

Learning and Skills Council

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Local Strategic Plan 2002-05

Somerset



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PART I:

> Foreword by Executive Director

Somerset Learning and Skills Council has ambitious goals over the next three years. Through our strategy we aim to be a catalyst for radical change, but what will success look like?

First, the participation of young people and adults in learning will be raised significantly, and the drop out rate at 16-18 substantially reduced. The involvement of small businesses in training will be significantly increased. Qualification and skill levels in Somerset will be higher, and the skills needs of employers more closely matched than currently.

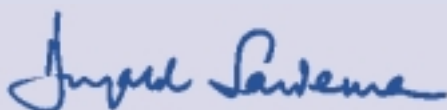
Next, we will deliver Somerset's contribution towards reducing the number of people without basic skills. Our target is a 7,700 reduction by 2004. To achieve this, we will increase substantially both the demand for, and the supply of, basic skills provision.

Somerset LSC and its partners are committed to developing individuals' opportunities to learn. Access to learning will be enhanced throughout the county, particularly to those disadvantaged geographically or socially. Learning will be focused to meet demand in a more coherent way. Our strategy for equality of opportunity will deliver practical outcomes for the whole community.

Consistently high quality provision will be secured through coherent and collaborative planning approaches. Inspection reports and learner surveys will measure quality. We will seek clear evidence of progression between learning experiences, to make lifelong learning a reality.

We will achieve our mission by 2005 if:

- Individuals have the opportunities they need, can overcome barriers to their learning, and can see the possibilities of progression.
- Employers can meet their skills needs from local people, and that, large or small, they are committed to workforce development.
- Providers feel they understand our strategy and are responding effectively to it.
- Statistics provide objective evidence of success.
- Our activities have a positive impact on the economic development and regeneration of Somerset.



Dugald Sandeman
Executive Director
March 2002

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> 1. Background to the Learning and Skills Council

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was established by the Learning and Skills Act 2000, and became operational in April 2001. It is a national organisation with 47 local councils, one of which covers the county of Somerset. It has responsibility for the planning, funding and quality assurance of all education and training post-16 with the exception of higher (ie university level) education.

The LSC is part of the Government's response to a serious national problem - the skill levels of the UK population. In the global economy, skills increasingly define the potential for national success and prosperity. On many international scales the UK does poorly: whereas nearly 90% of 15-19 year olds in Germany were engaged in education or training in 1998, fewer than 70% were in the UK - less than in Brazil or the Philippines. Whereas 75% of Swedes have the skills to cope with routine office work, only 50% of the UK population have. Seven million people in England are estimated to have real difficulties with literacy or numeracy or both.

In ironic contrast, the UK has one of the highest proportions of graduates in the Western world, combined with one of the highest percentages of people with no qualifications. So we are good at educating an elite through university while ignoring the needs of a large proportion of the remainder of our population. The Government believes - and few would disagree - that we need to raise dramatically the level of skills in both young people and adults. The LSC has been given the job of making sure this happens.

The creation of the LSC is a new opportunity to look at how we educate and train our young people and adults. It is a chance to step back and to look at what is provided from the point of view of the learner and the would-be learner. The scale of what needs to be done is daunting, as the international comparisons show, and we need to ensure that we have the strategies and capabilities to make a difference. The opportunities and the challenge are set out in the national LSC's corporate plan for 2001-04:

While the information revolution brings benefits for the majority, it carries great risks for those left on the margin. Knowledge is power, but ignorance is impotence. The estimated one in five adults in Britain who cannot function effectively with written words or numbers are more than ever excluded from our fast-moving society. Millions of unskilled jobs have disappeared, while the new jobs created in a dynamic economy require competences of a much higher order. The economic case for a radical improvement in skills, which the Learning and Skills Council has been set up to deliver, is that without it many people will not find or retain satisfying work, and the nation will lose competitiveness. Just as important is the human case: failure to develop people's talents to the full will reduce opportunities for personal satisfaction and squander human potential.

Alongside this challenge, there is also real opportunity. The new technology could help us to stimulate greater demand for learning amongst those who do not currently participate at all - and then meet that demand. It could be used to open up access to learning, improve quality and reduce costs. Alongside excellent teaching, the information revolution - e-learning - could facilitate the fundamental revolution we seek: the development of a learning society.

The Learning and Skills Council intends to seize this opportunity.

It is important that we meet the challenge not only to improve our economic competitiveness but also for the sake of every individual. The increasing complexity of modern society requires autonomous, well-skilled and self-confident citizens. Those without the necessary skills will find life increasingly difficult.

> 2. A national strategy

At the invitation of the Secretary of State, the national LSC set out the mission and vision for the organisation from the outset of the strategic planning process:

Our mission is to raise participation and attainment through high quality education and training which puts learners first. Our vision is that, by 2010, young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world.

What needs to be done

Against the background of low participation and low skill levels, the aim of the LSC is an ambitious one - to match the best in the world by 2010. Our task is set out below:

- 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.

Although some of these have been policy aims in the past, the Learning and Skills Council now has a statutory duty to raise demand for adult learning, which is unprecedented. It is a clear signal that the LSC's primary focus must be on the learner, and that the aims of the LSC embrace all parts of the population.

National Learning Targets

The 47 local Learning and Skills Councils will contribute to achieving the National Learning Targets by 2004:

- Extended participation by young people: 80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning.
- Increased achievement by young people: 85% at level 2 by age 19.
- Increased achievement by young people: 55% at level 3 by age 19.
- Increased achievement of literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults.
- Increased achievement by adults: 52% of adults at level 3.

In addition, targets will be defined during 2002 covering adult participation, employer engagement, adult achievement at level 2, quality of provision and user satisfaction.

The challenges ahead: responsiveness to a changing future

The challenge of the LSC will be to bring about meaningful improvements amidst continuing global turbulence. It will need to be responsive to both the changing needs of its key stakeholders and the opportunities presented by technological developments, innovations in practice and the evolving knowledge base of the learning community.

The 2002/05 Strategic Plan must also be flexible to emerging policy. For example:

- The reforms to key stage 4, put forward in the Green Paper published on 12 February 2002, have major implications for the retention and progression of target groups.
- Proposed reforms to the Modern Apprenticeship framework and the ambitious targets for participation in it have important implications for quality and participation.

> 3. A national strategic planning framework

The strategic planning framework is defined in the national LSC's Corporate Plan to 2004:



Collectively these three linked strategies will provide a framework for achieving the LSC remit. Broadly, the needs of employers and learners will be assessed in the top two strategies and then feed into the learning strategy - the means of responding to needs. There will also be a feedback loop, in which the skills and participation strategies will be modified in accordance with capabilities in learning delivery.

- The skills strategy will be employer focused. It will be concerned with building long term relationships with local employers, engaging them in defining skills needs and developing their workforces. The skills strategy will rely on increasingly close links with employers of all sizes, working either directly or through their representative groups. The aim will be to secure employer commitment to targeted action across the nation, to address the specific needs of key sectors and improve levels of generic skills.
- The participation strategy will focus on the individual. Its aim will be to bring more people into learning, especially from groups that are currently under-represented. The participation strategy will be underpinned by close collaboration with information, advice and guidance services, providers and other strategic partners. It will have a strong emphasis on equal opportunities, providing a platform for achieving greater inclusion in learning across the community.
- The learning strategy will be focused on the providers of learning opportunities. It will respond to the other two strategies, identifying how the Council's provider network will deliver education and training that will meet local employers' and learners' needs. The learning strategy will be built on close planning relationships with all providers, aimed at improving quality and securing responsiveness, flexibility and efficiency. A particular challenge will be to co-ordinate all 16-19 learning, including school sixth forms, so that the right combination of quality, flexibility and choice is delivered to all young people.

> 4. The Somerset context

Somerset Learning and Skills Council must interpret and implement the national vision in its local context. It must identify the particular needs and issues facing the county, and apply policies that are responsive to them. To do so requires a clear understanding of the context in which the skills, participation and learning strategies will be developed.

The skills strategy in context: the Somerset economy

The recently completed Somerset Economic Assessment¹ 2001 highlights a growing divergence from more prosperous parts of the South West region and calls for action to prevent the county from falling further behind. In particular, the report demonstrates that Somerset persistently lags behind regional and national levels for average earnings, workforce qualifications and the rates of both business and job creation. On the positive side, it predicts that Somerset will continue to be an attractive place to live and work, although areas of urban deprivation and rural decline are set to cause continued concern.

Somerset is essentially a rural county but with the M5 motorway and mainline railway services ensuring good links with other parts of the country. Despite its geographical position, the county has attracted relatively few direct inward investments in recent years and rates of investment in industrial and office accommodation have been greatly outstripped by those in other parts of the region. There is also a high skills exodus from the county, with many talented young people leaving the county for higher education and not coming back.

The county accounts for 9% of total economic output from the South West region and 9% of employment. It has a broadly similar industrial mix to the rest of the region and is well represented in four of the ten South West RDA priority sectors, namely food and drink, advanced engineering, leisure and tourism and printing and packaging.

The strategies of Somerset LSC and the new county level Local Strategic Partnership will need to take account of specific sector issues including:

- The manufacturing sector is vulnerable to any down turn in world trade and in South Somerset is particularly dependent on aeronautical engineering.
- There is currently a mismatch between the needs of advanced engineering industries and training activities.
- There is a skills shortage in printing and packaging, with insufficient numbers of employees possessing the level and breadth of skills demanded by changing technology.
- The food and drink industry is suffering persistent skills gaps, especially food technology, quality assurance and ICT.
- Leisure and tourism are important components of the economy, but tend to be low margin businesses with low skills and low pay. 2001 has been a particularly bad year for the sector as a result of damage from the foot and mouth outbreak.
- Agriculture and its associated industries have been in decline for some time, and the decline has been further exacerbated by the foot and mouth outbreak.
- The care sector is large and increasing, with the trend of rising numbers of older people predicted to continue in the future.

Somerset LSC's 2001 Statement of Learning and Skills Needs² highlights employer reports of skill shortages in key sectors and concludes that limitations in the supply of specialist skills are a major barrier to economic¹ activity. It also states that an important priority will be to develop a more flexible workforce in Somerset, with levels of generic skills that will be responsive to the inherent unpredictability of economic and social change. The ability of individuals to

¹ Somerset Economic Assessment 2001

² Somerset Learning and Skills Council's 2001 Statement of Learning and Skills Needs

continuously learn and adapt to new opportunities and challenges is likely to become increasingly important in the future.

The Skills Statement notes that employers are extremely concerned about the lack of generic skills, with deficiencies particularly noted in communication, problem solving and organising skills. A particular concern for Somerset is that respondents in the South West Household Survey 2000, rated themselves less favourably in most skills than the south west average.

The ability to read and write is essential for communication and performance in work but, with one in four Somerset adults experiencing difficulties with basic literacy, a large section of the population is excluded. This is consistent with the national profile, as is the fact that a similar number of people in the county have problems with basic numeracy.

The participation strategy in context: learning in Somerset

The lack of literacy, numeracy and other generic skills is also a major barrier to participation in learning. Without these building blocks, individuals find it difficult or impossible to make progress in either work related or non-vocational learning. They have neither the competence nor the confidence to break out of a perpetual cycle of under achievement.

Once they have left the education and training system, adults become progressively more passive towards learning, with both motivation to participate and awareness of learning opportunities falling over time. The extent of this discontinuity problem is highlighted by Somerset LSC's 2001 Statement of Learning and Skills Needs, which records that 53% of adults of working age in the county have not taken part in any learning for at least five years. Adult participation is strongly employer driven, with 80% of the people who said that they had taken part in training in 2000 reporting that it was funded by their employer.

To bring more adults back into learning, Somerset LSC and its strategic partners must tackle individual motivation, dealing with fear of failure, perceptions about lack of relevance and negative attitudes originating from adverse educational experiences. Achieving greater individual progress, and the broader cultural shift that will support it, will require a renewed emphasis on the 'marketing' of learning to all individuals in the Somerset community. A wide definition of marketing will need to encompass:

- The promotion of learning and its benefits.
- The delivery of effective information, advice and guidance, provided by Somerset Connexions for young people and the Somerset Information and Guidance Network (SIGN) for adults.
- The delivery of accessible, relevant and motivational learning opportunities, through the learning strategy (see next page).

The participation problem in Somerset will not be resolved by dealing with learning in isolation. There will also need to be an emphasis on addressing:

- Practical barriers faced by individuals, including finance, time, family commitments and geographical constraints. The rural nature of many parts of Somerset demands a specific focus on providing a coherent transport system for learners.
- Broader social barriers, particularly relating to the exclusion cycle. Somerset LSC's 2001 Statement of Learning and Skills Needs discusses a range of factors which contribute to disadvantage in learning, including poverty, age, single parenting and disability. It also calls for further research on exclusion issues and particularly highlights the lack of information on travellers, ex-offenders, the homeless and asylum seekers.

Participation by young people in learning post-16 is higher in Somerset than in England as a whole, and is also higher than the South West average. In 1998/99, 78% of 17 year olds were

engaged in education or training in Somerset (DfEE statistics). A particular feature of Somerset participation is that the proportion in work based learning is one of the highest in England (In 1998, 13.2% of Somerset's 16 year olds were in Government Supported Training, compared with 8.8% nationally - DfEE statistics).

The Somerset LSC target for participation by young people is:

Key objective	National target for 2004	Somerset position in 2000	Somerset target for 2004 Increase	Somerset target for 2004 Total
Extend participation in education, learning and training	80% of 16 - 18 year olds in structured learning	15,453 (78.6%)	1,921	17,374 (88.4%)

Source: percentages calculated by reference to DfES Statistical First Release - adjusted by LSC National Office with combined migration factor (scaled down).

A target for adult participation will be set during 2002.

The learning strategy in context: post-16 education and training in Somerset

LSC-funded education and training in Somerset after the age of 16 is offered by six further education colleges in urban centres, eight schools with sixth forms, mainly in small towns, and a network of training providers offering work based learning in a wide variety of vocational areas. Three FE colleges have recently received national awards in recognition of effective collaboration with employers, as well as innovative and flexible course content and delivery.

Adult learning is provided by colleges and the community education service, as well as by voluntary organisations. Somerset LSC's consultation process has also drawn attention to the wide range of learning opportunities provided by museums, libraries and religious institutions.

Attainment of qualifications by 16 year olds in Somerset was higher than both regional and national averages in 2001. According to recently published Secondary School and School and College Performance Tables, 93% achieved five or more GCSE Grade A*-Gs compared with 91% in the southwest region. The number achieving at least five Grade A*-Cs was also higher at 54.6%, compared with 52.2% at a regional level. By 19 years of age, 87.8% of Somerset residents had achieved level 2 and 54.5% had achieved level 3.

According to Somerset Careers destinations data, 11% of year 11 leavers went into Work Based Learning in 2000, of whom 3% entered Advanced Modern Apprenticeships and 4% Foundation Modern Apprenticeships. The remaining 4% entered NVQ Training (1% employed status and 3% non-employed).

The rates of achievement in Somerset in vocational qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 are high when compared with the regional average. The level 2 NVQ equivalent has been achieved by 44% of Somerset residents compared with 38.4% in the South West region. NVQ level 4 achievement, however, is lower at 25.8% in Somerset compared with 28% for the regional average.

The age profile of the county also undoubtedly has an effect on the lower levels of qualification rates for adults within Somerset, as many older people in Britain do not hold qualifications; this situation is particularly marked in West Somerset. A higher percentage of people in Somerset are aged 40-59 years (26%) and 60 and over (25%) compared with Great Britain at 25% and 21% respectively.

The Somerset LSC targets for raising achievement by young people and adults are:

Key objective	National target for 2004	Somerset position in 2000	Somerset target for 2004 Increase	Somerset target for 2004 Total
Raise achievement by young people	85% at level 2 by age 19	5,563 (87.8%)	170	5733 (90.5%)
	55% at level 3 by age 19	3,454 (54.5%)	366	3,820 (60.3%)
Raise achievement by adults	Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults	7,713		
	52% of adults* at level 3	104,000 (45.1%)	16,695	120,695 (51%)

*Economically active population

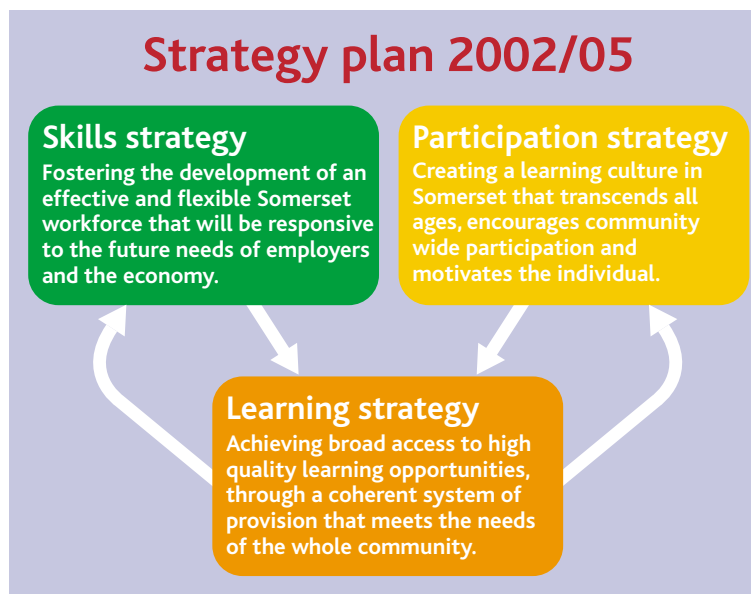
Source: percentages calculated by reference to Labour Force Survey 2000, Mid Year Population Estimates 2000 and ONS Department for Young People - adjusted by LSC National office with combined migration factor (scaled down).

Targets for adult achievement at level 2, quality of provision and user satisfaction will be set during 2002.

In addition to the national targets Somerset LSC intends to set targets for achievements in ICT for young people and level 4 among adults by September 2002.

> 5. A strategy for Somerset

The strategic aims of Somerset LSC have been defined within the planning framework:



The challenge of achieving these aims raises some fundamental issues:

The **skills strategy** must:

- Respond to the diversity of employer skills needs in the medium and long term.
- Support an ambitious economic strategy for the county by fostering responsiveness and flexibility in all businesses and raising the aspirations of Small and Medium Enterprises.
- Enable employees to maximise their potential through training.

The **participation strategy** must:

- Increase the demand for learning by under-represented groups.
- Raise the aspirations of individuals, through a radical shift in how learning is promoted.
- Achieve a shift in the balance between learning rich and learning poor - at present, those who have gained little from learning in the past are least likely to benefit in the future.
- Influence and collaborate with partners who can address the problem of disaffection with learning from primary school onwards.
- Tackle the barriers posed to learners by transport problems, rurality and poverty.
- Engage both learners and non learners.

The **learning strategy** must:

- Help individuals over the basic skills threshold - the point at which individuals reach a level of confidence with their own numeracy and/or literacy capabilities that enables them to derive practical benefits and accelerate their learning.
- Create an appropriate balance between qualification led provision and less formal learning, recognising that accreditation processes can be a barrier to participation for some individuals and employers.

- Improve 14-19 retention by directly addressing the fall off in motivation that can occur, particularly at 14-16.
- Ensure that provision meets the needs and expectations of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Equip more young people and adults with the entry requirements for higher education.
- Celebrate success at every level of learner achievement.

At the same time as addressing these issues, Somerset LSC must meet its responsibilities to the community in four key areas:

Equality and Diversity

Somerset LSC recognises the high priority given to make learning more accessible and inclusive and to widen participation. There is great expectation that, from the outset, the organisation will integrate equality of opportunity into its culture and operations. In addition, there is anticipation amongst stakeholders that services provided to them by the LSC Somerset will be underpinned by good equality principles and practice.

Somerset LSC will mainstream and integrate equality and diversity into all aspects of its work to ensure that all individuals and groups of people have equal access to appropriate learning provision, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, age, disability or learning difficulty.

Providing equality of opportunity is essential in building up the level of skills in the county. Research indicates that many individuals in Somerset still face discrimination due to ethnicity, religion, age, gender, disability or social circumstances. For example, disabled people are half as likely to be economically active than non-disabled people in Somerset. Just under half of lone parents in Somerset are not economically active with availability and cost in childcare identified as critical barriers to learning and employment for this group. Individuals, in seeking employment, access to training or returning to education, frequently encounter obstacles such as low expectations of ability in addition to outright discrimination. There are also significant and persistent differences in unemployment rates between white and minority ethnic populations. Somerset LSC acknowledges that it must respond to these issues and increase awareness of equality and diversity throughout the learning community.

Health and safety

Somerset LSC is committed to ensuring that good health and safety practices are adhered to in all its provision. This responsibility is delivered through a comprehensive health and safety audit plan, which includes risk assessment, appraisal of all providers and advisory support.

Financial propriety

Through its audit plan, Somerset LSC ensures that Somerset LSC's programmes are delivered through providers who are financially viable, observe financial propriety and provide value for money.

Sustainability

As part of its commitment to sustainability, Somerset LSC will follow policies which:

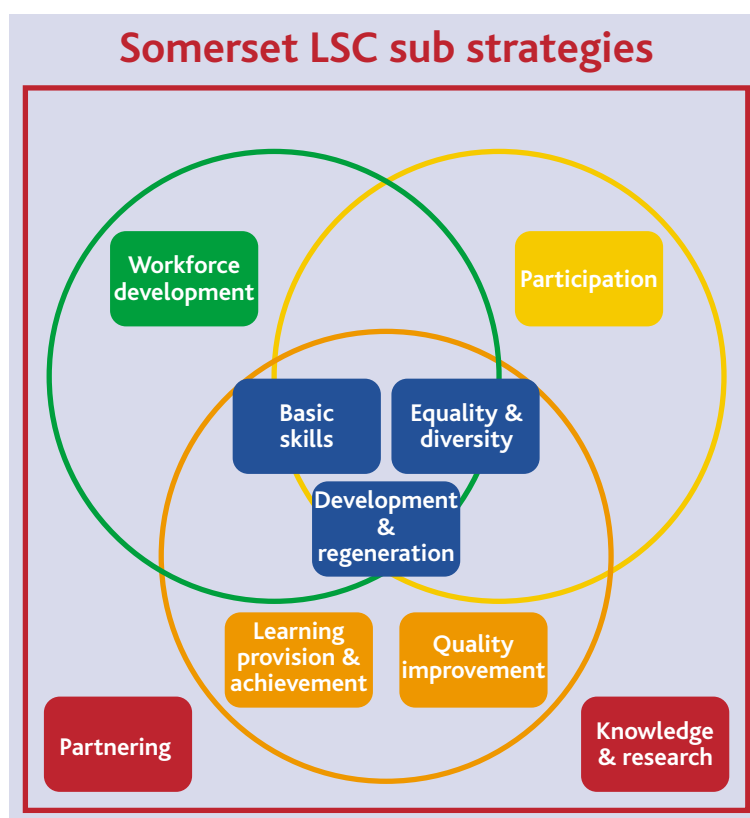
- Make minimal use of natural resources and reduce waste and pollution.
- Build on local strengths that add economic value locally.
- Increase local employment and strengthen local community and cultural identity.

Somerset LSC sub strategies

Somerset LSC is responding to these challenges through nine inter-locking and mutually supportive sub strategies which:

- Enable a focus on specific opportunities and problems.
- Allow strategic thinking to be aligned with current capabilities and those that will be needed in the future, both within the organisation and amongst our strategic partners.
- Provide the focus for engagement of LSC staff in implementation.
- Define the agenda for external parties who have specific interests and priorities.

The way these nine strategies fit in with the skills/participation/learning strategy framework is defined below and the rationale for each of them is defined in the table overleaf.



Importantly this structure has been developed in practice, rather than designed. It is the result of a bottom up and consultative process. As indicated, four of the sub strategies are directly derived from the skills, participation and learning areas of the national planning framework. Three more are at the core of LSC activities, while the partnering and knowledge and research sub strategies play an enabling role for the delivery of the other seven.

Sub strategy	Summary
Equality and diversity	Achieving greater equality of opportunity for learners is an explicit element of our remit and underpins all our activities. This strategy pinpoints how we aim to make learning more accessible throughout the community.
Workforce development	This strategy is central to a key aim of the LSC: developing the county's skills base so that it can flexibly meet the future needs of the economy and engaging a broad cross section of employers in this process.
Participation	Encouraging more young people and adults to participate in learning is a prerequisite to success. This strategy focuses on how we will attract more people into learning.
Basic skills	Problems with numeracy and literacy dramatically affect the skills base, prevent individuals accessing and fully contributing to work and present a barrier to participation in learning. Our basic skills strategy aims to tackle this key issue.
Learning provision and achievement	This strategy links directly with our role as a planning and funding organisation. Through our providers, we must ensure that the range and availability of learning is responsive to the present and future needs of individuals, employers and the community.
Quality improvement	Ensuring that all the learning we fund meets the expectations of the individual and achieves the same high quality standards is explicit in the LSC remit. This strategy shows how we can make progress in this area.
Knowledge and research	The development and implementation of all our strategies will hinge on our ability to integrate, create, communicate and utilise knowledge. This strategy will ensure that we effectively manage knowledge and underpin future decisions with a sound evidence base.
Development and regeneration	A strategy to address the development needs of the whole learning support and provision system is of fundamental importance. We gain the maximum benefit from available discretionary funding and capital projects.
Partnering	To succeed in all our aims, we must engage a wide range of stakeholders, nurture our relationships with strategic partners and work jointly with them on the issues facing Somerset. Here we set out how we will achieve these objectives.

These strategies are set out in more detail in Part II of this plan. In each case, the aim has been to strike a balance between specific achievements for 2002/05 and laying the foundations for longer-term change.

> 6. Implementing the strategy in Somerset

Achieving the LSC remit in Somerset will require the use of a broad range of capabilities, the majority of which are in the hands of partner organisations. The LSC must, therefore, work collaboratively with its provider network and a wide range of other partners, engaging them and mobilising their delivery capacity in the pursuit of shared objectives. Where necessary, it will need to work with its partners in identifying gaps and building capabilities for the future.

Levers for implementation

Somerset LSC has significant levers of influence through which to achieve its strategic aims. It is principally a planning and funding organisation but it will also need to deploy some other important levers to deliver meaningful strategic change. The seven key levers for implementation are:



Collaboration will be the fulcrum through which all the other key levers will have an impact on strategic change. Future success will be built on strong working relationships with a range of organisations that share or strongly identify with the LSC mission. Key areas of collaboration include:

- Mutually supportive working relationships with providers and contractors, directly linked with planning and funding.
- Active participation in the Somerset Strategic Partnership, the Somerset Learning Partnership and other groups in the county.
- Formal collaboration with Somerset Connexions, Somerset County Council, Business Link and the South West of England Regional Development Agency.
- Informal links with many other organisations and community groups.
- Continued consultation on our planning, to help evaluate the success of the strategy and determine its future direction.

Somerset LSC's **planning** activities are a primary implementation tool:

- Strategic planning, and its associated consultation activities, offer a lever for learning from and influencing a wide range of stakeholders.
- Formal 'Provider Planning' encompassing all LSC funded learning: Work Based Learning, Further Education, School Sixth Forms and Adult and Community Learning.
- Formal contracting with partners providing LSC funded services in Workforce Development, Education Business Links and Adult Information, Advice and Guidance.
- Co-ordination of new initiatives, such as Centre of Vocational Excellence.

Funding responsibilities give the LSC an important lever for achieving strategic change:

- Core funding of learning through the provider network.
- Growth funding of learning provision, targeted at local priority issues.
- Capital funding to improve the quality of teaching accommodation and information and communication technology.
- Supporting staff development through the Standards Fund.
- Funding of contracts to deliver learning related services to employers, adults and the education sector.
- Discretionary funding through the Local Initiatives Fund, targeted at specific needs.
- Discretionary funding from the European Social Fund, utilising Somerset LSC's status as a Co-financing Organisation.

Sound **knowledge management** practices provide the medium for influencing the future:

- Contributing to 'learning networks' and encouraging collective activities that facilitate the articulation and sharing of knowledge throughout the learning community.
- Understanding, unblocking and utilising informal knowledge flows in the community.
- Using, supporting and contributing to formal information sharing initiatives.
- Maintaining a flexible and responsive research capability within the LSC and integrating this with the activities and knowledge bases of strategic partners.

The **marketing** of learning and its benefits provides an important influence on change:

- Developing a 'learner as customer' focus for all development and delivery of learning.
- Promoting the availability and relevance of learning opportunities in Somerset.
- Promotion of the positive outcomes of learning, including 'celebrating of success', to learners, non-learners and their reference groups (including peer advocacy).
- Using exemplar behaviour by the LSC to encourage equality and good practice.

Many changes will be achieved through **continuous improvement**, linked to review:

- The quality improvement programme provides a mechanism for raising standards.
- The continuous improvement of good practices by the LSC will enable a gradual reduction of the administrative burden on providers and an increased focus on learning.
- The encouragement of innovation will help to stretch the boundaries of learning practice.
- The continuous development of Somerset LSC's own equality, diversity and learning practices will provide an exemplar model for other organisations.

Review of progress, and reporting of results, offers an important means of leveraging change. It is supported by:

- Continuous monitoring of performance by providers and contractors.
- The Provider Performance Review system.
- Monitoring of progress towards nationally co-ordinated targets for workforce development, individual participation, learner achievement and quality of provision.
- Auditing to ensure that all LSC funded activities are delivered through providers and contractors who are financially viable, observe financial propriety, provide value for money in their delivery and do so within good health and safety practices.

> 7. Consultation and evaluation

The key strategic tests of suitability, feasibility and acceptability have been extensively applied during the development of this three-year strategic plan. The final version is the result of extensive internal and external consultation, a process that will be continued throughout its period of influence. It is fully recognised that it will continue to evolve during implementation and the evaluation of its impact will be integral to this aim.

Consultation arrangements

Somerset LSC has maintained a continuous dialogue with the learning community in Somerset from its inception. Its executive director and numerous members of staff have used every opportunity to canvas views on how the LSC remit will be achieved and, in May 2001, a major partner conference was used to consult with providers, employers, voluntary groups and various other interested parties.

Internal consultation was also given high priority with all staff encouraged to offer their views on the development of the strategy. Cross-organisational working groups were used to develop the sub strategies and there was an open invitation strategy forum series, covering a wide range of issues and attended by a broad cross section of staff.

Somerset LSC formally consulted on two earlier versions of this strategic plan:

- The Outline Strategic Plan 2002/05 was issued to stakeholders in early October, together with a questionnaire. In addition, focus groups on five of the proposed sub strategies were run at the Somerset Learning Partnership's conference on 16 October 2001, and members of the Somerset LSC Council participated in strategy development workshops.
- The 'Draft Strategic Plan 2002/05' was circulated to stakeholders on 14 December 2001, with a request for comments by 31 January 2001.

The organisations that participated in the formal consultation are listed in Appendix 2.

In addition, focus groups were held to develop a dialogue with learners. The groups included young people excluded from school, young parents with basic skills needs and rural users of the mobile library service.

Feedback received during each of the above methods of consultation has had an important influence on this final version of the strategic plan.

Outline evaluation arrangements

The success of Somerset LSC strategy will be defined by whether it meets the needs of its principal stakeholders. A balanced approach to testing this requirement will be developed and an outline of the proposed system is as follows:

- Progress will be measured primarily against the extent to which the strategic aims outlined on page 9 are realised.
- The achievement of sub-strategy objectives will also be monitored.
- In addition to achieving specific headline outcomes, the evaluation will take account of 'under the surface' measures associated with long-term performance, including raising awareness, changing attitudes and building delivery capabilities.
- Evaluation will be based on both quantifiable measures and qualitative assessments, such as views expressed by stakeholders.
- Sources of evaluation data will include the national LSC target framework, other published indicators, Somerset LSC's research programme, management information systems, partner measuring systems and the continuing consultation arrangements.

> Equality and Diversity sub strategy

<p>Equality and diversity underpin all of our activities. We are charged with making learning more accessible and inclusive, widening participation, empowering individuals, challenging prejudice and removing barriers to learning caused by social and economic disadvantage. Our task is to achieve a flexible, learner centred approach; particularly to engage those who are not currently participating in learning.</p>	<p>Our strategic objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the creation of a learning society in which everyone has the opportunity to go as far as their skills, talents and efforts will take them. • Increase awareness of equality and diversity issues throughout the learning community. • Build capabilities in managing equality and diversity issues, so that people working with learners have the confidence, skills and access to resources needed to respond effectively. • Embed equal opportunities into the fabric of post-16 learning in Somerset, in all policies, programmes and actions and as a mainstream part of providers' and partners' strategies. • Broaden access to learning and ensure appropriate additional support is provided. • Increase participation and achievement of under-represented groups. • Develop and promote Somerset LSC as an exemplar employer and a champion of equality and diversity. 	
<p>Levers of influence Activities to achieve strategic objectives Partners</p>		
<p>Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the strategic planning system to influence a wide range of stakeholders on equality and diversity issues. • Integrating equality and diversity in the Provider Planning process for all LSC funded provision. • Increasing the supply of affordable, high quality childcare provision for learners. • Developing the diversity of providers as a key part of delivering inclusive learning. 	<p>Providers, Somerset Learning Partnership, Somerset Connexions, Somerset Information and Guidance Network, Somerset Education Business Link, Fair Play South West, Somerset Racial Equality Council, Somerset Health Authority, Business Link, Employment Service, Somerset Social Services, Probation Service, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP), Somerset Youth Partnership, community and voluntary organisations, employer organisations, trades unions, statutory agencies, south west LSCs.</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using growth funding to tackle under-representation, under achievement and stereotyping. • Targeting discretionary funding, including the European Social Fund, at initiatives to support under-represented groups. • Identifying and funding a wide range of provision for young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 	
<p>Knowledge management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting baseline data to identify the equality 'gap' in Somerset. • Developing joint approaches to equality issues with partners. • Establishing management information systems that capture learner data more effectively. 	
<p>Marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives to promote equality and diversity of learning. • Promoting the business case for equal opportunities and family friendly policies. • Identifying and developing equality and diversity champions and good practice amongst the local providers as a key part of delivering inclusive learning. • Challenging discrimination and the pre-conceptions of individuals, parents, providers and employers. • Marketing non-stereotypical careers, raising aspirations and offering alternatives. • Ensuring providers are aware of supplementary funding available to provide additional support for learners. 	
<p>Continuous improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing internal capabilities, knowledge and understanding through appropriate training and research activities. • Ensuring that good equality and diversity practices are fully integrated into to our own human resource policies and procedures. 	
<p>Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively monitoring progress towards equality of opportunity, within the LSC's review system. 	

> Workforce Development sub strategy

<p>The availability and level of relevant skills within the workforce are essential elements for enabling Somerset business to generate competitiveness and growth. In a rapidly changing, often hostile and inherently unpredictable global economy, the challenge is to achieve business agility through developing and sustaining an effective local workforce that possesses the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet the current and future needs of employers.</p>		<p>Our strategic objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put employers at the centre of joint consultation and collaboration. • Develop and disseminate an accurate knowledge of current skills gaps and future needs. • Support the development of a demand driven learning provision with the infrastructure, scope and capacity to meet all future needs flexibly. • Promote employer investment in workplace learning and encourage the development of business agility through the adoption of relevant best practice. • Promote a lifelong learning culture in Somerset where individuals want to invest in their own continuous personal improvement. • Develop effective pathways to the workplace, with appropriate guidance and learning, for those seeking work, returning to work or preparing to enter work for the first time. • Improve the provision, deployment and utilisation of information and communication technology throughout Somerset.
Levers of influence	Activities to achieve strategic objectives	Partners
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage further education colleges to widen and strengthen collaboration with employers, each other, and private sector learning providers. • Encourage the further development of targeted, high-quality education business link activities and achievement of wider employer and schools participation in order to ensure equal opportunity of access, improve workforce preparation and increase awareness of career paths and opportunities. • Plan and manage the provision of vocational options for 14-16 year olds, in order to widen student choice and opportunity as part of the strategy for 14-19 coherence. • Engage directly with larger employers and in collaboration with relevant partners to encourage the increase of best practice/employee development through business-to-business and supply chain influence. • Encourage increased private sector investment and involvement in the targeted establishment and deployment of Learning Centres and Access Points. • Seek to collaborate with all workforce development partners on the basis of mutual commitment to targeted objectives/actions and individual accountability for achieving planned practical outcomes. • Encourage the development of increased networking between organisations of similar size/sector/location with similar generic issues, in order to encourage best practice sharing, increased trading opportunity, and promotion of business agility and growth through employee development. 	<p>Providers, employers, Education Business Link, schools, workforce, Business Link, employer representatives, employer federations, trades unions, Somerset Ufl Hub, Ufl South West, South West of England Regional Development Agency.</p>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the increased consolidation and co-ordination of existing partner and project organisations, in order to maximise funding effectiveness. • Focus funding on the generally less qualified employees, young employees not qualified to NVQ Level 2, part-time employees, employees of small firms, employees with basic skills needs. • Support initiatives that are clearly aligned with the key objectives of this sub-strategy. 	<p>Providers, Business Link, Somerset Learning Partnership, employer representatives, employer federations, project groups, trades unions.</p>
Knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an IT-based channel for the dissemination of best practice promotion and relevant guidance, advice and information direct to employers, employees and partners. • Seek to consolidate and improve the co-ordination of business polling by workforce development partners, increasingly channelling such activity through IT media. • Develop and maintain a consolidated central source of workforce development information and related materials, aiming towards producing this in e-format. 	<p>Business Link, Somerset Learning Partnership, Somerset Ufl Hub, IT providers, employers, employer federations.</p>
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the awareness and benefits of business agility and improvement through employee development by seeking to place it on the agenda of every relevant partner. • Promote and encourage small and micro business owners/managers to undertake management skills training and, where appropriate, to achieve NVQ Level 4 or equivalent, in order to increase business agility and responsiveness to future markets. • Support the Somerset Ufl Hub to develop a targeted countywide provision of, access to, and participation in e-commerce and on-line learning. • Engage directly with leading ICT providers/developers/researchers to promote and contribute to the integrated development of the county's ICT infrastructure and the expansion of e-commerce. • Engage 'lead employers' across all size, sector and geographical categories and support them as 'Learning Ambassadors' to promote best practice in employee development especially to owners/proprietors of small enterprises. • Promote and develop employee 'Learning Champions' in smaller/non-unionised organisations, in order to complement and extend the impact of union learning representatives. 	<p>Providers, networks, representative groups, business service organisations, employer representatives, employer federations, trades unions, Business Link, owners/proprietors of small enterprises, Somerset Ufl Hub, ICT providers/developers/researchers.</p>
Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Investors in People Standard at relevant size/type of employers and encourage the employer-led development of alternative best practice models for small and micro organisations. • Promote and significantly increase the number of employers committed to best practice through employee development. 	<p>Strategic employers, business service org'ns, Business Link, employer representatives, employer federations trades unions, IIP UK.</p>

> Participation sub strategy

<p>In Somerset, 500 young people drop out of learning at age 16 each year and over 40% of working age adults have not taken part in any form of learning for a considerable period. We need to raise aspirations, change individual and family attitudes, and build confidence and self-esteem. Increasing choice in how and where learning opportunities are offered will help to create demand, as will more intensive and targeted promotion of the benefits of learning.</p>	Our strategic objectives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain participation, retention and progression by groups currently well represented in learning. • Improve access to learning for under-represented groups. Identify and target and most disadvantaged geographical locations and social groups. • Provide integrated and coherent learning support which overcomes the diverse range of individual and institutional barriers to learning. • Achieve a shift in the balance between learning rich and learning poor. • Influence collaborators who can address the problem of disaffection with learning from primary school onwards. • Increasing support to 14-16 year olds who are vulnerable to exclusion from post compulsory learning. • Develop diverse and effective access routes for non-learners, which recognise the broad range of personal situations faced by people. • Develop innovative approaches to increasing the demand for learning by adults. • Support providers in developing and implementing innovative methods of raising participation including wide-ranging entry points from informal learning. • Raise the aspirations of individuals through a radical shift in how learning is promoted. • Engage employers and the self-employed in increasing participation in learning. 		
Levers of influence	Activities to achieve strategic objectives	Partners
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with schools and Somerset Connexions to identify 12-16 year old learners at risk and respond to their specific needs. • Supporting the development of learning opportunities and teaching methods that appeal to a broad range of learning styles, encourage wider participation and bring provision to the learner. • Supporting new and existing initiatives within further education institutions to widen participation. • Developing well-publicised integrated and accessible information, advice and guidance services through providers, Somerset Connexions and Somerset Information and Guidance Network (SIGN). • Engaging individuals of diverse backgrounds, experience and ages in decision making. • Contribute to a county plan to address learner transport issues. 	Providers, Somerset Learning Partnership, Somerset Connexions, Somerset Information and Guidance Network, Somerset Education Business Link, Somerset Libraries, Arts and Information Service, Business Link, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP), Employment Service, Somerset Social Services, Probation Service, Somerset Youth Partnership, community and voluntary organisations, employer organisations, trades unions, south west LSCs, South West Museums Council.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding an integrated programme of 'taster courses' to enable more adults to come back into or start learning. • Funding taster courses for 14-16 year olds. • Targeting discretionary funding at initiatives to raise aspirations and help individuals and communities to overcome barriers to learning. 	
Knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information which enables individuals and employers to make informed choices by providing clear and accurate information on jobs and skills, learning options and progression opportunities. • Working with employer best practice networks on participation initiatives that benefit both employees and employers. • Establishing a network of community champions and peer group advocates. • Producing labour market and careers information guides for young people and adults. 	
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing learning for leisure, informal skills acquisition and volunteering as routes back into formal learning. • Influencing and motivating both individuals and their reference groups through innovative marketing and networking initiatives, targeting specific social groups and locations. • Targeting non-learners and their reference groups with promotional messages that address the stages preceding participation: acquiring awareness, developing interest, making decisions and taking action. 	
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using learner feedback, tracking and destination information to ensure continuous improvement and better understanding of learner needs. • Monitoring progress towards nationally co-ordinated targets for participation. 	

> Basic Skills sub strategy

<p>Basic literacy and numeracy skills not only underpin individuals ability to access and contribute to working life but are also a major determinant of participation in learning. In Somerset one in four adults experience problems with numeracy and a similar number struggle with literacy. We need both to stimulate the demand for basic skills learning and significantly enhance existing capacity to meet that demand.</p>	<p>Our strategic objectives</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the literacy and numeracy skills of adults in Somerset, with a strong focus on raising low levels of basic skills, identify geographically the target areas for priority focus. • Establish a co-ordinated, integrated and widely accessible approach to tackling the basic skills problem in the community. • Increase awareness of the diversity of individual needs and underpin basic skills provision with effective identification and specialist support. • Increase the engagement of agencies such as employers, trade unions, prison service, social services, community groups and the wider population in basic skills initiatives. • Develop imaginative and attractive learning opportunities to meet the varying needs of individuals. • Help individuals over the basic skills threshold - the point at which individuals reach a level of confidence with their own numeracy and/or literacy capabilities that enables them to derive practical benefits and accelerate their learning. 		
<p>Levers of influence</p>	<p>Activities to achieve strategic objectives</p>	<p>Partners</p>
<p>Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning collaboratively with organisations and groups involved in basic skills, both directly and through the Somerset Learning Partnership. • Influencing companies to include basic skills when planning their future development (linked to workforce development sub-strategy). • Encouraging a diversity of staff with basic skills awareness and/or teaching qualifications in a wide range of organisations. • Ensuring that delivery of learning opportunities offer choice and flexibility and are widely available. • Working with partners to address obstacles to participation such as transport and childcare. • Establishing partnerships with voluntary and statutory organisations and groups to promote and develop literacy and numeracy opportunities for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. • Strengthening the links between basic skills achievements and progression into mainstream learning. 	<p>Providers, Somerset Learning Partnership, Somerset Careers, Somerset Information and Guidance Network, Somerset Libraries, Arts and Information Service, South West of England Regional Development Agency, Business Link, Employment Service, Probation Service, Somerset Social Services, Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, Basic Skills Agency, Workplace Basic Skills Network, community and voluntary organisations, employer organisations, trades unions, statutory agencies, south west LSCs, South West Museums Council</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding specialist support for learners already in mainstream learning. • Targeting discretionary funding, for example LIF and ESF to support new delivery, including the imaginative use of information and communication technology. • Applying the Standards Fund to provide basic skills training and qualifications for staff. 	
<p>Knowledge management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on the work of family learning initiatives, adult and community learning and neighbourhood centres in adding value, sharing and disseminating good practice. • Consulting with learners and potential learners to identify areas of need. • Identifying the most difficult to reach groups, including those working for SMEs or on a casual/part time basis. 	
<p>Marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the awareness of the extent of the basic skills problem in Somerset and its implications, through co-ordinated marketing and networking initiatives that reach out to employers, individuals and their reference groups. • Working with employer best practice networks and trades unions on promoting the business case for basic skills training in the workplace. • Engaging new providers from the voluntary and community sector. • Celebrate the success of learning through promoting learner case studies. • Marketing aimed at engaging more individuals in basic skills learning. 	
<p>Continuous improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capabilities in basic skills identification throughout the community by the deployment of practical techniques and associated training. • Building capabilities in basic skills mentoring with employers and in the wider community. • Influencing all basic skills providers to work towards Basic Skills Agency (BSA) quality mark. 	
<p>Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring progress towards nationally co-ordinated targets for basic skills. 	

> Learning Provision and Achievement sub strategy

<p>The LSC is creating and implementing a new planning and funding system for post 16 learning. It will put the needs of the learner first, bring together both public and private learning providers, encourage and reward collaboration and achieve a substantial increase in participation and achievement through provision that is easily accessible, flexible and relevant.</p>	<p>Our strategic objectives</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build responsiveness to demand, and provide flexibility so that the future aspirations of learners, employers and the community can be met. • Ensure that Somerset maintains a strong and effective network of providers, delivering value for money learning, within good health and safety practices, pursuing a policy of continuous improvement in quality and achievement. • To provide a coherent range of post 16 learning opportunities across the county and avoiding unnecessary duplication. • Broaden access to learning opportunities and appropriate specialist support. • Increase participation, achievement and progression by young people and adults. 		
Levers of influence	Activities to achieve strategic objectives	Partners
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing a fresh approach to strategic planning with all providers, linked to evidence on future demand of individuals, employers, sectors and communities. • Develop the range of provision available to create an appropriate balance between qualification-led and informal learning. • Working with providers and information, advice and guidance organisations on the achievement of specific targets for participation and achievement. • Contribute to the development of a strategy for higher education, which offers further progression opportunity in Somerset for a wider range of learners. • Motivate the disengaged and disadvantaged by encouraging providers to develop attractive and accessible locations for learning in local communities. • Developing a coherent framework for progression from 14-19, which identifies and resolves institutional blocks, constraints and inflexibilities. • Using the planning framework to create greater cohesion and co-operation between providers. • Encouraging the creation of multi-agency centres that take provision to communities. 	Providers
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating and simplifying the funding of provision and linking it to our strategic objectives. • Targeting growth funding at local priority areas. • Funding capital projects to increase the quality of learning environments in priority areas. • Fostering link activities for 14-16 year olds with colleges and providers to bring greater coherence to provision, motivate individuals and raise their aspirations. • Supporting collaborative activities to meet learner needs and improve access. 	
Knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with providers to improve initial assessments and the diagnosis of specific aspects of learner needs, making funding available for appropriate support services. • Collaborating with provider networks on good practice and develop new innovations in learning delivery. • Encourage all providers to develop their direct links with businesses and identify opportunities for employers to contribute to the learning curriculum. 	
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the development of vocational options for 14-16 year olds, together with consistent transition arrangements to keep all young people switched on to learning. • Fostering the development of a 'learner as customer' focus for all development and delivery of learning. • Publicise positive outcomes of learning, including 'celebrating success', to learners, non-learners and their reference group. 	
Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of provision through the LSC's contracting, auditing, quality improvement and provider performance review systems. 	
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring progress towards nationally co-ordinated targets for learner achievement. • Continuous monitoring or performance by providers through the returns management process. • Auditing to ensure that all LSC funded activities are delivered through providers and contractors who are financially viable, observe financial propriety, provide value for money in their delivery and do so within good health and safety practices. 	

> Quality Improvement sub strategy

<p>Quality of learning has a direct impact on issues such as participation, achievement and workforce development. We need to be clear what our customers want, what their expectations are, how close we are to satisfying them and how to achieve excellence.</p>		<p>Our strategic objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure continuous improvement in the quality, choice and accessibility of learning. • Maintain a strong focus on areas of relative weakness. • Increase learner participation, retention and achievement. • Recognise and further develop excellence in education and training. • Develop a greater understanding of 'quality', in terms of individual and employer perspectives. • Raise levels of learner and employer satisfaction. • Foster a 'quality of learning' culture throughout the provider network, which focuses on meeting flexibly the needs of learners and employers. • Encourage innovation in the development and delivery of learning opportunities.
Levers of influence	Activities to achieve strategic objectives	Partners
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating quality improvement into the provider planning process for all LSC funded provision. • Establish Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) that achieve higher standards and increase participation. 	<p>Providers, Adult Learning Inspectorate, Ofsted, Employment Service, Learning and Skills Development Agency, Association of Colleges, Association of Work Based Learning, South West of England Regional Development Agency, national LSC, other local LSCs.</p>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting the Standards Fund at improving areas of weakness and supporting the professional development of staff. • Establishing an Innovation Fund to encourage new methods of raising quality. 	
Knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating international methods of good practice where appropriate. • Responding to the outcomes of research by using new knowledge to inform actions that will improve provision. • Encouraging collaboration between providers on the sharing of good practice. • Sharing good practice with other LSCs. • Encouraging providers to investigate and act on learners' reasons for leaving early, extend and develop customer feedback processes and satisfaction surveys. 	
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting excellence including successful use of the Standards Fund and the development of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). 	
Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with providers to continuously improve quality in response to the outcomes of reviews. • Responding to the specific outcomes of area and provider inspection reports. • Applying the same standards to all forms of LSC funded provision and ensure that providers take responsibility for resolving areas of weakness. 	
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review performance through the provider performance review system and the self assessment framework. 	

> Knowledge and Research sub strategy

<p>The development of a sound and comprehensive knowledge base is essential to evidence based strategy and planning. Gaps in knowledge need to be filled quickly and information flows speeded up if we are to achieve a collective understanding of how the learning and skills market works, how imbalances can be resolved and how to plan for an uncertain future.</p>	<p>Our strategic objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that our strategic decisions are grounded in a sound evidence base and that knowledge is acted upon. • Ensure that our research programme is responsive to the changing and future needs of individuals, employers, communities and partners. • Contribute to identifying, mapping and strengthening intellectual capital in the county. • Provide a hub for the integration, interpretation and dissemination of knowledge on the learning agenda in Somerset. • Contribute to other initiatives for knowledge and information pooling in Somerset, the South West and nationally. • Enable innovative thinking and the creation of new knowledge to meet the current and future challenges faced by the learning community. 	
<p>Levers of influence</p>	<p>Activities to achieve strategic objectives</p>	<p>Partners</p>
<p>Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that all planning activities are supported by robust research and effective knowledge management. 	<p>Somerset Strategic Partnership, Somerset Learning Partnership, Somerset Intelligence Network, Somerset Connexions, South West of England Regional Development Agency, Regional Observatory, Learning and Skills Development Agency, other LSCs, Employment Service, Regional Assembly, Somerset County Council, Somerset Libraries, Arts and Information Service.</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning and funding relevant primary and secondary research projects through the LSC budget. • Supporting other relevant research activities through the Local Initiatives Fund and the European Social Fund. • Where appropriate, applying either of the above funding streams to support inter-agency and LSC regional initiatives. • Producing an annual learning and skills needs assessment of the county. 	
<p>Knowledge management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing to 'learning networks' and encouraging collective activities that facilitate the articulation and sharing of knowledge throughout the learning community. • Understanding, unblocking and utilising informal knowledge flows in the community. • Using, supporting and contributing to formal information sharing initiatives including the Somerset Intelligence Network and the Regional Observatory. • Maintaining a flexible and responsive research capability within the LSC and integrating this with the activities and knowledge bases of strategic partners. • Internally conducting secondary research reviews to inform colleagues and establish areas of focus for future research, drawing on existing knowledge in the learning community. • Supporting the development of a vision and forecast of skills needs in the next 10 years and linking this to the economic development strategy of the Somerset Strategic Partnership. • Identifying predictors of achievement by young people at levels 2 and 3 to establish where the blockages are and how to resolve them. • Carrying out a risk and sensitivity analysis to assess the external factors that will accelerate or suppress the take up of learning over the next 5 years. • Carry out consultations with learners and non-learners to generate direct feedback on perception, experience and aspiration. • Reviewing post-16 provision in Somerset with the aim of achieving greater coherence, quality, collaboration and value for money by putting the learner first. • Maintaining a comprehensive library and information base for internal and external use and ensuring that information is promptly communicated and disseminated. • Carrying out social exclusion research. 	
<p>Marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Championing effective knowledge management practices. 	

> Development and Regeneration sub strategy

<p>The development of provision and access will play a key role in the achievement of our strategic aims. Through discretionary and capital funding we can support and enhance activities delivered through other LSC funding streams and provide opportunities for individuals and communities at the margins of mainstream learning provision.</p>	<p>Our strategic objectives</p> <p>To work with partners and other appropriate groups focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening participation to and improving opportunities for learning. • Equality of opportunity, access and inclusion. • Urban and rural regeneration and community capacity building. • Targeted actions to support sustainable economies. • Competitiveness and entrepreneurship. • Contributing to a viable Somerset strategy on sustainable development. • Achieving visibility within and accountability to local communities. 	
Levers of influence	Activities to achieve strategic objectives	Partners
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and securing support for the development strategy. • Identifying and using synergies between Somerset LSC's development strategy and Somerset's economic development strategy. • Identifying priorities for the use of discretionary funding which complement mainstream activity but which focus on those individuals and communities at the margins and on small businesses. • Initiating joint actions and projects with South West LSCs and other partners. • Identifying shortfalls in existing capacity or provision and new organisations or groups best placed to address them. • Utilising existing networks and developing new partnerships to meet shortfalls in capacity and provision. • Working with the national LSC property team to ensure effective utilisation of capital funds. • Implementing a sustainability action plan with an emphasis on raising awareness, delivering meaningful improvements and acting as an exemplar organisation. 	<p>Providers, Somerset Learning Partnership, Somerset Strategic Partnership, Somerset Connexions, Somerset Information and Guidance Network, Somerset Education Business Link, Somerset Youth Partnership, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP), South West of England Regional Development Agency, Employment Service, Probation Service, community and voluntary organisations, employer organisations, trades unions, statutory agencies, south west LSCs.</p>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively seek additional sources of funding to support learning and skills, economic development, regeneration and sustainability activities. • Optimising the application of available discretionary funding, including European Social Fund and the Local Initiatives Fund. • Ensure that new discretionary funding initiatives are successful and subsequently embedded in the core activities of the post-16 sector. • Facilitating improved access to European funding for partners in the community. • Improving access to and enhancing further education and community provision through investment of capital funding. 	
Knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working via the Somerset Strategic Partnership. • Establishing effective internal communication to support the development of new initiatives. 	
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using exemplar behaviour by the LSC to promote sustainable development. • Promote the successful deployment of discretionary funding to encourage continued funding of high quality innovative projects. 	
Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that good sustainability practices become fully integrated into the day to day working of Somerset LSC. • Working with partners to periodically update the development strategy to ensure it continually meets the needs of learners, businesses and communities. 	
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active monitoring of progress on development, regeneration and sustainability, within the LSC's review system. 	

> Partnering sub strategy

<p>Somerset LSC can only achieve its remit through effective partnerships with a wide range of organisations and networks. We value the knowledge, expertise and viewpoints of others. We are keen to build on existing success and good practice by establishing mutual goals and a commitment to getting results for learners in Somerset.</p>	<p>Our strategic objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with others to identify how collaborative activities can ensure that learning and skills contribute to economic prosperity and support community priorities. • Achieve integration of strategies and actions with key local and regional partners. • Play an active role in the development, promotion and early achievements of the Somerset Strategic Partnership. • Initiate, promote and facilitate networking, information sharing and good practice between LSCs regionally and nationally. 	
Levers of influence	Activities to achieve strategic objectives	Partners
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying roles, responsibilities, priorities and opportunities for collaboration. • Building strong, effective and mutually supportive planning relationships with partner organisations. • Planning jointly to reduce duplication of effort. 	All partners, including those listed in the preceding sub strategies.
Knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening and developing our relationships with an increasingly wide range of voluntary, community and business organisations. • Where appropriate, working with other South West LSCs to provide a conduit for liaison with partner organisations at a regional level. • Initiating collective activities that facilitate the articulation and sharing of knowledge throughout the learning community. 	
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting a 'learner first' focus in all work with partners. • Council members locally, regionally and nationally to act as champions and opinion formers. • Using exemplar behaviour by the LSC to encourage effective partnership working. 	
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging the effectiveness and impact of our strategies and collaborative working on individual lives, communities and business competitiveness. 	

> Appendix 1: List of Somerset LSC Council members

The members of the Somerset Learning and Skills Council are:

JANE BARRIE: (Chairman) Also Chairman of Somerset Health Authority.

DUGALD SANDEMAN: (Executive Director)

DORIS ANSARI OBE, JP: South West of England Regional Development Agency representative and Member of Cornwall County Council.

MICHAEL BEAUMONT

IAN BENNETT: Principal of Strode College, Somerset.

JOHN BLOOMFIELD: Director and Works Manager, UCB Cellophane Ltd, Bridgwater.

ALAN BRALEY: Vice-Chair of Governors at Yeovil College and a consultant on disability and inclusion issues.

RUPERT ELLIOT: Principal of Lufton Manor College (Specialist Residential College of Further Education for students with learning difficulties and part of the Mencap National College).

PETER HILLMAN: MD of Hillman Associates and a Director of TQMI (organisations which work with a wide range of clients to help improve performance).

BRYAN LEAKER: Resort Manager, Butlins Skyline, Minehead.

MARGARET LUCK MBE: Quality Advisor, Education Department, Somerset County Council.

SANDRA MANSER: Company Director, running her own consultancy.

PAUL O'SHEA: South West Regional Secretary of UNISON (over 80,000 regional members).

ELAINE PETERS: Chief Executive of South Somerset District Council.

DR DAVID RADFORD

JOHN WHITE: Director of Taunton Race Course and former Managing Director of a Taunton textile business. Chairman of Taunton and West Somerset Youth Justice Panel.

> Appendix 2: Summary of consultation respondents

In October and November 2001, written responses to the 'Consultation on Outline Strategic Plan 2002/05' were received from the following stakeholders:

- Business Link
- Cannington College
- Commodore Naval Aviation, Yeovilton
- E B Training
- EYDCP
- Hickley Valtone Ltd
- HM Prison Shepton Mallet
- Internal - Somerset LSC staff
- Locomotivation
- NCH Steps
- NHS Executive
- Numatic International Ltd
- ReMIT
- Sexey's School
- Shepton Veterinary Group
- Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Somerset College of Arts and Technology
- Somerset Education Business Partnership
- Somerset Education Development Service
- Somerset Libraries Arts and Information Service
- Somerset Rural Youth Project
- Somerset Social Services
- South West Museums Council
- St Dunstan's Community School
- SWAFET
- The Church of England, Diocese of Bath and Wells
- Thorne and Thorne Solicitors
- Wordworks (UK) Ltd
- Yeovil College
- Youth Offending Team

(30 responses; 236 external parties consulted)

In January 2001, formal responses to feedback on the 'Draft Strategic Plan 2002/05' were received from the following stakeholders:

- AVE Communications Consultancy for the Information Age
- Dartington Foods plc
- David Laws MP, Yeovil
- Dee Rogers, South West TUC
- Education Department, Somerset County Council
- EEF Western (Engineering Employers' Federation Western)
- Fairmead School, Yeovil
- Fair Play, South West
- Internal
- Learning and Skills Development Agency
- National Office
- Robin Morris
- Social Services, Somerset County Council

(13 responses; 288 external parties consulted)

> Appendix 3: Qualifications framework with NVQ Level equivalency

NVQ Level	Qualification
5	NVQ Level 5, Higher degree.
4	NVQ Level 4, First Degree, Teaching Qualification, Nursing Qualification, HNC/HND, RSA Higher Diploma.
3 (Advanced Level)	NVQ Level 3, 2 or more Advanced Levels, Advanced Modern Apprenticeship, RSA Advanced Diploma, ONCX/OND, BTEC National, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, Trade Apprenticeship, Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education.
2 (Intermediate Level)	NVQ Level 2, Foundation Modern Apprenticeship, 5 or more GCSE's at grades A-C, 1 Advanced Level, GNVQ Intermediate, RSA Diploma, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC General.
1 (Foundation Level)	NVQ Level 1, less than 5 GCSEs (at grades A-C), GNVQ Foundation.
Entry Level	Certificate of (educational) achievement

Basic skills entry level qualifications

Level	Examples of skills required
Entry 3	Numeracy: To add or subtract using three-digit numbers. Literacy: Organise writing in short paragraphs.
Entry 2	Numeracy: Read and understand information in basic diagrams and charts. Literacy: Use punctuation correctly, including capital letters, full stops and question marks.
Entry 1	Numeracy: Recognise and name common shapes. Literacy: Read and obtain information from common signs and symbols.

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