the National Council, and the local Council has the status of a committee which acts for the Council within Cumbria. Subject to a period of transition, we expect the local Council to have considerable flexibility and opportunity to analyse local challenges and then deploy resources to meet those challenges. The aim is to build an organisational model that will allow central and local priorities to be kept in close alignment, balancing:

- > national leadership and co-ordination; and
- > local knowledge, planning, flexibility and delivery

so that all parts of the organisation are contributing to a cycle of continuous review and improvement of processes.

We have set out in chapter 1 our aspirations for the local Council which will be advised by three committees - a Young People's Learning Committee, an Adult Learning Committee, and an Equality and Diversity Advisory Committee. In addition the local Council has an Audit Committee, which, like the other three Committees, has members external to the Council.

The Young People's Learning Committee will advise on achievement of targets for young people aged 16-21, including strategies for increasing participation and attainment levels. It will work closely with Connexions Cumbria, schools, colleges, the County Council and others.

The Adult Learning Committee will advise the Council on achievement of targets for adults and for organisations (including IIP, where the Council intends to monitor performance particularly closely). This will include widening participation, raising attainment levels and improving basic skills among adults.

The Adult Learning Committee will also advise on skills and workforce development strategy and on relationships with national and regional agencies, sectoral, economic and business bodies and other key partners.

The Executive

The local office, based in Workington, is headed by the Executive Director, Mick Farley. Below the Executive Director, the office is currently (February 2002) organised into three divisions, namely:

- > Workforce Development – headed by Jon Power.
- > Education and Quality Improvement – headed by Lindsay Harford.
- > Finance and Corporate Services – headed by Madeleine Warren.

As the previous chapters of this plan make clear, the local Council has an essential strategic planning role, both locally and regionally and feeding into national policies, as well as responsibility for delivery. It is at the local level that the relationship between learners, employers, training providers and local communities will be developed, budgets deployed and contracts managed.

Defining specific functions of the national and local Councils

As this plan makes clear, the national Council and the local Council share a common vision, objectives and targets, within a single framework for the whole organisation. In many cases the division of functions between the national and local Council is clear, but in some areas there is overlap – sometimes desirable overlap, but carrying with it the risk of confusion, dissent, duplication or omission.

As this new and complex organisation is established, so will national and local accountabilities for specific functions and activities be devised so that our partners and providers and learners understand how best to engage with us – nationally, locally or, on occasion, both. The outcome will be incorporated in the updated national Corporate Plan.

Funding

Budgets

The Learning and Skills Council national office is currently producing more accurate and reliable baseline data on learners, upon which to draft, discuss and set targets for the strategic period.

It is critical that the targets set be realistic in terms of the budget available for the first year and the forecast of funding over the strategic period. We have now received the Secretary of State's grant letter for 2002/03 and await specific confirmation of the allocation for Cumbria.

As an indication of the likely availability of funds for the local Council, the following is the most recent allocation for 2001/02. This incorporates some revisions from the figures published in the Business Plan:

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| > Further Education Participation | £26,820,364 |
| includes the funding of young people (16-18 year olds) and adults (19+ years) participating in further education courses which may be located in further education or higher education establishments. Once the split between young people and adults is established the further education participation figures will be incorporated into the four key funding blocks below. | |
| > Young People | £10,163,654 |
| includes the funding of 16-18 year olds in work-based learning which may be delivered by further, higher education, or by private providers, the funding of further education Pastoral and Discretionary Student Support for 16-18 year olds and the funding of Education Business Links (EBL). | |
| > Adults | £3,955,957 |
| includes work-based learning for learners aged 19+, further education adult discretionary support, adult and community learning (via the LEA), adult information, advice and guidance and workforce development. | |

> **Infrastructure** **£1,751,392**

includes funding the LIF, further education capital, standards fund and national marketing and promotion. The capital and standards fund budgets are administered nationally. Proposals are submitted to local Learning and Skills Councils and go forward to the national Council with local Learning and Skills Council support, at which point local allocations are amended. Thus, the infrastructure figure shown is subject to revision as proposals are accepted.

> **Administration** **£1,930,697**

this covers internal costs.

> **Total 2001/02** **£44,622,064**

The figure for 2001/02 does not include additional funding for school sixth-forms of £14.5 million which is being administered by Cumbria Learning and Skills Council via the LEA in 2002/03 (see paragraph below). Cumbria Learning and Skills Council is seeking to maximise its ability to tackle local priorities through effective deployment of its LIF, which represents £841,828 of the infrastructure budget above and by seeking additional funding sources such as those described under co-financing below. The totals above do not include such additional funding which has yet to be finalised.

Co-financing

Cumbria Learning and Skills Council has received approval to become a co-financing organisation. A Co-financing Plan 2002/03 developed around objectives adopted by the LMSG and based upon the North West Regional Development Plan has been drafted, consulted on and has been approved by the PMRC. This will enhance our levers to raise participation, improve skills/qualification level, widen access, and respond to individual, community and business requirements where they are needed most.

Now that our plan has received full approval, we will be able to distribute ESF monies, under Objective 3, to projects that address policy measures as set out in the North West Regional Development Plan. These are:

- > Active labour markets.
- > Equal opportunities for all and promoting social inclusion.
- > Improving training and education and promoting lifelong learning.
- > Adaptability and entrepreneurship.
- > Improving the participation of women in the labour market.

As part of the consultation exercise on the Co-financing Plan 2002/03, we requested expressions of interest from providers/potential providers that wish to deliver activities. The responses have been considered and providers have now been invited to submit full applications with support from local Council staff.

The Co-financing Plan and Strategic Plan will be developed based on the revised baseline data and further analysis so as to provide a coherent offer to the learner. Over the coming months Cumbria Learning and Skills Council will model current provision in terms of volume, quality and type, mapped against the needs of learners and employers, national and local targets, and will identify any mismatch between budget required to achieve these and the budget available.

School Sixth Forms: New Funding Arrangements

From April 2002, the Learning and Skills Council is taking on the role of funding school sixth form provision via the LEA. This will result in an additional £17.7 million flowing through the local Council. A key element of the new funding arrangements for school sixth forms is the Government's Real Terms Guarantee (RTG). Schools whose sixths form numbers are maintained will not lose funding. The national Council has, through the local Council, issued an information pack to schools with sixth forms and to the LEA that sets out the new arrangements in detail.

Schools have now received their provisional allocations for sixth form provision. Approximately half of the schools in Cumbria have moved direct to formula funding whilst the others will benefit from the RTG. The local Council, the LEA and Cumbria Association of Secondary Heads have established a forum to discuss any issues around general sixth form funding.

Funding by Formula

Over the next few years, the Council proposes to move to a national funding formula covering further education, work-based learning, school sixth forms and adult and community learning. The formula has already been applied to work-based learning and will be applied to further education and sixth form colleges from 2002. There will be consultation on the detail of this differentiated funding (as it has been called). However, the formula will have five elements:

- > A national base rate – this is core funding that reflects the length of learning programmes and its base cost.
- > A programme weighting – this reflects the fact that some programmes are more costly to provide than others.
- > An achievement element – this is a percentage of the two elements above and is payable on condition that the learner successfully achieve the intended outcome or qualification.
- > A disadvantage uplift – this supports the policy imperative, and recognises the cost of encouraging learners who come from backgrounds which have disadvantaged them to continue in learning after compulsory school age.
- > A weighting factor – this is an area cost reflecting the significant higher costs of delivering learning in London and some related areas.

The national formula also includes an element called fee remission which covers the fees that learners might otherwise pay.

The Council is carrying out a research project which will endeavour to identify issues impacting on education and training in rural areas.

Timetable

The national Learning and Skills Council national and the local Council in Cumbria has worked towards a unitary timetable in order to draft, consult on and publish our Corporate, Strategic and Business Plans. We expect the following milestones.

| Date | Strategic Planning (to 2004 and 2005) | Business Planning (to 2003) |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Nov 2000 | Remit letter issued. | Annual guidance/budget 01-02. |
| Mar 2001 | Corporate plan 01/04 to external consultation. | |
| Apr 2001 | Learning and Skills Council launched. | |
| May – Aug 2001 | National Council reviews responses, consults Government, approves final plan and notifies ranges for local targets. | Annual guidance 01-02. |
| | Local Council begins preparing local skills, participation and learning strategies. | Local Council prepares draft plan 02-03. |
| From Oct 2001 | Local Council consults local and regional partners on draft strategic plans. | |
| Nov 2001 | | Annual guidance/budget 02-03. |
| Dec 2001 – Jan 2002 | Local Council reviews responses, consults national Council, and approves final draft plan. | |
| Jan – Mar 2002 | National Council takes overview of local plans; reviews progress against targets; and finalises Corporate Plan 02/05. | Annual guidance/budget 02-03. |
| | Local Council finalises local strategic plans 02/05. | Local Council finalises business plan 02-03. |

Table 5

Consultation

A consultation exercise was held to share and discuss Cumbria Learning and Skills Council's strategic aims with staff, the local provider network, key partners, employers and other bodies with an interest in our work (Table 6).

| DATE | Cumbria Strategic Plan |
|---------------------|---|
| Sept 2001 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Draft plan produced. > Draft plan shared with local Council members. |
| Oct 2001 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Draft plan presented to key partner organisations across the county. > Draft plan promoted through the local media. |
| Nov 2001 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Events held for specific interest groups throughout November e.g. focus groups/breakfast meetings. > Media promotion continued. > Public consultation events held. |
| Dec 2001 – Jan 2002 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > All views and responses collated and used to shape production of the final strategic plan. > Final plan shared with local Council members. |
| Feb 2002 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Final plan available for any further comment. |
| Mar 2002 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Final version of strategic plan produced and agreed by Local Council members. > Strategic Plan published. |

Table 6

Each and every view/comment received has been given our full consideration and has helped to shape this plan. Our firm wish is that the Strategic Plan 2002/05, and all subsequent and complimentary plans, will find acceptance by relevant agencies including the NWDA, GONW, the County Council, the SBS, JobCentre Plus and Connexions Cumbria as well as by other key partners – schools, colleges and other training providers, employer and employee organisations and the wider community.

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> Annex 3: Glossary of terms

| | |
|----------------|--|
| ABSSU | Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit |
| ACL | Adult and Community Learning |
| ALI | Adult Learning Inspectorate |
| AMA | Advanced Modern Apprenticeship BSA Basic Skills Agency |
| BSQI | Basic Skills Quality Initiative |
| CBEC | Cumbria Business Education Consortium |
| CBI | Confederation of British Industry |
| CDC | Community Development Centre |
| CEIP | Cumbria Economic Intelligence Partnership |
| CEML | Centre of Excellence in Management and Leadership |
| CoVE | Centre of Vocational Excellence |
| CREDITS | Community Regeneration through the Development of Information Technology |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| DTI | Department of Trade and Industry |
| EBL | Education Business Link |
| ESOL | English for Speakers of Other Languages |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| FEFC | Further Education Funding Council |
| FMA | Foundation Modern Apprenticeship |
| GCSE | General Certificate of Secondary Education |
| GONW | Government Office North West |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| liP | Investors in People |
| ILA | Individual Learning Account |
| ILR | Individualised Learner Record |
| ISR | Individualised Student Record |
| LASDA | Learning and Skills Development Agency |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| LFS | Labour Force Survey |
| LIF | Local Initiative Fund |
| LLDD | Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities |
| LLP | Local Learning Partnership |
| LMSG | Labour Market and Skills Group |
| LSC | Learning and Skills Council |
| MA | Modern Apprenticeship |
| NAO | National Audit Office |
| NALS | National Adult Learning Survey |
| NTO | National Training Organisation |
| NVQ | National Vocational Qualification |
| NWDA | North West Development Agency |
| OfSTED | Office for Standards in Education |
| PFSA | Provider Financial Support and Assurance |
| PIU | Performance and Innovation Unit |
| PMRC | Programme Monitoring Regional Committee |
| PSA | Public Service Agreement |
| QCA | Qualification and Curriculum Authority |
| RAZ | Rural Action Zone |
| RTG | Real Terms Guarantee |
| SBS | Small Business Service |
| SME | Small and Medium-sized Enterprises |
| SRB | Single Regeneration Budget |
| TEC | Training and Enterprise Council |
| TUC | Trades Union Congress |
| Ufi | University for Industry |
| WLB | Work-Life Balance |

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