

Learning and Skills Council

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Local Strategic Plan 2002-05

Shropshire



Learning+Skills Council
Shropshire

> Chairman's Foreword

The operational area for the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire (referred to as 'Shropshire LSC area' throughout this document) includes the largely rural, land-based economy of Shropshire and the mainly urban economy of Telford and Wrekin. The key issues within this area are diverse and include addressing the recent adversity in the rural parts of the county; developing the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure across the entire area; encouraging investment by high value industries, attracting company headquarters and expanding the breadth of the industry base within the county.

This Strategic Plan sets out the key strategic priorities for the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire and outlines the strategic objectives that we propose to follow to address these priorities. It describes how we are going to satisfy the Learning and Skills Council's mission and work towards our key targets. This Plan relates to the period from April 2002 until March 2005 and will be updated annually to maintain a 3 year rolling plan to improve all post-16 learning in the Shropshire LSC area.

We cannot work in isolation and much of what we do will only be achieved by working in collaboration with a variety of organisations. The Learning and Skills Council has both a planning and funding role, which is significantly different from its predecessor organisations. There will be a significant element of collaborative planning with key agencies in the community where post-16 education and training is key to their success. We are a new organisation with a challenging, broad remit and our early priorities will be in the research, consultation and planning effort to ensure the strategies are soundly based and effective.

We thank you for your support in creating this document and the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire looks forward to moving forward together with partners to deliver this Plan.



Nigel Pursey
Acting Chair (June 2001 to April 2002)
Learning and Skills Council Shropshire



Robert Hartley
Chair (Commenced April 2002)
Learning and Skills Council Shropshire

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> Letter from the Executive Director

The delivery of the strategic plan in a timely, effective and efficient way, will only happen through excellent partnerships of the Learning and Skills Council with local organisations. The local Learning and Skills Council office has a staff of around 50 people supporting the activities necessary to carry out our work in these partnerships.

We are a planning and funding body and have resources aimed at working with partners to develop and deliver programmes for colleges, training providers, sixth forms and many others who are in the front line of teaching and learning. We also have staff whose role is to ensure that quality improvement and issues of Equality and Diversity are high on our agenda.

We are a major funding body and will act with high standards of integrity and probity to ensure that Government money is spent wisely. Annually we will produce an associated Business Plan, which describes in more detail our activities and funding for that year. We encourage you to read this year's version (when it is available) in association with this Strategic Plan.

The Business Plan will describe a more sharply focused set of priority actions developed in conjunction with partner organisations. We recognise that flexibility and responsiveness are also important in making a real difference to the area, and we will endeavour to use the funding stream we administer to grasp opportunities and meet needs as they arise during the life of the Business Plan.

I look forward to working with you to take the aspirations included in the Strategic Plan and transform them into reality, making an important contribution to the improvement of learning in Shropshire.



Dr Philip Extance
Executive Director
Learning and Skills Council Shropshire

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> 1. Guide to the Strategic Plan

To assist the reader and aid their understanding of this document, this section briefly highlights the various sections of the document. Each section is described individually and its links with the rest of the document explained.

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Section 3 Learning and Skills Council's Vision and Mission	page 7
This provides a basis for the whole strategy. It describes what our vision and mission is and the key tasks that have been set out by the Secretary of State for Education.	
Section 4 National Learning Targets	page 9
The method of measurement towards the vision and mission have been set out in the form of these interim targets to 2004. It is these numerical goals combined with the mission that drives the rest of our strategy. All our activities will contribute in varying degrees to these targets.	
Section 5 Local Delivery of the Plan	page 10
We are responsible for the delivery of the vision, mission and key tasks within the county of Shropshire with sections 4 and 5 setting out our large remit. How we ensure we have the capabilities to successfully deliver this plan and how we aim to finance it are outlined in this section.	
Section 6 Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin: An overview of the Shropshire LSC operational area	page 14
To support our strategy and to justify the direction we are proposing, this section describes the main features of the county in terms of its economy, its population and its current learning provision. We have provided a statistical portrait of Shropshire segregated into these three categories.	
Section 7 Local Targets	page 39
This section provides the links between National Learning Targets and our strategic priorities, introducing the local disaggregation of the national targets.	
Section 8 Local Key Strategic Priorities and Objectives	page 41
This is the main section in the document and outlines our Key Strategic Priorities. This defines the direction we shall take over the next three years in each of our three categories of Skills, Participation and Learning. Related strategic objectives are set out which provide more specific detail about how we will achieve our Key Strategic Priorities.	
Section 9 Evaluation of the Plan	page 58
A significantly important section which outlines the process by which we will measure the success of our plan on an annual basis, to inform and guide our future strategies.	
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Appendix 2 a list of the learning providers contracted with and operating in the Shropshire LSC area.	page 61
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> 2. Executive Summary

Introduction

The creation of the Learning and Skills Council represents a comprehensive reform of post-16 learning in England, integrating the planning and funding of all post-compulsory learning outside higher education. This wide remit enables us to provide effective co-ordination and strategic planning at national, regional, sectoral and local levels. Our statutory duty to encourage participation in education and training, places the individual learner, for the first time at the heart of the system. This Strategic Plan has been developed within a national framework that defines our key objectives and targets.

LSC's Mission and Vision

The mission and long term vision of the Learning and Skills Council can be stated briefly and simply:

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.

Our key tasks as set out in the Secretary of State's remit letter of 9 November 2000, are:

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

National Learning Targets

To guide us towards the vision, we have a few very clearly defined targets to serve as the principal benchmarks for progress over the next three years. These will be the key measures of our achievements.

Key Objectives and National Learning Targets for 2004

Key Objectives and National Targets	Shropshire's position in 2000	Shropshire's minimum target for 2004
1. Extend participation in education, learning and training. A target of 80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning.	13,576 (86%)	15,125 (92.5%)
2. Increase engagement of employers in workforce development. (Measure of employer engagement to be developed)	Not available	To be set
3. Raise achievement of young people. A target of 85% at level 2 by age 19 and 55% at level 3 by age 19.	4,771 (95.6%) at level 2 by age 19 2,738 (54.9%) at level 3 by age 19	5,125 (105.1%) at level 2 by age 19 3,026 (62.1%) at level 3 by age 19
4. Raise achievement of adults. Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults 52% of adults at level 3 % of adults at level 2.	Not available 85,000 (43.9%) Not available	Raise achievement of 6,177 adults 100,473 (51.9%) To be set
5. Raise quality of education and training and user satisfaction. (Measure and targets to be set)	Not available	To be set

Local Delivery

Strategically and operationally the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire enables the national policies to be delivered effectively within the local economy and community. We cannot deliver this local strategy or effect major improvements alone. Everything that we do will need to be in partnership with a variety of organisations and agencies both public and private and central to this collaborative approach is the opportunity to bring together appropriate local organisations that can then agree and share common goals. Local targets for us, in line with the National Learning Targets for 2004 have been proposed. Our achievement of these targets will help to ensure that we meet our local and national objectives.

Overview of our operational area

The Shropshire LSC area is the UK's largest inland county covering approximately 350k hectares. The population is now about 432,400, which is an increase of 20,800 (5%) since 1991. By 2005 the population is projected to increase to 441,900.

The economy is relatively diverse but currently dominated by a number of business sectors that have significantly changed their profile over the past twenty years particularly with the reduction in the reliance on Agriculture and related activities.

There has been a marked increase in full time employment from 49% in 1998 to nearly 58% in 2000. Nearly one third of the employed workforce is in the managerial, professional and associate professional occupations, with 15% employed in the secretarial and clerical occupations. Reflecting the area's manufacturing dependency nearly 30% are employed in craft and machine operative occupations.

Over 50% of the workforce are employed in less than 600 business units with Telford & Wrekin figures showing over 60% of the workforce in less than 250 businesses.

Shropshire, excluding Telford and Wrekin has a significantly older age profile than the national average, whilst Telford & Wrekin has a significantly younger age profile with a population density well above the national figure of 3.81 persons per hectare, whilst all the other districts of the county are considerably lower.

The low population density in most districts means that rural isolation is a significant barrier to participation in learning that we must consider. Learners' travel to their place of study is more of an issue for us than many other local LSC areas.

Whilst overall retention and achievement rates are currently above the national average there is significant room for improvement. The largest scope for improvement is in the retention and achievement rates amongst Work Based Learning candidates.

Adult achievement highlights the fact that Shropshire is above the national figures for Level 1 and 2 qualifications but below at Level 3, which influences our objectives and activities.

Local Key Strategic Priorities

Our local strategy is composed of three sub-strategic areas; skills, participation and learning. The key strategic priorities for the Shropshire LSC area under each of these strategic headings are:

Skills Strategy

- We will establish processes to identify and meet the current and future skills needs of the workforce.
- We will focus major support on the skill development needs of the key employment sectors, with a particular emphasis on vocational skills and increasing the level of transferable skills.
- We will actively encourage responses to the skill requirements of "inward investors" and their aftercare needs in order to support future investment in the area's economy.
- We will stimulate the development of the local economy by ensuring there is high quality provision of learning to develop entrepreneurial skills and management skills.
- We will widen participation in Workforce Development, increasing the number of employers committed to training and developing their staff.

Participation Strategy

- We will work with partners to raise the aspirations of 16-18 year olds and so increase their levels of participation in education and training.
- We will work with partners to raise the aspirations of adults, stimulating and encouraging a greater number of people into learning and seeking to instil a culture of lifelong learning.
- We will target activity towards the reduction of the major barriers to successful participation in learning in the Shropshire LSC area.
- We will "Champion Equality and Diversity" by challenging and overcoming discrimination with respect to participation in learning.
- We will strengthen the links with the Voluntary sector and other Community groups in order to widen participation in learning.
- We will work with partners to increase the demand for, and the quality of information, advice and guidance by all members of the community.

Learning Strategy

- We will work with partners to identify and reduce literacy, numeracy and self-confidence problems.
- We will establish and support processes to improve the quality of all post-16 learning provision, increasing both retention and achievement.
- We will encourage learning provision that develops skills to maximise the employment potential of individuals.
- We will seek to establish innovative methods of teaching and learning appropriate to current and potential learners so that we are at the forefront of realising the benefits of new technology.
- We will work closely with our provider base to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all post-16 learning provision.

> 3. Learning and Skills Council's Vision and Mission

Mission and long-term vision

The Secretary of State invited the Learning and Skills Council to set out its mission and long-term vision. These can be stated briefly and simply:

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.

There has been a sharp improvement in recent years against our own "previous best". Both participation (meaning engagement in structured learning) and achievement of young people and adults in England are at historically high levels. Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that skills levels here still lag behind those of key comparators such as the United States, Germany and Japan. If, by 2010, this country is to be amongst the world leaders – say, within the top ten – in education, training and lifelong learning, we must measure best practice elsewhere, benchmark it against our own current performance and establish the framework to deliver excellence consistently and over a sustained period.

We can build on recent improvements in attainment in our schools at ages 11 and 16, and the large increase in post-16 staying-on rates. Around four-fifths of children entering secondary schools in 2000/01 achieved the expected standards in literacy and numeracy for their age: up from a little over half just a few years ago. There has also been a steady rise in achievement at age 16, the end of compulsory schooling. These improvements give a firm base on which to plan for higher levels of active participation and achievement of people aged 16–19, where our performance has improved less rapidly, and lags behind that of some comparable countries.

To realise these higher levels of achievement it will not be enough simply to improve what is on offer through our publicly supported systems, and to hope that it is taken up. Nor will it be enough to show that better skill levels are in the wider national interest, or the interests of the economy or of a given industry. We shall need to convince individual employers that systematic engagement in training and developing their workforce will raise their own productivity and competitiveness. Equally, we shall need to convince individual adults and young people that learning is exciting, life-enhancing and worthwhile.

Perhaps our greatest challenge is to convince that large group of adults who have barely participated in learning since leaving school of the return that an investment in their own skills would bring.

If we can do this, we will achieve our aspiration of world-class levels of knowledge and skills by the end of the decade, enhancing our national competitiveness.

Our key tasks

The creation of the Learning and Skills Council represents a comprehensive reform of post-16 learning in England, integrating the planning and funding of all post-compulsory learning outside of higher education.

Our key tasks as set out in the Secretary of State's remit letter of 9 November 2000, are:

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

This wide remit enables us to provide effective co-ordination and strategic planning at national, regional, sectoral and local levels. Our statutory duty to encourage participation in education and training places the individual learner, for the first time, at the heart of the system. At the same time our statutory duty to encourage employer participation in the provision of that education and training ensure that the skill needs of the economy and society will be fully met.

Equality and Diversity

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 requires us to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between people from different racial groups, men and women, people with or without a disability. Other groups will be included within our local activity reflecting some issues that are pertinent to the county e.g. an increasing proportion of the population in older age groups, who still have a significant contribution to make towards the learning and skills agenda. This duty sits alongside other key legislative requirements embedded within a variety of Acts, all of which have implications for planning, delivery and success in achieving key priorities.

We will work towards promoting equality and diversity by creating an environment in which people from all areas of the community can progress and achieve their potential for learning, skills and employment. This will be achieved by engaging and consulting continuously with the key stakeholders including,

- Learners and trainees including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD). Specific information can be found in the Key Strategic Priorities, and strategic objectives in section 8,
- Learning Providers,
- Employers,
- Community groups,
- Voluntary Sector,
- Statutory bodies.

This two-way process will ensure that equality and diversity are threaded through all of our internal and external policies, procedures and working practices. We will champion these issues through promoting good practice, challenging discrimination and encouraging others to take our lead.

> 4. National Learning Targets

Learning and Skills Council Targets

To guide us towards the vision, we have a few very clearly defined targets to serve as the principal benchmarks for progress over the next three years. The targets will support and enable us to track progress towards our wider objectives: equality of opportunity (participation and achievement of minority groups); consistency (qualitative measures at all levels); and "value added", relative to the learner's starting point.

Until now, the national targets have been largely top-down, reflecting national policy needs. This may be the right starting point, but it is not the whole story. To deliver national targets there is a need to build local engagement and ownership. Our national targets should deliver our national vision, but they should also reflect the sum of local needs. Such targets would engage people at all levels, and the prospect of achieving them would be much greater.

The targets set by the Council are intended to achieve our vision – to match the best in the world by the end of the decade. This means raising levels of participation and achievement for each cohort of young people and for the whole adult population across the full spectrum of attainment, and without disadvantage to any group.

To achieve these long-term goals we need interim targets to which we can work in the three-year timeframe of the first Corporate Plan, and of the Government's public expenditure cycle to 2004. These targets should stand proxy for a much wider set of achievements – taking account of pre-16 attainment and progression to higher education – which we shall be monitoring in detail at national, local and other levels.

Interim National Learning Targets for 2004

The table below shows the proposed target figures where possible. Only five of these targets can be set at this time due to the availability of relevant data. The Learning and Skills Council has yet to decide on four of these targets, a task which will be completed during 2002/03.

Key objectives	National Targets for 2004	2000 National Position	Minimum Local Targets for 2004*	2000 Local position
1. Extend participation in education, learning and training	80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning	75%	15,125 (92.5%)	13,576 (86%)
	Set baseline and target for adults (19+) in 2002/03			
2. Increase engagement of employers	Develop measure of employer engagement and set baselines and targets in 2002/03			
3. Raise achievement of young people	85% at Level 2 by age 19	75%	5,125 (105.1%)	4,771 (95.6%)
	55% at Level 3 by age 19	51%	3,026 (62.1%)	2,738 (54.9%)
4. Raise achievement of adults	Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults	Up to 7 million adults with literacy or numeracy difficulties	6,177	N/A
	% of adults (19+) at Level 2: target to be set in 2002/03			
	52% of adults at Level 3	47%	100,473 (51.9%)	85,000 (43.9%)
5. Raise quality of education and training and user satisfaction	Develop measure and set baselines and targets in 2002/03			

* Percentages are calculated using the ONS population projections for 2004 and include a migration factor for residents who learn outside of the Shropshire LSC area and vice versa.

> 5. Local Delivery of the Plan

Delivery through Strategy

The previous sections have outlined our mission, objectives and targets. The Learning and Skills Council is a national organisation with 47 local offices spread throughout England. The leadership comes from both the national council and the local councils, which are made up of representatives from employers and the wider community. Strategically the local Council (see Appendix 1) provides the steer to enable these national policies to be delivered effectively within the local economy and community.

We cannot deliver this local strategy or effect major improvements alone. Everything that we do will need to be in partnership with a variety of organisations and agencies both public and private. The Learning and Skills Council must however maintain its accountability, which could all too easily become obscured by the complexity of the cross agency work. Central to this collaborative approach is the opportunity to bring together appropriate local organisations that can then agree and share the common goals. We have indicated later in this document the organisations that we view as critical to the success of each individual strategic objective. In many instances we are not the appropriate lead organisation and instead would be an actively working partner.

Our guiding principle is to establish effective long term relationships that respond to the learners' and employers' needs, improves choice and access, drives up quality and performance and contributes to our outcome targets.

Delivery through Funding

A very important role of the Learning and Skills Council is to fund learning provision. We control substantial budgets and have a major role to play in improving post-16 learning in Shropshire. The main financial responsibilities, which are detailed further in our Local Business Plan, can be summarised as follows:

Further Education provision in FE and Sixth Form Colleges

Work Based Learning provision
(Modern Apprenticeships, Vocational Training, Life Skills, Preparatory Training)

Co-Financing
(European Social Funding to assist the Learning and Skills Council meet its objectives)

Local Initiative Funding
(Numerous bespoke local activities in addition to mainstream initiatives)

Workforce Development

Adult and Community Learning

Education Business Links

School Sixth Form provision
(New for 2002/03)

Co-financing means channelling both European Social Fund (ESF) money and the required match funding to providers in a single funding stream, securing better value for money and promoting greater coherence, co-ordination and targeting of provision. As an approved co-financing organisation (CFO), Shropshire LSC will dovetail the priorities of the ESF Objective 3 Programme with the Learning and Skills Council's strategic aims and local priorities. This will allow a greater local strategic approach to be taken of training and educational activity, promoting linkage between projects, ensuring their relevance to the needs of the sub region. It enables a significant extra level of European funding to be used to finance activities that supplement our mainstream initiatives, allowing greater flexibility and choice for learners in the Shropshire LSC area. Our Co-financing Plan (CFP), has been approved by the Government Office, and sets out the work that we intend to do regarding the respective Objective 3 measures and priorities.

Co-financing alone will not provide the financial support required to achieve our overall objectives and we intend to bid for or access a range of other external funding either from the European Commission, Advantage West Midlands or from Central Government. Parts of Shropshire have been designated with the necessary status to enable certain funds to be accessed e.g. Rural Regeneration Zone, Market Towns Initiative, Objective 2 (transitional and core).

The Local Initiative Fund (LIF) is another means available to Shropshire LSC to finance a variety of local activity. This fund is designed to primarily support activities for lifelong learning and workforce development; targeting social disadvantage, equality of opportunity and employment regeneration; and promoting attainment in young people leaving school and about to leave school, who may need support in preparing for, or succeeding in education and training.

Delivery through Partnerships

Working in tandem with other organisations is the only way in which our strategy can be delivered efficiently and effectively. We have proposed key partners against each strategic objective later in the document. Each organisation will have its own strategy and local targets to which progress should be made either directly or indirectly as a result of collaboration.

The success of the partnerships will be very much dependent on the willingness of partners to share data, experiences, working practices and forward planning. The development of the Memorandum of Understanding with Advantage West Midlands and the Learning and Skills Council commitment to engagement in all aspects of the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA) provides us with a good basis for future working.

To ensure that our strategy fits within a coherent framework for the Shropshire LSC area and the West Midlands, key partner relations are essential with the following,

- Lifelong Learning Partnerships – (Shropshire LLP, Telford & Wrekin LLP) two partnerships in the county that provide essential communication with current and potential learners, are crucial for promoting local innovation and improving local planning and delivery.
- Trade Unions – stimulating interest and demand for learning amongst employees.
- Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) – co-ordinating the work of government departments in the West Midlands.
- Advantage West Midlands (AWM - Regional Development Agency) – working to improve the region's infrastructure, people skills, economic productivity and competitiveness.

- Rural Regeneration Zone Partnership (RRZP) – as part of the West Midlands Economic Strategy, Advantage West Midlands has designated six Regeneration Zones. The Rural Regeneration Zone covers rural areas in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
- Jobcentre Plus (Employment Service) – support for finding and keeping employment.
- Connexions – a new Government service to support young people through their teenage years, and the transition to adult life. Connexions enable them to make informed learning choices through advice, guidance and support measures.
- Sector Skills Councils (from April 2002 – formerly National Training Organisations) – to draw together wider employment interests, including professional bodies, Trades Unions and Trade Associations. Providing sectoral market information to influence training delivery, curriculum development and qualifications.
- University for Industry (Ufi) – to stimulate demand for lifelong learning among individuals and businesses, and to improve access to relevant, high quality learning opportunities, especially through **learnirect**.
- Economic Development Agencies (Telford Development Agency and Shropshire Investment Bureau).
- Early Years Childcare Development Partnership – childcare issues.
- Shropshire Partnership – a core of 18 organisations representing the public, private and voluntary sectors across Shropshire.
- Telford and Wrekin Partnership – Telford and Wrekin Strategic partnership is the umbrella group for all partnerships within Telford & Wrekin.
- Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and Business Link.
- Shropshire County Council.
- Telford and Wrekin Council.
- Local Authority District Councils.

Key Delivery Partners

We shall implement our strategy through working with the following organisations using their learning provision,

- Further Education Colleges including Sixth Form Colleges.
- School Sixth Forms (from April 2002).
- Private Learning Providers.
- Adult and Community learning providers.
- Education Business Partnership.
- Community and Voluntary Organisations – particularly for disadvantaged and excluded young people and adults.
- Shropshire and Telford Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership.
- Business Link Shropshire – for delivery of workforce development services including Investors in People.

Delivery through Quality Improvement

It is our responsibility to ensure that the learning provision offered is of a high standard and that it meets the needs of all learners. We need to improve some of our contracted provision and maintain a proactive, monitoring role with all of our providers. We shall share good practice amongst providers and instigate urgent improvements where necessary so as not to let the quality of provision diminish. Regular performance reviews with all providers allow us to closely monitor the performance from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

Delivery through Internal Local Quality

Internal quality assurance and continuous professional development are important if we are to raise standards and effect progress towards the LSC's key tasks and targets. We are a new office and are making significant progress in developing the necessary systems and processes to provide a framework around which our effectiveness and efficiency will be maximized. We will focus on developing internal quality procedures; a customer charter defining our customer service standards; a local quality policy; and individual training and development plans for all staff within a national comprehensive performance management framework.

On 30 July 2001 Shropshire LSC made a public commitment to working towards achieving the Investors in People standard.

Delivery through Health and Safety

The Learning & Skills Council is committed to Health and Safety which plays a key role in raising standards. The primary responsibility for Health and Safety lies with our providers and the council requires that all providers have a planned approach to Health and Safety with the resources needed to provide competent Safety management.

The Learning and Skills Council will act as a support mechanism, becoming a catalyst for change and continual improvement through the sharing of good practice and dissemination of information throughout the provider network.

> 6. Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin: An overview of the Shropshire LSC operational area

Introduction

The first sub-heading "Our operational area", of this section of the strategic plan provides a brief overview of the geography and demography of the Shropshire Learning and Skills Council area.

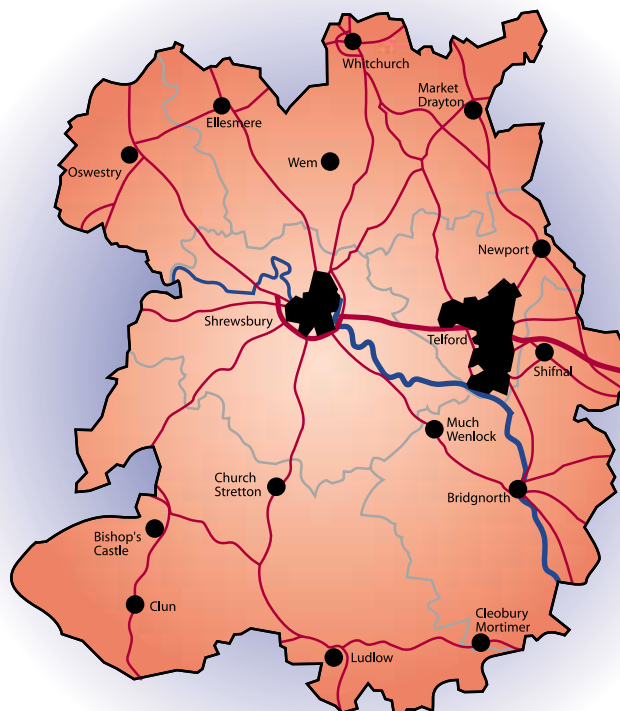
The sub-heading, "Economy" provides an overview of the economy and key data that highlights the marked differences between the economies of the two local authority areas, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, looking at employment, key sectors, size of business units and workforce skills. This sets the scene for the demand side of learning from employers.

The "Learners" sub-heading provides an overview of learners showing the age distribution of the population and its characteristics being summarised. The latest statistics summarising where young people go, post-16 are compared to the post-17 and post-18 data. Basic skills needs are illustrated across the area, highlighting significant differences. Again the geographical factors of where young people and adults participate in learning are highlighted. The distribution of the qualifications and subjects being studied are also summarised.

Finally the "Learning Delivery" indicates the quality of the learning being provided, though much of the data available is based on inspection data that may be up to 3 or 4 years old.

There is a summary of the implications of this data at the end of each subdivision, which aims to set the scene for the strategic direction proposed. It is recognised that the data is incomplete and in some cases, out of date. A key role for the Learning and Skills Council is to improve the gathering and analysis of such data to better inform learners and providers.

Operational Area



Our Operational Area

The Shropshire LSC area is the UK's largest inland county covering approximately 350k hectares. The population is now about 432,400, which is an increase of 20,800 (5%) since 1991, mainly in the male population (58%). The total population is projected to increase to 441,900 by 2005. Migration accounted for 77% of the change. The population density is 1.24 persons per hectare compared to the national figure of 3.81 persons per hectare.

The county is part of the West Midlands region, which covers 13,004 square kilometres and accounts for a 9% share of the UK's population (5.3 million regional population). With more than half of the region's population (3 million) living in large conurbation areas, the region's density (4.10 people per hectare) is slightly higher than the average for all English regions. Over 2 million people reside in the region's rural counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

The indigenous economy is relatively diverse but currently dominated by a number of business sectors that have significantly changed their profile over the past twenty years particularly with the reduction on the reliance on Agriculture and related activities.

The diversity of the economic base is further complicated by the contrast between the rural and urban industrial and commercial centres where the majority of key and emerging business sectors are located. These urban areas, principally Telford and Shrewsbury have expanded industrially and commercially by attracting the majority of inward investment within the county. Almost half of the population of the county live in these two centres. In addition there are a number of small centres of population in the market towns, but a very significant proportion of people are based in rural areas. This is estimated at 33% of the population as a whole, however if we look at Shropshire excluding Telford & Wrekin this figure rises to 47% of that area's population who reside outside of the main towns.

Telford has been identified as one of the 25 most dynamic centres in the UK. The rapid growth in population, housing, economic development and infrastructure is anticipated to continue well into this century. Designated a New Town in 1968 the population has grown by over 50,000 in the last 30 years both by in-migration and by natural increase. The current population is approaching 125,000 and is predicted to reach 136,500 by 2006. Telford still has a large manufacturing base employing 32% of the workforce compared to 23% in the West Midlands and 16% nationally. Particular industrial strengths are in the Automotive Components, Electronics and Polymers sectors.

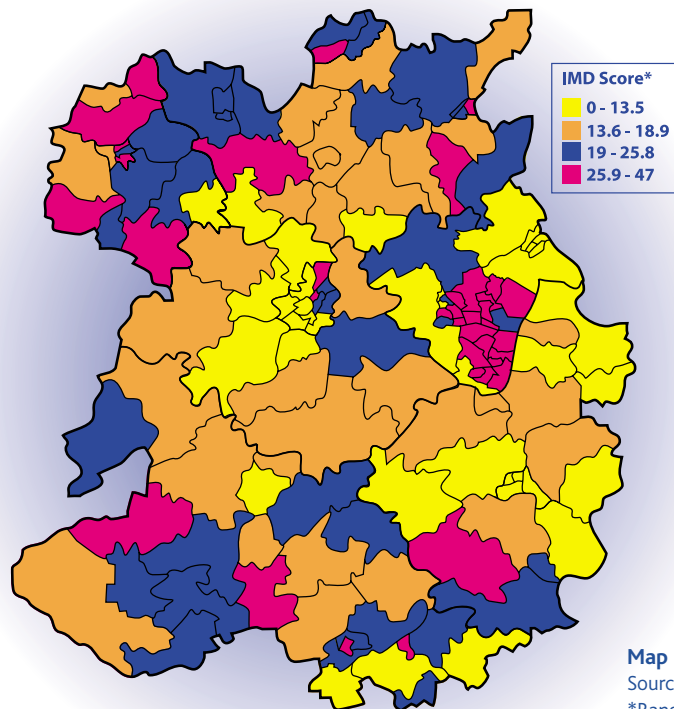
Shrewsbury is a county town that for centuries has been the regional centre of the Marches and of considerable importance to central Wales. It has a population of 97,400 and remains a busy commercial centre housing a number of district and regional offices. New business parks are under construction designed to attract further investment to this area. As a retail centre Shrewsbury is home to a range of major multiple outlets. Tourism and the development of a leisure and evening economy are emerging sectors of significance to the future success of the town. The town is home to an important livestock market. Although the manufacturing sector has reduced over the years there still remains a diverse range of engineering companies to the north of the town.

The market towns provide important economic centres not only for the indigenous population of that area but also of their wider hinterland. These centres are under threat from the competition of out-of-town developments and major shopping centres and need to re-invent their role and function. To this end, regeneration and economic forums have been established across the county, for example the East Shropshire Regeneration Partnership bring together four market towns that share common challenges.

The transport infrastructure provides vital connections with the West Midlands conurbation as well as Manchester, Mid-Wales, South Wales, London and further afield. Shropshire is the gateway for movement between Mid-Wales and the centre of the UK. It also lies on the north-south axis of passenger and freight movements along the western edge of England.

The Government categorise each individual ward in the country in the Index of Deprivation, collating the results of six different indices to give an overall score. The distribution of these scores is shown in Map 2. The areas which are most deprived are located around the main towns and in some of the more rural areas.

Index of Deprivation (2000)



Map 2
Source: DETR, 2001
*Range is 0 to 47 where 0 is the least deprived area

Economy

The economy of the Shropshire LSC area makes up 8.3% of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the West Midlands and 0.7% of that in the UK with Telford & Wrekin at 0.3% and Shropshire at 0.4%.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Total GDP (£m)				
Year	UK	West Midlands	Telford and Wrekin	Shropshire CC
1993	562,857	46,859	1,452	2,118
1994	593,931	49,577	1,606	2,291
1995	622,389	52,407	1,780	2,459
1996	657,775	54,851	1,934	2,553
1997	700,567	57,783	2,067	2,684
1998	743,314	61,130	2,208	2,859
GDP per head (£)				
Year	UK	West Midlands	Telford and Wrekin	Shropshire CC
1993	9,671	8,855	10,175	7,808
1994	10,170	9,352	11,207	8,406
1995	10,619	9,869	12,339	8,952
1996	11,185	10,309	13,375	9,229
1997	11,871	10,845	14,164	9,663
1998	12,548	11,455	14,843	10,231
Average Annual Growth in GDP per head 1993 - 1998				
%	5.3	5.3	7.8	5.6

Table 6.1

Source: Business Competitiveness Indicators – May 2001 issue

- GDP estimates use the income-based measure and can be described as the total of all incomes earned from the production of goods and services. The county estimates of GDP measure it on a workplace basis, with the income from employment of commuters allocated to the region where they work, rather than the region where they live. GDP per head is the amount of wealth generated per head of population. In Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin), GDP per head is 82% of the national figure whilst Telford & Wrekin shows a high level at 118% of the national average.

Gross Value Added (GVA) per head in manufacturing

Year	UK	West Midlands	Shropshire
1993	26,768	23,962	22,022
1994	28,969	24,857	24,873
1995	30,719	26,776	26,364
1996	32,601	28,860	30,140
1997	33,081	30,252	28,662

Year	UK	West Midlands	Shropshire
1993	4,218	556	38
1994	4,243	566	40
1995	4,205	563	42
1996	4,256	571	42
1997	4,299	573	44

Table 6.2

Gross value added per head in manufacturing (£)
Source: ACOP / ABI (ONS)

Employment in manufacturing (000s)
Source: ACOP / ABI (ONS)

- GVA per head is a measure of the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector of an economy; it is a measure of the net output generated by manufacturing enterprises per employee. Due to the types of industry located in the West Midlands (those that need high levels of labour input and produce relatively low value output) productivity has always been below the national average. However the region has been making up ground closing the gap from being 13% below the England average to being 9% below between 1993 and 1997. The figure for the Shropshire LSC area shows that GVA is below the national and regional figures. Also worthy of note is the decline in competitiveness between the latter two years despite an increase in employment rates. This leads to the conclusion that the drop in output per head was greater than the figures suggest.

Business Formation Rates

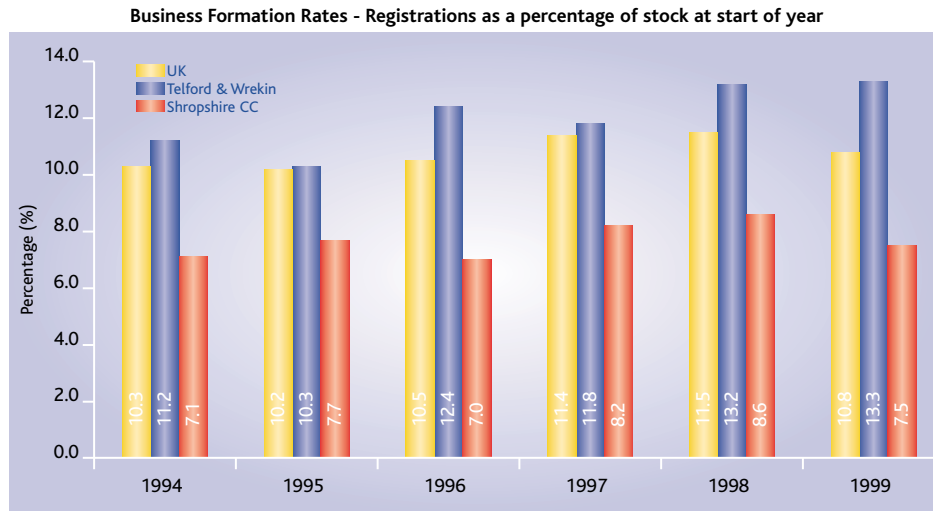


Diagram 6.1

Source: Business Competitiveness Indicators – May 2001 issue

- Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin) remains below the national rate of business formation. However Telford & Wrekin has had a +3.6% change in business registrations (1998-1999) compared to the other districts of Shropshire which have all had a negative % change.

Business Survival Rates

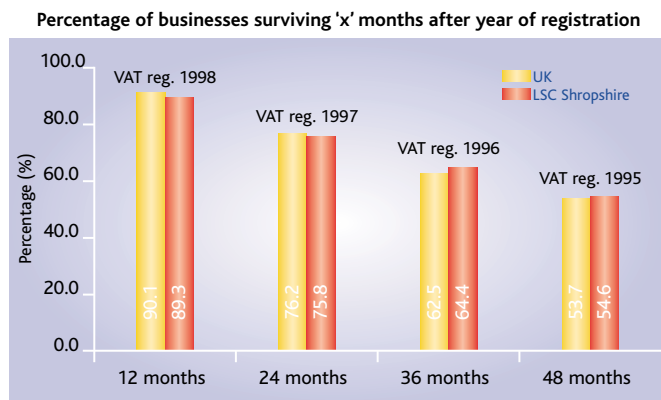


Diagram 6.2

Source: Business Competitiveness Indicators – May 2001 issue

- Although our business formation rate is low, the figures are better for business survival especially after 36 and 48 months trading.

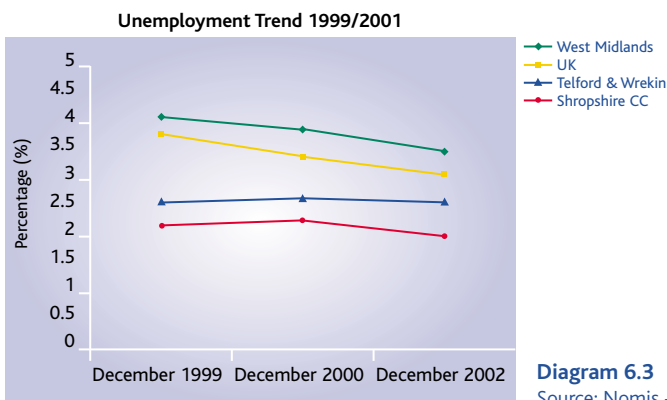
Employment

- There has been a marked increase in full time employment in Shropshire LSC's area from 49% in 1998 to nearly 58% in 2000. This figure together with those employed part-time and the self-employed means that over 83% of the workforce are in employment, this is higher than the regional rate of 77%. There is an emerging pattern in the increasing use of recruitment agencies and for part time working. 38% of women work full time and 31% work part time. This gives rise to the need for collaboration with the appropriate agencies to integrate some form of learning for those on short term contracts and small numbers of working hours to enable them to access some form of provision if desired.
- Nearly one third of the employed workforce is employed in the managerial, professional and associate professional occupations, with 15% employed in the secretarial and clerical occupations and reflecting the area's manufacturing dependency nearly 30% are employed in craft and machine operative occupations.

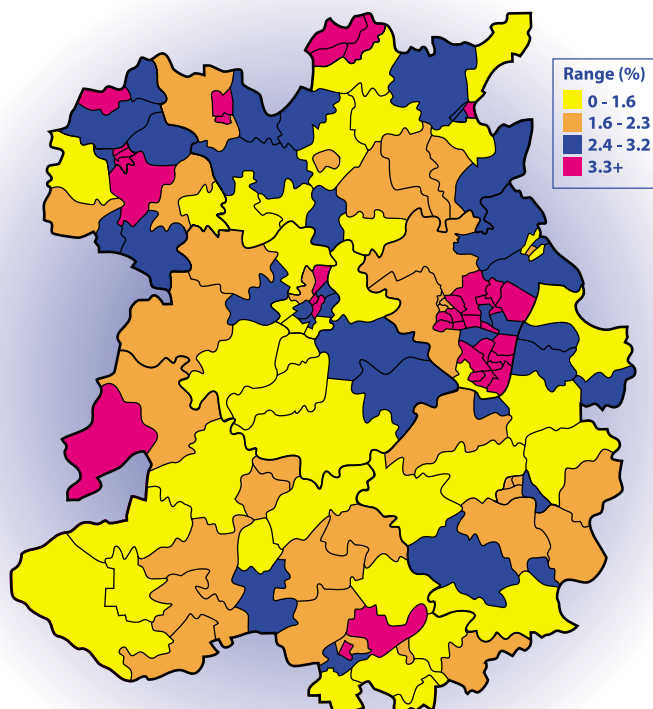
- The average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for Shropshire as a whole for 2000 was £8.91, an increase of nearly 9% on the 1999 figure. Looking at Telford & Wrekin at £9.26, an increase of nearly 12% and the rest of Shropshire at £8.61 an increase of 6% confirms that the gap between Telford & Wrekin and the rest of Shropshire is increasing compared to the 1999 figures. Comparing these figures against the regional and national figures shows that Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire are below the regional average of £9.61 and the national average of £10.28. This low wage economy was historically attractive to the Manufacturing sector, but it is now proving hard to attract people to the area to satisfy the job demand.

Unemployment

- There is a reducing unemployment rate in the area. Figures for July 2001 show Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin) at 2% and Telford & Wrekin at 2.5% compared to a regional figure of 3.7% and a National figure of 3.2%.



- The unemployment pattern within our area can be seen more clearly in Map 3 which shows unemployment percentages by individual ward.



Map 3
Source: Nomis, 2001

- Some Telford employers currently transport a significant number of workers from out of the county to meet their demand. However there is a significant "latent workforce" who, with appropriate training could develop the skills and confidence to return to the workforce. A study carried out by Telford Development Agency into the latent workforce in Telford & Wrekin showed that over three quarters are not in employment with the main factors preventing them from finding employment being, the cost of childcare, lack of available childcare, lack of access to a car, lack of appropriate skills and no suitable jobs available.

Self-Employment

- The availability of more flexible learning styles is of even more importance for the self-employed in the area, given the time pressures that they are under in running their own businesses.

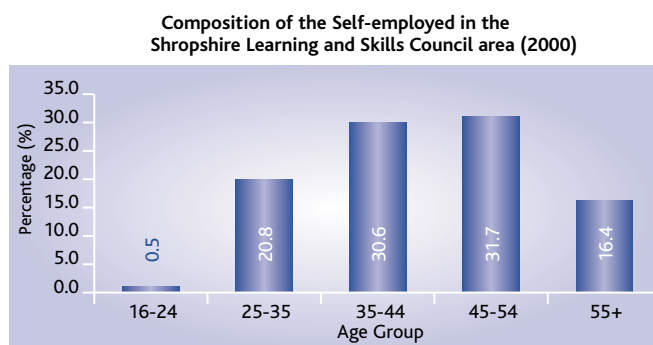


Diagram 6.4

Source: Shropshire's Workforce Analysis 2000 taken from Household Survey 2000

- The data from the Household Survey 2000 shows that nearly 9% of the workforce are self-employed, a slightly lower proportion than in 1998 but above the West Midlands regional proportion of 7.3%. The local percentage is significantly lower than the National figure of 11.3% of people self-employed as a percentage of all in employment in England. (Note: the National figure is from a different data source – NOMIS)
- Males are more than twice as likely to be self-employed than females.
- The workforce most likely to be self-employed is in Construction, Agriculture, Hunting & Forestry and Real Estate.

Note: The Real Estate classification which is used here includes a number of industries which are more prevalent in the Shropshire LSC area such as: Renting/Letting, Accounting/Book-keeping, Advertising, Labour recruitment/provision of personnel, Administration of the State, Software/hardware consultancy.

Employment by sector

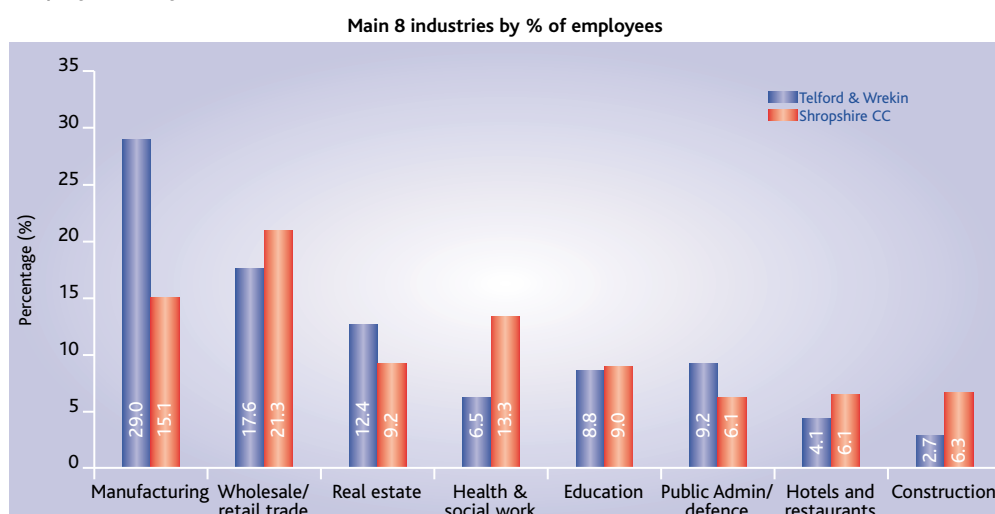


Diagram 6.5

Source: NOMIS August 2001 – ABI Workplace analysis

- Manufacturing is the second highest employment sector for Shropshire County Council's (CC) area and the highest for Telford & Wrekin. In Telford & Wrekin the Manufacturing sector holds 12% of the business units employing 29% of the workforce.
- Tourism makes an estimated contribution to our economy of over £217m per annum sustaining over 10,000 direct and indirect jobs (The complexity of the SIC data makes it difficult to establish a more accurate result). Employees in hotels, bars and restaurants account for 5.3% of the total workforce.
- As noted above Real Estate includes labour recruitment and provision of personnel i.e. Employment Agencies which account for the higher proportion showing in Telford & Wrekin.

Business Units by employee size band and number of employees

Total Figures for Shropshire CC				
Sizeband ¹	Number of Units	% of Total	Number of Employees	% of Total
1-10	12,635	91.6	29,421	28.2
11-49	980	7.1	29,030	27.9
50+	155	1.1	45,787	43.9
Total	13,795		104,238	
Total Figures for Telford & Wrekin				
Sizeband ¹	Number of Units	% of Total	Number of Employees	% of Total
1-10	3,305	85.8	11,796	15.8
11-49	425	11.0	17,331	23.2
50+	105	2.7	45,656	61.1
Total	3,850		74,783	
National Figures				
Sizeband	Number of Units	% of Total	Number of Employees	% of Total
1-10	1,798,584	83	5,416,679	22
11-49	277,567	13	6,129,098	25
50+	78,914	4	13,420,970	54
Total	2,155,065		24,966,747	

Table 6.3

Source: ABI Workplace Analysis, Nomis, 1999 and Inter-Departmental Business Register, ONS, March 2000

* - due to the sensitivity of the information the figures are rounded to the nearest 5

- The Construction Industry does not rank highly with the number of employees it has as a whole, however it does hold over 10% of the total number of units in Shropshire, accounting for over 12% of firms that employ 1-10 people (1,192 units).
- The figures confirm the extensive size of the small and micro business population in the Shropshire LSC area. It is interesting to note also that Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin) has almost 30% of its employees employed in the 1-10 category compared to Telford & Wrekin with just over 15%.
- Further in-depth analysis of the small and micro businesses show a high proportion of "Specialist Craft Industries" especially in Shropshire, which are a crucial element of the important Tourism sector for the Shropshire LSC area.
- For the Shropshire LSC area over 50% of the workforce are employed in less than 600 business units with Telford & Wrekin figures showing over 60% of the workforce in less than 250 businesses.

Sectors by Employee size band

Sector	Geographical Area	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 49	50 to 199	200 & over	Grand Total
Agriculture	Telford & Wrekin	170	35	15			220
	Shropshire CC	3415	280	60			3755
Construction	Telford & Wrekin	290	40	20			350
	Shropshire CC	1135	160	90			1385
Education	Telford & Wrekin				10		10
	Shropshire CC				15		15
Health & Social Work	Telford & Wrekin			40		5	45
	Shropshire CC			145		5	150
Hotels	Telford & Wrekin	195	75	30			300
	Shropshire CC	530	230	125			885
Manu-facturing	Telford & Wrekin	215	80	95	35	30	455
	Shropshire CC	575	160	125	40	10	910
Real Estate	Telford & Wrekin	730	100	70	10		910
	Shropshire CC	1850	185	120	15	5	2175
Wholesale & Retail	Telford & Wrekin	605	175	95	10		885
	Shropshire CC	1895	410	235	25		2565
Total	Telford & Wrekin	2205	505	365	65	35	3175
Total	Shropshire CC	9400	1425	900	9	20	11840

Table 6.4

Source: Inter-Departmental Business Register, ONS, March 2000

Note: The figures are from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) count of VAT and /or PAYE based enterprises for Shropshire CC and Telford & Wrekin. For confidentiality reasons we are unable to show figures below the count of 5 (these are rounded to 0) therefore some sectors will not show in size band breakdown. However the table also shows total figures which includes all size bands.

- The table above shows the number of organisations in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin by employment size band in selected sectors.

Skills

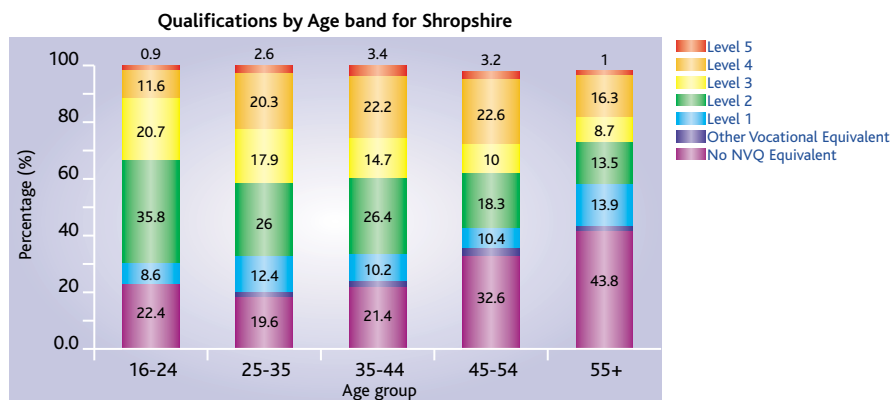


Diagram 6.6

Source: West Midlands Household Survey 2000

- Diagram 6.6 shows that there is a pattern to the achievement of qualifications. Significant proportions of the over 45 age groups do not have a qualification at all, yet those that have achieved are more likely to hold a level 4 qualification. This data enables us to see where to focus our activities for raising individual's aspirations. The results for the over 55 age group is likely to be due to historical social factors. The 16-24 group is important to us due to their inclusion in the National Learning Targets, with one objective being to improve the numbers achieving level 3 qualifications.

- The West Midlands Household Survey for 2000 shows that just over three quarters of our workforce have a qualification from school, college or university that is connected with work.
- The data shows distinct variations when considering industry and the likelihood of holding a qualification, with 92% of those employed in the finance sector likely to hold a qualification (91% throughout the West Midlands), those employed in agriculture at 56% (61% in West Midlands), hotels & restaurants at 55% (60% in West Midlands), wholesale and retail at 67% (69% in West Midlands) and manufacturing at 69% (67% in West Midlands).

Skill Deficiencies

- This encompasses both 'Skill shortages' and 'Skill gaps' recorded by employers within their business. Skill shortage vacancies refer to the subset of reported hard-to-fill vacancies, which are due to recruitment difficulties explicitly attributed to a lack of job applicants with the required skills, qualifications or work experience. Skill gaps occur where a significant proportion of existing staff in a particular occupation lack full proficiency at their current jobs.

Shropshire LSC area	SOC Level Groups				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Number of Skill shortage Vacancies	278	77	91	95	541
Number of Hard to Fill Vacancies	1818	156	2344	261	4579
Number of Total Vacancies	2364	243	4803	973	8383

Table 6.5

Source: Employers Skill Survey 2001 – Skills, Local areas & unemployment

SOC Major Groups

Level 4 Managers & Administrators Professional Occupations Associate professional & technical occupations	Level 2 Craft & related workers
Level 3 Clerical & Secretarial Occupations Personal & protective service occupations Sales Occupations	Level 1 Plant & Machine operatives Other occupations (Where the ordering of occupations is by broad qualification level based on the convention of ascribing higher numbers to more advanced/ higher-level qualifications than to less advanced/ lower-level qualifications)

- The success of each SOC level category in filling its total vacancies can be established by calculating the difference between the total vacancies and the respective skill shortage vacancies. For example SOC level 3's total vacancies has decreased from 4803 to 91 skill shortage vacancies, a decrease of over 98%, which is by far the most successful category.
- SOC level 2 is the one where the resulting skill shortage vacancies are the highest as a proportion of the total vacancies (31.7%). This is the group where the skills are least prevalent and the demand for workers can not be satisfied.
- SOC level 4, where the level of qualification required to enter the professions are highest, shows a reasonable success rate in filling vacancies with only 11% left unfilled as shortage areas.

Sector	Skill Shortages (SS)	Skill Gaps (SG)
Land Based Sector	- Major recruitments difficulties but more associated with low pay	- 40% have no qualifications - 275,000 require training (1 in 5 in sector) to get them to necessary NVQ3 level to cope with change - owner managers require business and management skills
Construction	- Skilled craft jobs	- Technical and practical skills esp. in extraction/mineral processing
Engineering	- Craft/technician skilled operatives and esp. design engineers, electrical engineers, fitters, pattern makers, CNC programmers, setters and operators, project managers	- Technical skills - Generic skills esp. people management - Experienced designers able to manage teams
Food Manufacturing	- Production/Process Operatives	- Ability to develop flexibility to realise efficiency gains
Hotels and Catering	- Managers, Chefs	- Basic IT skills
Local and Central Government	- Policy knowledge/specialists - IT Professionals/Assoc. Profs.	
Health Care	- Limited current supply of physiotherapists, radiographers and other Assoc. Profs.	- Managing diverse customer groups under resource pressure
Social Care	- Nurses - Care workers	- Literacy and Numeracy of Care Workers

Table 6.6

Source: Skills in England, DfES Research Report, 2001

- Table 6.6 reflects the national status of each of our key sectors in relation to their respective skills gaps and shortages. This enables us to focus specific requirements of the industry to address the current deficiencies. Locally we need to focus research into our employers' specific gaps and shortages in these sectors to establish the current status and enable activities to be effectively directed.

General Skills where "gaps" are experienced by employers

Skills gaps	1999-2001 (avg)
Basic IT skills	29%
Communication skills	25%
Software/programming skills	20%
Use of computer packages	18%
Basic literacy/numeracy	17%
Other personal/social skills	10%
Foreign languages	4%
Project management	3%

(Note: 1000 randomly chosen employers are surveyed each year to obtain their views on a range of subjects. The core questions are similar each year to enable trend analyses to be performed. The resulting report is entitled "A View From The Top").

Table 6.7

(Source: "a view from the top" Revolution)

- Over 7% of all employers identified that there are gaps in the skills of their workforce that they are finding difficult to bridge. This is a decline on the proportion in 2000 but similar to the proportion in 1999.
- More than 23% of all employers state that the skills needed from an average employee in their organisation to keep the business running effectively are increasing.
- Just over half of all employers have provided training in the past 12 months which is significantly below the 80.5% of employers that provided training in 2000.

Investors in People

- Investors in People is the national Standard which sets a level of good practice for the training and development of people to achieve business goals. Addressing the issue of increasing the engagement of employers of all sizes, focusing mainly on the small and medium size enterprises is a significant challenge for the Learning and Skills Council in conjunction with Business Link.

- During 2001/02 the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire had a target of 44 companies within our operational area being successfully recognised. 59 attained the standard (134%). This annual target has been generated locally as a milestone to achieving the target for December 2002.
- The current recognised target for Shropshire is for 222 local companies to have gained recognition of Investors in People by December 2002. To date we have achieved 97% of this target amongst companies of all sizes. The average achievement for all six Learning and Skills Council areas in the West Midlands to date is 74%.

Economic Summary

The data presented here can only provide an indication of the likely employment opportunities within the area, and therefore can only provide a weak indication of training and education needs.

It can be seen that Shropshire County Council and Telford and Wrekin's area are very different and require specifically focused activities to maximise their effectiveness and efficiency.

There is a need to provide access to skills and qualifications for potential entrepreneurs and improve the utilisation of those who currently have such skills and experience.

The changing trends of employment are showing more short-term contracts and use of recruitment agencies. These are a potential void as far as Work Based Learning is concerned at present. Collaborative work with such agencies will alleviate the gap and improve the participation in learning amongst the workforce.

Activities to enable the latent workforce within Shropshire to access appropriate and desired learning need to be established to improve their potential to re-enter the labour market.

A key message is to recognise that the economy of Telford & Wrekin, whilst historically strong and growing, is very dependent on manufacturing which is increasingly moving to lower cost areas of the world and is therefore vulnerable to the swings of economic fortunes. We must support those organisations that wish to diversify by ensuring that their changing skill requirements are met.

In the rural parts of the area, the existing decline of agricultural jobs has been amplified by Foot and Mouth disease and there are many communities where re-employment is becoming increasingly difficult unless new skills are acquired and diversification into new business areas is encouraged.

Improving skills will have limited success if there is no potential to effectively apply these skills. Through this strategic document we should be concurrently encouraging high value employers into the area to enable potential learners to easily apply any newly acquired skills. The benefit here is also the increase in motivation to engage in learning and training.

We must regularly enable all employers to feedback their experiences regarding their reasons for recruitment difficulties and skills shortages to enable effective and efficient activities to be collaboratively established in an attempt to address them.

Given the current skills gaps and shortages we will need to raise the level of participation in training within the Care, Tourism and Public Administration sectors within the Shropshire Learning and Skills Council area.

Learners

Population Age Structure

- Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin) has a significantly older age profile than the national average, whilst Telford & Wrekin has a significantly younger age profile.

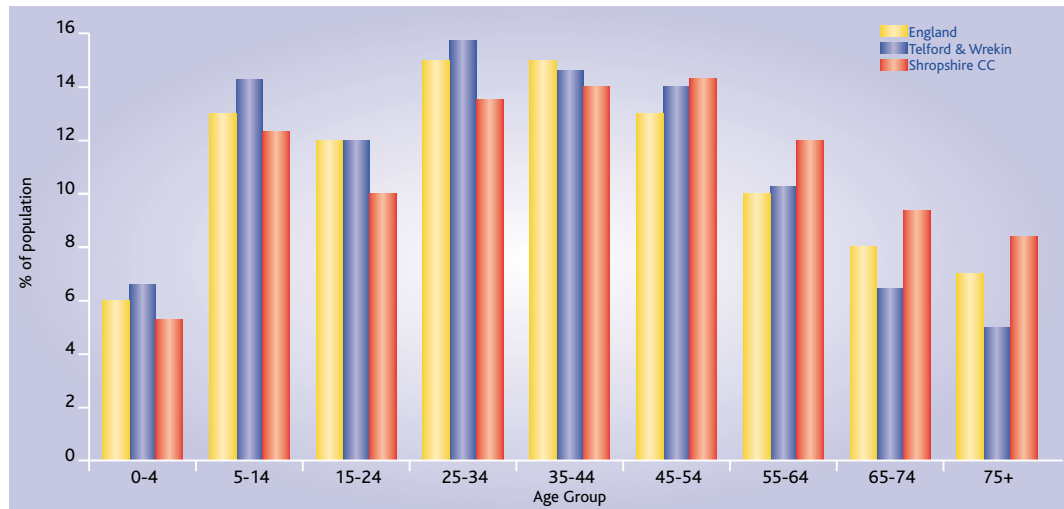


Diagram 6.7

Source: Nomis – Mid-year Estimates, 2000

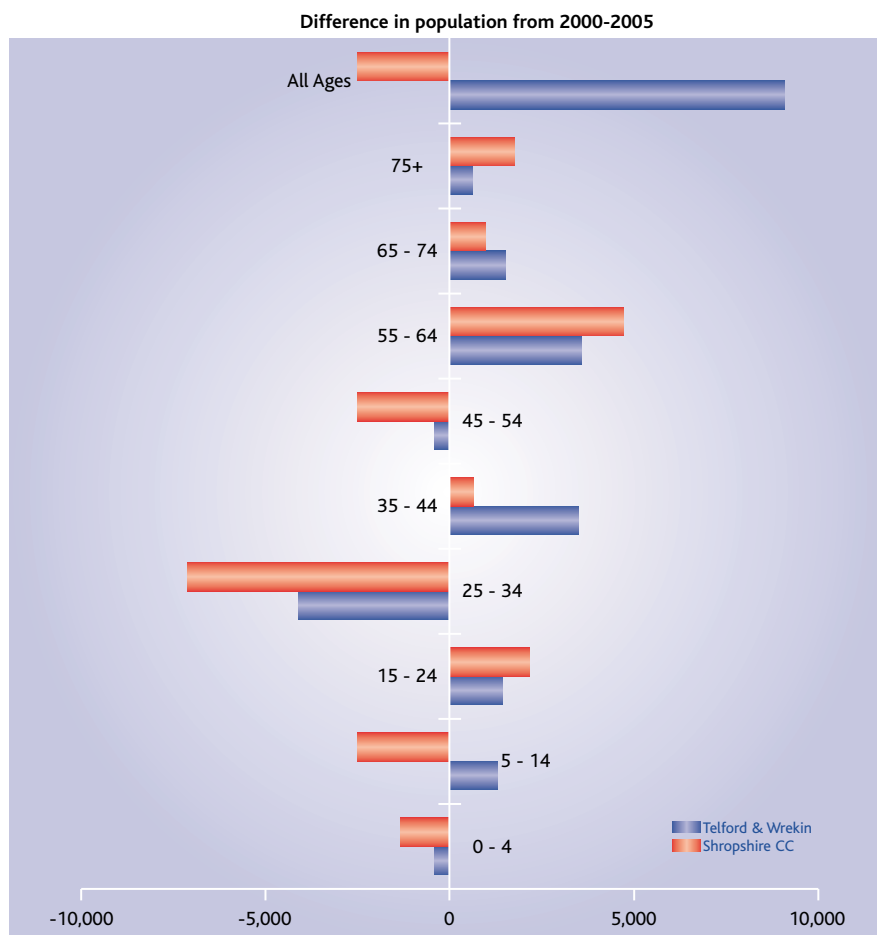


Diagram 6.8

Source: Sub-National Population Projections, ONS, 2001

- The proportion of the population by each age group is expected to change between now and 2005. The main changes will impact on the activities we engage in and we must appreciate these. The sustainability of initiatives if the population changes as per the diagram will be governed by the participation of the expanding age groups. We need to consider how best to engage those entering our area to have a positive effect towards our targets.
- The expected decrease in the 25-34 year old population is significant in the next 4 years. We are an area that has a net migration of learners to Higher Education establishments outside of the county, mainly Staffordshire and Wolverhampton Universities as shown later in this section. They are classed as residents in our area whilst studying but then seek employment elsewhere on completion of their high level qualifications, and consequently establish new residency.
- Each local district has a varying proportion in each age band which will impact on the current level and demand for future skills. We need to be aware of this when compiling activities within each area to ensure they are relevant and appropriate. The rural areas of the Shropshire LSC area show a different age range than the urban areas of Telford, for which there are numerous reasons and again require different strategies to positively affect participation and achievement in learning.

Population by District

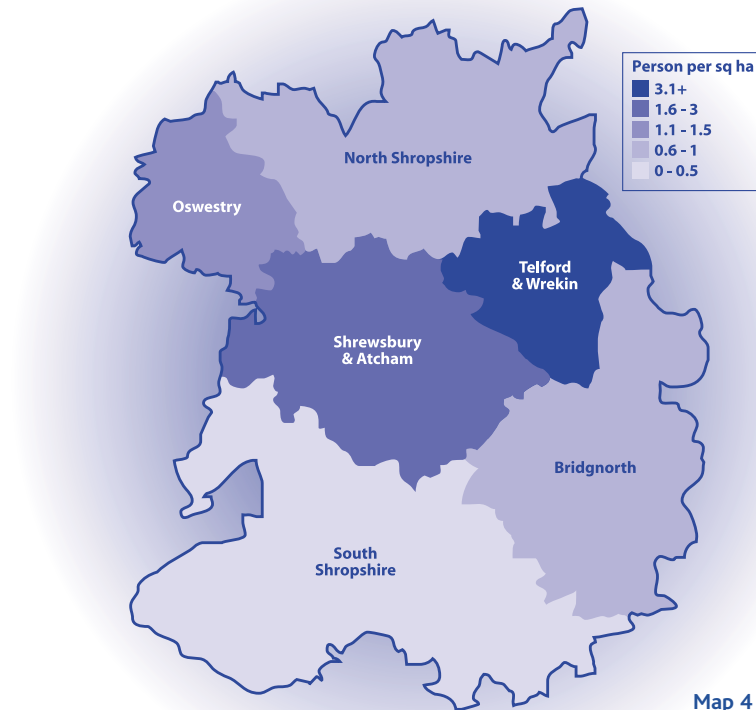
District	Population	Population Density (people per sq ha)	Average Age
Telford & Wrekin	151,300	5.16	36.9
Shrewsbury & Atcham	98,700	1.63	40.0
North Shropshire	56,000	0.82	41.4
Bridgnorth	52,600	0.83	41.0
South Shropshire	42,100	0.41	43.0
Oswestry	35,200	1.36	41.1

Table 6.8

Source: based on ONS mid-year estimates. Office for National Statistics 2000 & Shropshire County Council Planning Policy Group 1999)

- Telford & Wrekin has a population density well above the national figure of 3.81 persons per hectare, whilst all the other districts of the county are unsurprisingly considerably lower (see Map 4).
- There is an inverse correlation between the population density and the average age of the population of each area, which must be considered in assessing and planning the learning provision and addressing various issues within each district.
- Low density of population, or sparsity, inevitably gives rise to issues of "distance to learning", lack of work placement opportunities, high travel times and high costs per head for education.
- The travel-to-study distances and time taken will be the subject of further scrutiny in the coming year. An initial internal analysis has shown that there is an inverse relationship between the average time taken to travel to an FE College and the proportion of pupils not active post-16 in a selection of schools. Further research will enable a more representative portrayal to be established.

Population Density



Map 4
Source: Shropshire CC Policy Planning Group 1999

Ethnic Minority Groups

Total Percentage of Ethnic Minority Groups in Shropshire CC and Telford & Wrekin

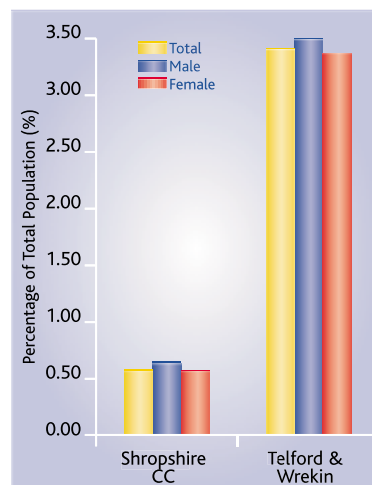


Diagram 6.9
Source: Nomis – 1991 Census of Population

- The total ethnic minority population in Shropshire in 1991 was 1,854 (0.69% of the local population) and the figure for Telford & Wrekin was 4,836 (3.47%).

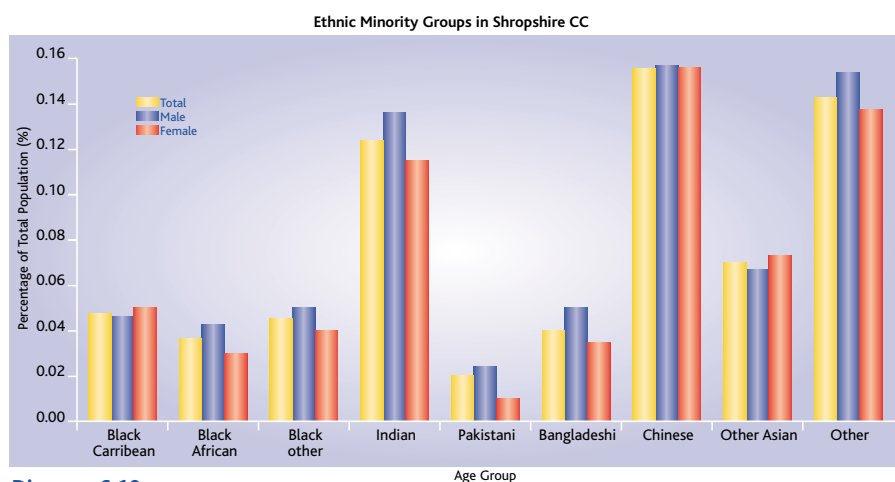


Diagram 6.10

Source: Nomis – 1991 Census of Population

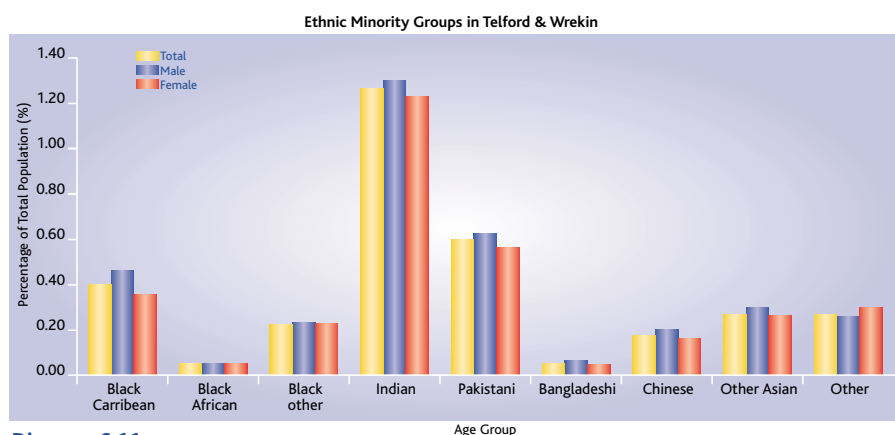


Diagram 6.11

Source: Nomis – 1991 Census of Population

- Whilst absolute numbers are low for both areas, there still exist pockets of racial tension and discrimination. Identifying and overcoming these issues through learning or as they affect learning is important to the Learning and Skills Council.

Destinations and Achievement

- The overall objectives of the Learning and Skills Council target learning for post compulsory education. This relates to all people from the age of 16 upwards. The Government have now extended this remit realising that the LSC can support the development of a more coherent and well balanced 14-19 phase of learning. This extends the LSC's involvement into the last two years of compulsory education working in partnership with secondary schools, assisting in the development of vocational subjects and placements.
- The current performance data for Year 11 students from the 2000/2001 academic year is as follows:

Average GCSE GNVQ Results			
		5+ A* - C	5+ A* - G
Shropshire CC	Male	46.5%	91.2%
	Female	63.0%	95.3%
Telford & Wrekin	Male	39.9%	93.0%
	Female	48.0%	92.2%
England	Male	42.0%	86.9%
	Female	53.1%	91.1%

Table 6.9

Source: DfES, Schools Performance Tables 2001, Shropshire CC Data 2001

- Connexions is an agency of the Department for Education and Skills that offers guidance and support to 13-19 year olds. Locally it is co-terminus with the Learning and Skills Council in that it covers both Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire County Councils' areas. "Destinations 2001" is a summary taken from a wide range of statistical information held by Connexions Shropshire. It explains what happens to young people at the end of compulsory education with two other analyses providing the activity status of those who have completed one year and two years of full-time education beyond the minimum schools leaving age. Post-17 data refers to the cohort that completed year 11 in 2000 and the post-18 data is those pupils who finished year 11 in 1999, and subsequently year 13 in 2001.

Post-16 Destinations	Shropshire CC (%)	Telford and Wrekin (%)
Continuing in Education	69	66
Work Based Learning	13	11.5
Employer Funded Training (EFT)	5	6
Employment (excluding EFT)	5	5
Part-time employment	2	1
Unemployed	3	4
Other (non active/Moved Away/No response)	3	6.5
Total	100	100
Post-17 Activity	Shropshire CC (%)	Telford and Wrekin (%)
Continuing in Education	61	54
Work Based Learning	13	15
Employer Funded Training (EFT)	7	8
Employment (excluding EFT)	6	7
Part-time employment	2	1
Unemployed	3	4
Other (non active/Moved Away/No response)	7	11
Total	100	100
Post-18 Activity	Shropshire CC (%)	Telford and Wrekin (%)
Higher Education	38	60
Deferred Entry to HE	7	3
Continuing in HE	21	8
Work Based Learning	6	3
Employer Funded Training (EFT)	9	13
Employment (excluding EFT)	7	3
Part-time employment	0	3
Unemployed	3	3
Other (non active/Moved Away/No response)	9	4
Total	100	100

Table 6.10

Source: destinations 2001

- The previous trend for an increased number of young people staying in full-time education halted in 2001 (see diagram 6.12). Compared to the previous year, the proportion decreased by 4% in Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin) and remained static in Telford and Wrekin. Both areas figures had been improving steadily since 1997. The reason for the decrease was the poorer results in those achieving 5 GCSE's grade A* - C compared to 1999/2000. In Shropshire this fell by 2.6% whilst in Telford and Wrekin the decrease was 0.8%. The main consequence was the increase in the number of young people entering Work Based Learning or employment with structured training.

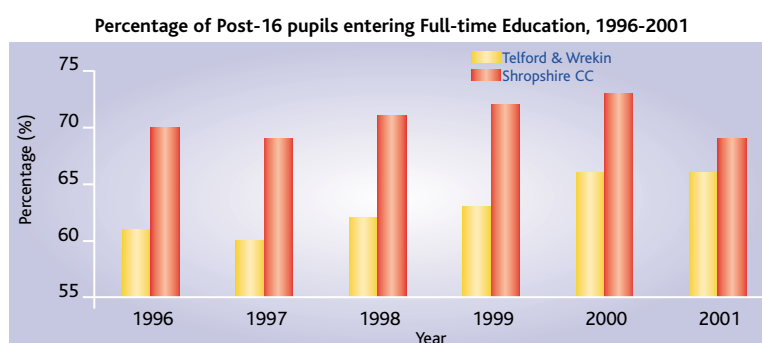


Diagram 6.12

Source: Destinations Data, Connexions Data, 1996-2001

- In Shropshire (excluding Telford & Wrekin), 92% of those achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A-C continued in full-time education, 4% went to WBL and 3% directly into employment. In Telford & Wrekin, 88% of this attainment group continued in full-time education, 6% entered WBL and 4% entered employment.
- After one year there is a considerable drop in the number of students in full time education and a rise in the numbers in employment. This retention issue needs investigating to ascertain if the reduction in retention is legitimate or if students are leaving prematurely. This occurrence is often larger in schools with a high staying on rate in post-16 full time education.
- A record number of students nationally sought HE places last autumn (2001), up 2.5% on last year. The biggest rise is among mature students where numbers here have increased by over 6%. The number of school leavers opting for HE is growing more slowly with a rise of nearly 2%.

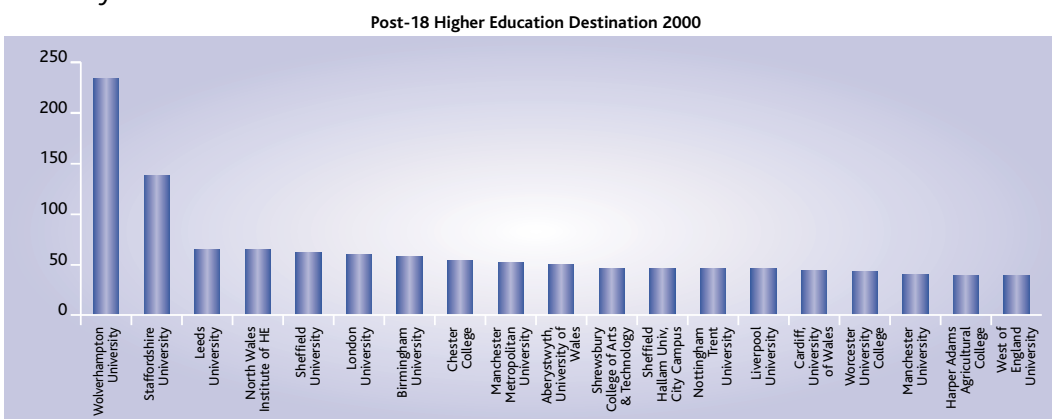


Diagram 6.13

Source: Connexions/SCAT

- The most popular HE providers for young people are clearly the local establishments. The presence of an HE establishment could enhance participation above those already studying for HE qualifications within FE Colleges, and increase the level 4 achievement rates. Improved collaboration amongst relevant organisations is the advised way forward. The Open University is the most popular provider of HE for our residents in total. This is because a large number of learners aged 40 and over participate in its distance learning courses.
- The adult achievement graph highlights the fact that the Shropshire LSC area is above the national achievement for level 1 and 2 qualifications but below at level 3 which influences our objectives and activities.

Adult Achievement (by highest qualification achieved)

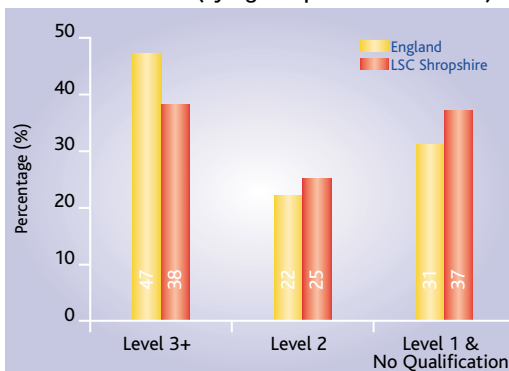


Diagram 6.14

Source: West Midlands Household Survey 2000

Basic Skills

- A total of 24% of the adult population of England is estimated to have poor literacy. This can be broken down as follows: 15% have low literacy; 5% have lower literacy; 4% have very low literacy. This diagram shows that a comparatively large number of residents in our Learning and Skills Council area will benefit reasonably quickly from our strategies and activities surrounding Basic Skills. Collaborative work will be organised in our local area to address all learners' needs irrespective of their current level.

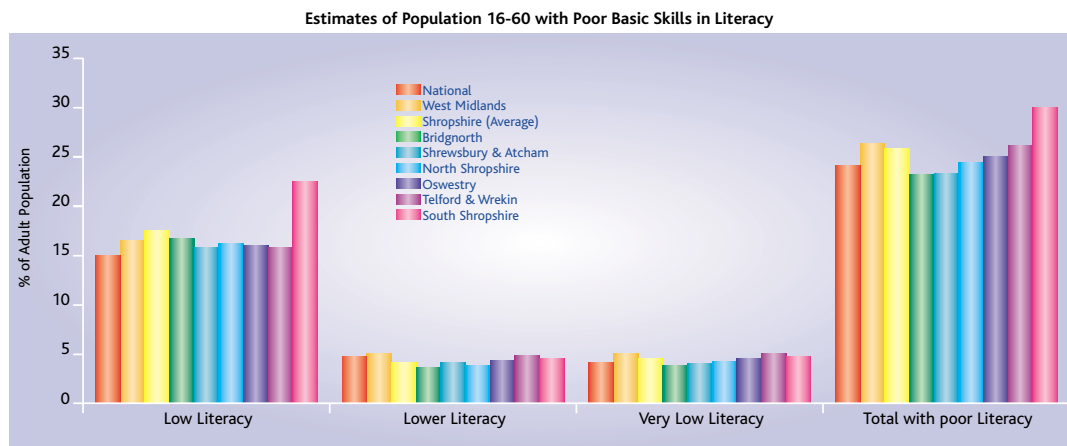


Diagram 6.15

Source: Adults' Basic Skills – The Basic Skills Agency, 2001

- A total of 24% of the adult population of England is estimated to have poor numeracy. This can be broken down into three groups as follows: 12% have low numeracy; 7% have lower numeracy; 5% have very low numeracy. As with literacy, little work is required to reduce the countywide levels as the bulk with poor numeracy are categorised as low levels.

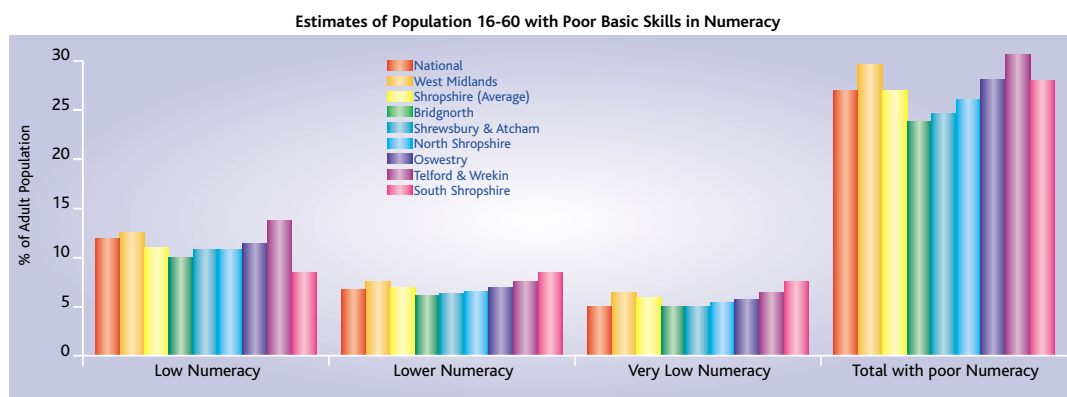


Diagram 6.16

Source: Adults' Basic Skills – The Basic Skills Agency, 2001

- It is worth highlighting that the levels in Telford & Wrekin are worse than the national average for both literacy and numeracy with Shropshire's current numeracy rate being in line with the national average yet the literacy is worse. This alone identifies a significant proportion of work and effort that needs focusing on our residents' Basic Skills needs.
- Identifying learners with Basic Skills needs and developing effective ways to help them overcome these needs is an important priority for the Learning and Skills Council working with its partners.

Learners Summary

Due regard needs to be taken for the demography of the population. There are differences in the two council areas, one whose residents are proportionally above average in the 45+ year olds and the other who show greater than average proportions in the younger age groups.

The difference in population density for each district means that rural isolation is a significant barrier to participation in learning that we must consider. Learners' travel to their place of study is more of an issue for us than other local LSC areas. Ties can be made here with the Rural Regeneration Zone to access specific funds to alleviate difficulties faced by those in these areas caused by their isolation.

Due to the age of this data and the opinion that the proportion of people from ethnic minorities has increased in the last 10 years, there is a need for more information into the exact levels of population and the issues that they experience in relation to skills and learning.

The proportion of Year 11 pupils achieving the level 2 standard of 5 GCSEs graded A*-C needs to be improved in the Telford and Wrekin area up to and beyond the national average. The introduction of vocational courses and qualifications for year 10 and 11 pupils through the 14-19 curriculum initiative will assist this change.

Activities that investigate and address the poor continuation in full time education by 17 year olds should be a priority.

The HE Provider with the largest participation rate in the county is the Open University. Many of their students are over 40 which demonstrates that the demand for level 4 and 5 learning is strong. A local report confirms this demand and concludes that improved collaborative working is the advised option.

Improvements in the attainment of Basic Skills can be focused initially on the local authority areas with poor comparative results. These areas are South Shropshire for literacy and Telford and Wrekin for both literacy and numeracy.

Basic Skills and "first rung" learning experiences need to be addressed to widen participation and increase the employability of adult population.

Learning Delivery

Learning Providers

- In the Shropshire LSC area there are six Further Education (FE) Colleges two of which are in Telford & Wrekin. There are eleven LEA schools with sixth form provision; three of these based in Telford & Wrekin. There is also a strong independent school provision that is not considered in detail within this strategic framework. Currently the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire contract with 35 Work Based Learning Providers (see Appendix 2). Harper Adams is a University College within the Shropshire LSC area with specialist schools in Agriculture and Management delivering mainly HE level courses. They are also a provider of FE provision but are not included in the table below.

16-18 participation levels

Base	6th Form	WBL	FE College	Total
Telford & Wrekin	393	757	2,016	3,166
Shrewsbury & Atcham		761	2,204	2,965
Bridgnorth	636	619 ¹	103	1,358
Oswestry		18	329	347
North Shropshire	509	370	200	1,079
South Shropshire	59	77	330	466
Multi-sited or Out of County		174		174
Total	1,597	2,776	5,182	9,555

Table 6.11

Source: Individual Student Record 2000-2001, Shropshire LSC planning/learner data, Period 9 WBL In Learning Count

¹ Includes 619 trainees at RAF Cosford

Figures for multisided or countywide WBL providers have not been split and are included with the main site or a separate category.

- The table above gives a breakdown of where young people aged 16-19 are learning during 2001/2002. The high figure for WBL in Bridgnorth is caused by the trainees at RAF Cosford, a major engineering training establishment for the Royal Air Force. The data relates only to full-time participation.

Adult 19+ Student Table					
Base	WBL	FE College Council Funded	FE College Non-Council Funded	ACL ²	Ufi
Telford & Wrekin	311	12,045	2,105		517
Shrewsbury & Atcham	199	9,643	2,764		153
Bridgnorth	1,432 ¹				48
Oswestry	4	3,223	825		246
North Shropshire	166	1,633	507		
South Shropshire	22	981	262		38
Multi-sited or Out of County	169	553	64		
Total	2,303	28,078	6,527		1,002

Table 6.12

Source: Individual Student Record 2000-2001 [Walford & North Shropshire College 2001/2002 data], Period 9 WBL In Learning Count, and Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Ufi Hub data

¹ Includes 1,432 trainees at RAF Cosford.

² Data not available at time of printing.

Figures for multisided or countywide WBL providers and Shrewsbury College have not been split and are included with the main site or a separate category.

Further Education provision

- The majority of adults and young people use FE Colleges for their learning be it on part-time or full-time courses. In line with national figures there are more female than male learners.

Shropshire LSC - Students on LSC funded provision in further education sector institutions in 2000-2001 by gender and mode of attendance

Mode of Attendance	Female	Council Funded Students			National %	Non-Council Funded Students	
		Male	All	Local %		All	Local %
Full Time	53.6%	46.4%	7,444	21.6%	24.2%	505	5.7%
Part Time	59.9%	40.1%	27,091	78.4%	75.8%	8,408	94.3%
Total	58.5%	41.5%	34,535			8,913	
National %	59.5%	40.5%					

Table 6.13

Source: Individual Student Record 2000 - 2001

- The majority of qualifications (excludes WBL predominately delivering NVQs) are funded through FE mechanisms. The following table illustrates the levels of qualifications studied (see Appendix 3 for the appropriate equivalent qualifications).

Students enrolled on LSC funded provision in Further Education in 2000-2001 by age, level and type of qualification (Shropshire LSC Area)

Level	Council Funded Students					Non-Council Funded Students		
	16-18	Student age 19-20	21+	Total	Local %	National %	Total	Local %
Level 1 & Entry	460	227	7,748	8,435	24.8%	28.6%	885	11.1%
Level 2	1,361	380	8,299	10,040	29.5%	26.0%	759	9.5%
Level 3	4,528	398	5,169	10,095	29.6%	24.1%	529	6.6%
Level 4, 5 + HE	7	22	661	690	2.0%	1.8%	308	3.9%
Other	122	133	4,562	4,817	14.1%	19.6%	5502	68.9%
Total	6,478	1,160	26,439	34,077			7983	
LSC Shropshire %	19.0%	3.4%	77.6%					
National %	17.9%	4.5%	77.6%					

Table 6.14

Source: Individual Student Record 2000/2001

Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

- Significant part-time adult provision also comes through adult and community education, previously funded by LEAs and now funded by the LSC. The breadth and complexity of the learning experiences means that there is little data available on numbers of learners participating.
- There are many learning centres located around the Shropshire LSC area including UK Online centres, village halls, community centres, local schools, **learn**direct centres, libraries, museums etc. FE Colleges and HE Institutions have a remit to "widen participation" by expanding their provision into areas of need or isolation, using learning centres or any other innovative approach to improve people's potential to access learning. The Gateway Education and Arts Centre in Shrewsbury is a major institution for the delivery of Adult and Community Education.
- The table below shows the ACL provision that the respective LEAs have planned for the 2002/03 year. This provision is provided at entry level, level 1 and level 2, but no higher. The LSC's remit will begin to influence the provision offered in the local area based on demand from learners and employers.

Planned Adult & Community Learning Provision for 2002/03 in the Shropshire LSC area

	Shropshire		Telford & Wrekin	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Sciences and Mathematics				
Land Based provision	✓	✓		
Construction				
Engineering				
Business Administration, Management & Professional	✓	✓		
ICT	✓	✓		✓
Retail, Customer Service & Transportation				
Hospitality, Sports, Leisure & Travel	✓	✓		✓
Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy	✓	✓		
Health Social Care and Public Services				
Visual and Performing Arts and Media	✓	✓	✓	✓
Humanities	✓	✓		✓
English Language & Communications	✓	✓		✓

Table 6.15

Source: Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin LEAs, 2002

Quality of Provision

- Diagram 6.17 shows the total number for each grade for all areas of provision given at the most recent inspections for all learning providers in the Shropshire LSC area. This data includes FE Colleges and Work Based Learning provision together. Grades 1 to 3 are acceptable whilst grades 4 and 5 are not and necessitate an urgent action plan.
- The current format of the data will change after this year due to changes in the inspection system for FE Colleges. As a result of this it will be unable to continue with any trend analysis in future years.

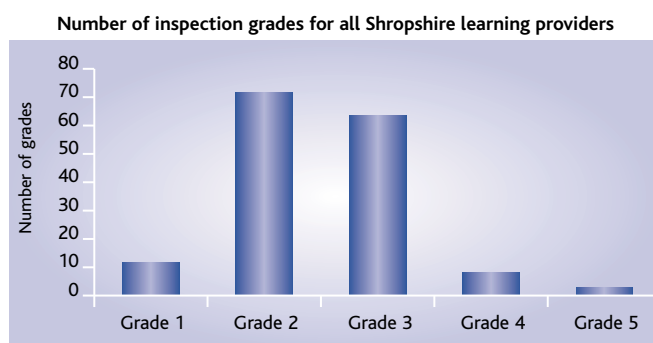


Diagram 6.17

Source: FEFC/TSC Inspection Data

- Through performance review processes and post inspection action plans, significant focus is going to be placed by the Learning and Skills Council on improving these results.
- The most recent inspection data for each FE College (2001 and earlier) has awarded only one college with a grade higher than a 3 for quality assurance making this one of the weakest aspects of cross college provision. All the other cross college areas inspected have resulted mainly in grade 2s with a few grade 1s.

Retention and Achievement

- We must recognise that there are differences between the capabilities of all learners and their motivation to work and to learn. Our role is to ensure that the learning provision is broad in its range of choices, has an appreciation for how people learn and is delivered efficiently and effectively. The key focus is on raising aspirations so that people can aim to maximise their potential.

- The adult achievement graph highlights the fact that the Shropshire LSC area is above the national figures for level 1 and 2 qualifications but below at level 3, which influences our objectives and activities.
- Whilst Shropshire has overall retention and achievement rates currently above the national average there is significant room for improvement. The largest scope for improvements is in the retention and achievement rates amongst WBL candidates rather than those in Further Education. Current data for Further Education shows that Shropshire is the best area across the country for achievement rates for all qualifications. Retention in FE Colleges is above the national average.

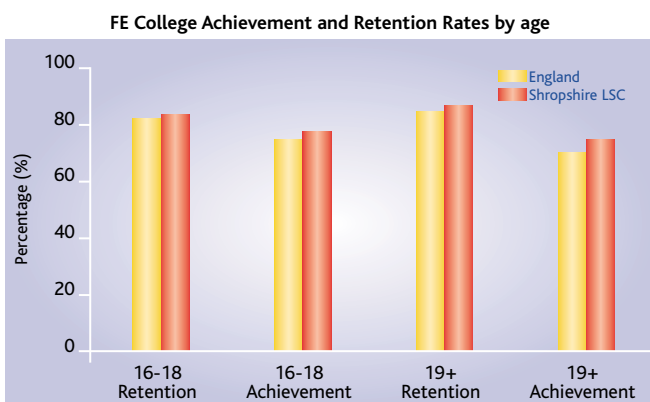


Diagram 6.18

Source: FEFC Performance Data, 1999/2000

- There are some good results in terms of level 3 achievements within the county. The Sixth Form results from those secondary schools with such a facility are shown below and are particularly good. When the entire population of Shropshire is measured the results are considerably lower. We recognise this good performance and will seek to capitalise on it using collaborative approaches and networking throughout the county. The table below shows both academic and vocational qualification achievements at A/AS level in the 2000/01 academic year.

		GCE A/AS only			AGNVQ/VCE A/AS only		
		Number entered	Average point score per student	Range in avg points scores	Number entered	Average point score per student	Range in avg points scores
Telford & Wrekin Average	Total	527	18.8	13.1-31.7	81	7.7	5.6-9.2
	Male	254	18.7	13.1-26.6			
	Female	273	18.8	16.6-31.7			
Shropshire CC Average	Total	1066	18.6	10.3-22.9	131	11.1	9.3-18.0
	Male	488	17.9	10.3-20.3			
	Female	578	19.2	12.5-22.9			
England Average	Total	194,515	16.6		41,179	10.2	
	Male	88,823	16.1				
	Female	105,692	17.1				

Table 6.16

Source: Schools Performance Tables DfES 2001 & Shropshire CC Data 2001

- Work Based Learning (WBL) is a Government initiative designed around vocational learning for young people aged 16 to 25. It incorporates programmes to cover level 2 qualifications, Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (formerly National Traineeships) and level 3 qualifications, Advanced Modern Apprenticeships.
- Work Based Learning routes have different characteristics to full-time college provision. However achievement rates, here measured using NVQ per leaver, especially those at level 3 need to improve to effectively contribute to our work towards the National Learning Targets.

	Total Participants	Learners Started Shropshire	Total Leavers Shropshire	Level of NVQ Gained	NVQ per Leaver % Shropshire	NVQ per Leaver % England
Other Training	1364	480	845	2 and above	61	38
National Traineeship	1424	985	398	2 and above	43	36
Modern Apprenticeship	1973	791	739	3 and above	39	48

Table 6.17

Source: LSC Admin.data 1999/2000, TEC Performance Tables, DfES, 2001

- Retention rates are lower than colleges. One important point is that employment is far more likely for those who achieve compared to those who leave without completing their qualifications.

Work Based Learning Destinations for 16-25 year olds in the Shropshire LSC Area

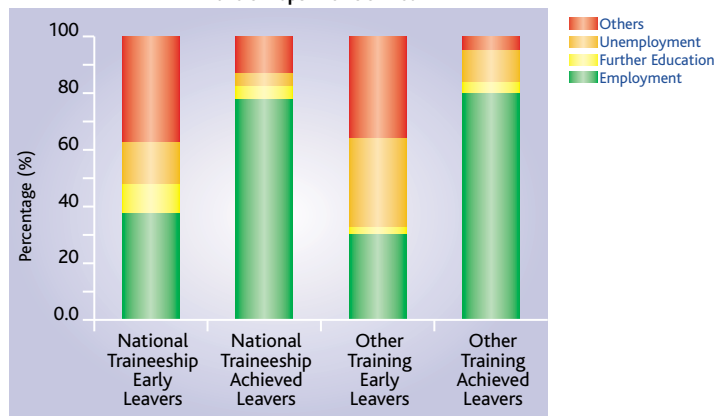


Diagram 6.19

Source: LSC Admin.data 1999/2000

- We appreciate that all learning is beneficial irrespective of whether it leads to a qualification or not, or even if the learner finishes before attaining the qualification. There is a dichotomy here for the LSC in that our performance is measured against the National Learning Targets but we must increase participation in all forms of learning putting the learners first.

Learning Summary

Further analysis is required of the provision currently available in the Shropshire LSC area compared to the demand for learning. Such work should include all of the initiatives that are within the remit of the LSC.

Whilst Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin may appear to be above average compared to the national data for many indicators, there is considerable room for improvement of retention and still scope for better quality leading to higher achievement. Modern Apprenticeships in particular have lower achievement rates at level 3 than the national average and will be the focus of priority attention for Shropshire LSC.

Increasing opportunities and support for progression to level 3 and beyond will enhance employment opportunities for young people.

The quality of FE and WBL provision in the Shropshire LSC area is good. Continued work is required to maintain this level of quality and to ensure that the areas where there are aspects for improvement are prioritised and addressed.

ICT investment and exploitation of the infrastructure will generate opportunities to enable both higher quality learning experiences and increasing participation, particularly in rural areas.

> 7. Local Targets

Key Objectives and Interim Targets for 2004

The Council has been charged with advising on the post-16 targets beyond 2002. Part of this process has been the development of interim National Learning Targets for 2004 which have been fed down to local level to help shape the local targets.

The remit letter (November 2000) from the Secretary of State sets out the overall objectives for the LSC. This has now been followed by the grant letter (December 2001) which has added further details to these objectives. These have been covered previously in a number of sections and are mainly satisfied through the Key Tasks and National Learning Targets. There are however some elements of our work that have not been outlined previously.

Working towards our local targets will have an impact on regional targets for 2004 for the Regional Development Agency, AWM, particularly those linked to Promoting a Learning and Skilful Region as contained in the West Midlands Economic Strategy "Agenda for Action":

- To increase the proportion of adults with NVQ 4 by 5.5%
- To bring down the proportion of adults with basic skills deficiencies to at least the national average

The regional target of a 5.5% increase in adults with Level 4 equates to approximately 2,500 adults for the Shropshire LSC area. The most recent data available (1999) shows that approximately 58,000 adults in the Shropshire LSC area have achieved an NVQ at level 4. Local progress against the Level 3 target should feed into the potential participants available to progress towards achieving Level 4 qualifications.

The LSC has a key role to play in supporting progression towards the DfES's target for participation in Higher Education (HE). Our involvement is mainly in the linking and progression from level 3 to level 4 qualifications and to ensure the quality of provision where HE students are studying in FE colleges meets that of universities and colleges of HE.

A local feasibility study into the demand and supply of HE in Shropshire (March 2002) advised that to meet the shortfall in provision a greater degree of integration and collaboration amongst relevant partners should be the preferred approach.

Joint Local Impact Measures

In conjunction with other key partners we have developed priority measures that other agencies can support. These priorities can be defined as "joint local impact measures", with the measures reflecting very specific priorities for the Shropshire LSC area or areas within it. Progress against the measures will directly support achievement of the local targets for the National Learning Targets.

The specific joint local impact measures are as follows:

- Increase the achievement of ICT qualifications at all levels.
- Increase the number of Level 4 qualifications amongst resident adults.
- Increase the achievement of level 2 qualifications by 16 year olds in the Telford and Wrekin area.
- Increase the percentage of working age people who have achieved a level 1 qualification.
- Increase participation and achievement rates for black and ethnic minority groups.

- Increase the participation of any particular disadvantaged group with a relatively significant population in the Shropshire LSC area.
- Reduce the gender imbalance in terms of both retention and achievement rates.
- Increase the number of Shropshire companies involved in some form of workforce development programme/initiative.

Further national indicators for measuring performance have been established by the Audit Commission and included within Shropshire Partnership's Countywide Community Strategy. These "Quality of Life" indicators could also be incorporated by the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire to supplement the joint local impact measures stated above. The most relevant ones to our key tasks and targets are,

- The proportion of people of working age in employment.
- The proportion of young people in education, training or employment.
- The number of new VAT business registrations.
- The percentage increase or decrease in the number of local jobs.
- The proportion of people with level 2 qualifications at age 19 (National Learning Target).
- The number of childcare places available per 1,000 population of children under 5 not in early education.

The impact that the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire will have on the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin areas is broadly defined in our work towards the local learning targets, the joint local impact measures, indirectly to the Quality of Life indicators and any other measures held by key partner organisations. These are all intrinsically linked and our influence is wider than simply the targets that we are responsible for. Through effective partnerships and collaborative work we will have a positive influence on targets and measures that we and other organisations have established. These act as a focus in terms of setting out our high level commitments and are comprehensively underpinned by the activities we have proposed in the corresponding Business Plan.

> 8. Local Key Strategic Priorities and Objectives

Approach

We have outlined the national remit within which we are working and the targets that we are aiming towards achieving. The overview of the Shropshire LSC area and the issues that we deem to be of a high priority status now lead us into this, the main section of the document. The purpose of this section is to outline the strategic priorities that form the basis of the direction we will take and detail some of the overarching objectives within these. It is the analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the local economy (Appendix 4) that has provided the impetus for these objectives.

Our local strategy is composed of three sub-strategic areas; skills, participation and learning.

Skills strategy:

This refers to how we will build long-term relationships with local employers, engaging them in defining skill needs and developing their workforce.

Participation strategy:

This sets out our plans to "put individual learners at the heart of the system" covering issues such as increasing participation, supporting adult learners, equality of opportunity, geographical representation, tracking of learners and the feedback from learners.

Learning strategy:

This identifies how we will deliver education and training to meet the needs of individual learners and employers. It relates to the quality, efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility of the local learning provision.

These three sub-strategies interlink and feed off one another. The Skills and Participation issues will feed through into the Learning strategy and vice versa, where the needs of employers and the needs of learners are met through appropriate and proper provision.

The Key Strategic Priorities are summarised in the next section to introduce the work that we intend to commit to. For each Key Strategic Priority we have set out the related strategic objectives and the expected collaborative partners.

It is essential that we engage with these organisations, firstly defining and then working towards the specific activities using more detailed operational actions. We expect that the objectives will not be delivered exclusively by one partner, as we believe there is greater benefit from a collaborative approach.

This plan has a 3-year rolling format updated annually. The current lists of strategic objectives are neither exhaustive nor final, which enables them to be amended as necessary following our regular evaluation processes.

Summary of our local Key Strategic Priorities

Skills Strategy

S1 Skills Needs

We will establish processes to identify and meet the current and future skills needs of the workforce in the Shropshire LSC area. We will further develop long-term relationships with employers and work with partners to raise the skills of the working population to meet the present and future needs of businesses in the Shropshire LSC area. We will particularly aim to improve participation by SMEs and micro businesses.

S2 Key Sector Focus

We will focus major support on the skill development needs of the key employment sectors in the Shropshire LSC area with a particular emphasis on vocational skills and increasing the level of transferable skills in these sectors including: Agriculture/Land Based industries; Tourism; Food & Drink industry; Care Sector; Manufacturing; Public Administration; Construction and Polymers.

S3 Building Capacity

We will actively encourage responses to the skill requirements of "inward investors" and their aftercare needs in order to support future investment in the Shropshire LSC area's economy. We will do this by working in collaboration with the inward investment agencies and providers. We will support the growth of established companies, particularly by addressing the emerging "new workforce" and the "latent workforce" of the Shropshire LSC area.

S4 Enterprise and Growth

We will stimulate the development of the local economy by ensuring there is high quality provision of learning to develop entrepreneurial skills and management skills, as well as generic key skills, to facilitate company start-up and growth. We will work with partners to identify business diversification opportunities.

S5 Employer Commitment to Learning

We will widen participation in Workforce Development in the Shropshire LSC area, increasing the number of employers committed to training and developing their staff. This is key for successful economic development and in this area greater effort is needed to engage micro businesses and SMEs.

Participation Strategy

P1 Young People in Learning

We will work with partners to raise the aspirations of 16-18 year olds in the Shropshire LSC area and so increase their levels of participation in education and training, especially those who prematurely leave Further Education with no skills or qualifications and go into employment with "no structured training".

P2 Adults in Learning

We will work with partners to raise the aspirations of adults in the Shropshire LSC area, stimulating and encouraging a greater number of people into learning and seeking to instil a culture of lifelong learning. We will target those classed as "non-learners" but also encourage those adults already in some form of learning to progress to higher levels or other areas of learning.

P3 Maximising Participation

We will target activity towards the reduction of the major barriers to successful participation in learning in the Shropshire LSC area which include: rural issues; gaps and quality of provision; isolation due to disability, family circumstances, culture, communication, language, finances, stereotyping and discrimination both individual and institutional.

P4 Equal Opportunities

We will "Champion Equality and Diversity" by challenging and overcoming discrimination with respect to participation in learning throughout the Shropshire LSC area funding activities addressing: age; unemployment; gender; ethnicity; disability or health; special needs; those with learning difficulties.

P5 Voluntary & Community Sector

We will strengthen the links with the Voluntary sector and other Community groups in the Shropshire LSC area in order to widen participation in learning. We will collaborate with partners to develop a common strategy for supporting more people back into learning especially those socially or economically excluded.

P6 Information, Advice and Guidance

We will work with partners to increase the demand for, and the quality of information, advice and guidance by all members of the community in the Shropshire LSC area. We will focus our resources on encouraging better participation, retention and achievement.

Learning Strategy

L1 Basic Skills

We will work with partners to identify and reduce literacy, numeracy and self-confidence problems in the Shropshire LSC area. We will together develop enhanced ways of stimulating participation and deliver high quality provision that meets people's and employers' needs.

L2 Quality Improvement

We will establish and support processes to improve the quality of all post-16 learning provision in the Shropshire LSC area increasing both retention and achievement. This will ensure that more learners have a positive experience and all learning providers will maintain an approach that focuses on the learner. We would aim for the Shropshire LSC area to be recognised as excellent because of its high quality of training and education.

L3 Employability Skills

We will encourage learning provision in the Shropshire LSC area that develops skills to maximise the employment potential of individuals. These academic, vocational and generic skills, act as a measure of quality and need to be matched to the economic structure of the Shropshire LSC area and/or to national employment trends to ensure their relevance.

L4 Teaching & Learning Methods

We will seek to establish innovative methods of teaching and learning appropriate to current and potential learners so that the Shropshire LSC area is at the forefront of realising the benefits of new technology. This encompasses the development of existing techniques of teaching and learning and the adoption of new approaches to ensure that all learners can achieve and further their potential in their preferred way.

L5 Maximising Value

We will work closely with our provider base to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all post-16 learning provision in the Shropshire LSC area. We will encourage collaborative activity where appropriate and seek to support centres of excellence to raise the standards where feasible.

Skills Strategy

S1. Skills Needs

We will establish processes to identify and meet the current and future skills needs of the workforce in the Shropshire LSC area. We will further develop long-term relationships with employers and work with partners to raise the skills of the working population to meet the present and future needs of businesses in the Shropshire LSC area. We will particularly aim to improve participation by SMEs and micro businesses.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
S1.1	Integrate existing and new strategies for workforce development that may be national (e.g. Way to Work report, DfES), regional or local to maximise the effect of government funding in our area. e.g. establish local forum.	CBI, IOD, Business Link, TUC, Fed'n of Small Businesses STIAG, Shropshire CC, T&W Council, AWM, FE Colleges
S1.2	Identify and develop ways of meeting the skills needs of those employed through recruitment agencies, especially in Telford & Wrekin, in line with employer requirements and the individual's need to demonstrate progression.	Recruitment Agencies, Jobcentre Plus, Key employers (who use agencies) STIAG, Connexions, FE Colleges, Social Services
S1.3	Develop relevant approaches to encourage and enable all organisations in our area to identify their skills needs e.g. Training supervisors/managers to be able to undertake a Skills Needs Analysis.	Business Link C of C, NTOs, STIAG, Connexions, IIP Team, FE Colleges
S1.4	Promote and develop ways to enable employers to address the skills needs of their workforce, especially within SMEs or groups of SMEs e.g. In-company learning centres.	FE Colleges, Training Providers Business Link, C of C, HEI, Ufi
S1.5	Challenge organisations to continually focus on and improve their staff retention rates supporting the wider agenda of the retention of lone parents, particularly women by highlighting and supporting projects involved in child care.	EYDCP, Business Link, C of C, Fed'n of Small Businesses, Chambers of Trade, Jobcentre Plus
S1.6	Support the delivery of the Education Business Partnership's (EBP) Business Plan.	EBP, Employers, Secondary schools
S1.7	Increase the level of attainment of ethnic minority groups from level 2 to level 3 in line proportionally to that amongst the white population.	FE Colleges, Training Providers, Connexions, STIAG, Jobcentre Plus, Race Equality Council
S1.8	Improve the employment rate of disabled people by championing equality and diversity, uplifting their skill levels and raising awareness amongst employers.	ES Disability Service, Training Providers, Business Link, C of C, FE Colleges, Shropshire Disability Consortium.
S1.9	Promote the achievement of women and lone parents to encourage active employment.	Business Link, C of C, Employers, Recruitment Agencies, Jobcentre Plus

S2. Key Sector Focus

We will focus major support on the skill development needs of the key employment sectors in the Shropshire LSC area with a particular emphasis on vocational skills and increasing the level of transferable skills in these sectors including: Agriculture/Land Based industries; Tourism; Food & Drink industry; Care Sector; Manufacturing; Public Administration; Construction and Polymers.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
S2.1	Encourage Care sector providers to work in collaboration and develop processes to ensure that all the NVQ skills requirements are met.	Social Services, FE Colleges, Training Providers, Employers, HEI, AWM, NHS, SPIC, TOPSS
S2.2	Develop and implement delivery of relevant training in rural areas especially for those "micro" and small Land Based industries. e.g. establish a collaborative group across the FE colleges and other training providers drawing on appropriate expertise.	Lantra, Harper Adams Uni. College, Walford and North Shropshire College, SCAT, Wolverhampton University, NFU, Training Providers, AWM
S2.3	Identify training requirements and develop actions to address the skill shortages related to the Tourism industry. e.g. Work with existing groups such as the Telford & Shropshire Marketing Partnership, Shropshire Tourism UK Ltd, to improve the quality of service and increase the tourist income to the local economy.	Countryside Agency, District Councils, FE Colleges, Training Providers, Employers, HEI, AWM, Shropshire CC, T&W Council, HETB, Tourism Sector Group (SCC), Jobcentre Plus
S2.4	Identify the areas for development and ways of addressing these in the local Manufacturing industry.	EMTA, Employers, FE Colleges, Training Providers, HEI, AWM, EEF, GTAs, Food & Food Processing Development Group (SCC), C of C
S2.5	Establish the appropriate learning provision to increase the economic activity of the Food and Drink industry.	FE Colleges, Training Providers, Employers, NTO, HEI, AWM, Agriculture, Food & Food Processing Development Group (SCC), C of C
S2.6	Establish priorities for the development of learning and skills in the public administration sector by working with key employers from public administration and other appropriate consultation bodies.	Employers, FE Colleges, Training Providers, HEI, AWM, Shropshire Partnership, Assc. of Shropshire Govt., C of C
S2.7	Support the further development of the local Polymer industry in conjunction with AWM's technology corridor strategy.	AWM, Business Link, C of C, Polymer NTO
S2.8	Identify the areas for development and ways of addressing these in the local Construction industry.	AWM, Business Link, C of C, CITB

S3. Building Capacity

We will actively encourage responses to the skill requirements of "inward investors" and their aftercare needs in order to support future investment in the Shropshire LSC area's economy. We will do this by working in collaboration with the inward investment agencies and providers. We will support the growth of established companies, particularly by addressing the emerging "new workforce" and the "latent workforce" of the Shropshire LSC area.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
S3.1	Identify the current and future skill requirements of the companies we want to attract to our area. e.g. Companies' headquarters and central offices.	TDA, Shropshire Investment Bureau (SIB), Business Link
S3.2	Develop and maintain an aftercare learning programme to meet the "aftercare needs" of the companies new to our area.	TDA, SIB, Business Link, FE Colleges
S3.3	Attract "more of the same" established organisations into the county by highlight the successful examples of learning within those established organisations.	TDA, SIB, Business Link
S3.4	Establish sector focus groups and relevant training centres where needed e.g. Using the current Call Centre project as a basis for future projects.	NTOs, Business Link, C of C, FE Colleges, Training Providers
S3.5	Develop and maintain a closer strategic and working relationship with Business Link Shropshire e.g. holding regular meetings/briefings with all Business Link Advisory staff.	Business Link
S3.6	Develop ways to support managers by utilising other experienced personnel in existing companies as mentors within our operational area.	Business Link C of C
S3.7	Develop ways to increase the employability of the comparatively high percentage of women in the county's latent workforce.	Business Link TDA, SIB, FE Colleges

S4. Enterprise and Growth

We will stimulate the development of the local economy by ensuring there is high quality provision of learning to develop entrepreneurial skills and management skills, as well as generic key skills to facilitate company start-up and growth. We will work with partners to identify business diversification opportunities.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
S4.1	Establish high quality training provision with appropriate outreach capabilities, focusing on the main generic skill needs of the targeted workforce e.g. "Customer Care Training Centre" guaranteeing the highest quality training in this vital skill requirement for all sectors.	NTOs, Employers, Training Providers, FE Colleges
S4.2	Support organisations that have, diversified their business, recently expanded or plan to expand their work and have subsequent training needs, skill gaps or skill shortages.	Business Link, C of C, Employers, FE Colleges, Training Providers Community Businesses Social Enterprises
S4.3	Establish a capability with partners to collate existing local data, and research new local data to forecast future economic needs, employment trends and demographics.	Local Councils' Economic Development Units, C of C, NTOs (Skills Foresights), AWM, Regional Observatory
S4.4	Improve the graduate attraction and retention in the county by developing ways, with appropriate partners to increase the HE provision within our area.	University of Wolverhampton, SURF Consortium, HEFCE, Local Councils, FE Colleges, Other HEIs
S4.5	Stimulate young potential entrepreneurs to start up new business by providing the business skills required, ensuring that the training is accessible to those under-represented groups.	Business Link Providers, Prince's Trust, HEI, Young Enterprise, FE Colleges

S5. Employer Commitment to Learning

We will widen participation in Workforce Development in the Shropshire LSC area, increasing the number of employers committed to training and developing their staff. This is key for successful economic development and in this area greater effort is needed to engage micro businesses and SMEs.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
S5.1	Promote and encourage the take-up of Management Development activity especially amongst micro businesses SMEs and ethnic businesses.	Business Link, C of C TUC, Community & Social Enterprises, AWM, MCI, WM Inst. Of Managers, Training Providers, FE Colleges, Ufi
S5.2	Promote the take up of the Investors in People standard especially for our Public Sector bodies and those companies in the wealth creating sectors. e.g. promotion of the standard for micro businesses and some SMEs could be achieved through using the Building a Better Business approach.	Business Link, liP UK, C of C, Public Sector, Planning Policy Group (SCC), T&W Unitary Authority, Community & Social enterprises
S5.3	Encourage "employer learning networks" for example through geographical clusters around business parks and industrial estates or through sectoral or supply chain clusters.	Business Link, NTOs, CBI, C of C, Trade Org'ns & Professional bodies, Community & Social enterprises, AWM, Training Providers
S5.4	Develop and promote a central, consistent, high quality contact point for organisations seeking advice on training opportunities for their staff and advice on employer equality and diversity issues.	Business Link, C of C, Connexions, Community & Social enterprises, STIAG
S5.5	Encourage collaboration between local small employers to share the skills training necessary for their employees to complete a vocational qualification. e.g. use of Group Training Associations.	Business Link, C of C, Fed'n of Small Businesses, Chambers of Trade, Training Providers FE Colleges
S5.6	Encourage organisations to participate in Workforce Development by promoting good practice related to employee development described in the Investors in People Standard, Business Excellence Model, Building a Better Business.	Business Link, C of C Employers, liP team Training Providers, FE Colleges
S5.7	Encourage companies to offer WBL opportunities. e.g. by developing links with companies/organisations through Business Link, liP Team, the Recruitment Agencies and our own internal resources.	Employers, Business Link, Recruitment Agencies, Jobcentre Plus, Training Providers, C of C

Participation Strategy

P1. Young People in Learning

We will work with partners to raise the aspirations of 16-18 year olds in the Shropshire LSC area and so increase their levels of participation in education and training, especially those who leave Further Education prematurely, with no skills or qualifications and go into employment with "no structured training".

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
P1.1	Secure sufficient, high quality provision for education and training leading to relevant and marketable qualifications, provided by FE Colleges, WBL providers and Sixth Form Colleges.	FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Training Providers
P1.2	Develop the strategy for 14-16 year olds in order to support progression and minimise the uncertainty that transition at 16 can bring. e.g. vocational awareness using experience and evaluation from the "Bridge Project".	EBL, Connexions Bridge Project participants, Educational Partnerships, FE Colleges, Training Providers, LEAs
P1.3	Develop actions to encourage increased participation of 16-18 year olds, particularly targeting those schools (using the destination data) with a high percentage of pupils not going onto FE or WBL.	Connexions, School management, Employers, FE Colleges
P1.4	To encourage and support participation by offering learner support funding for young people in learning / training.	LEAs, FE Colleges, Training Providers
P1.5	Support the delivery of the Shropshire Education Business Link Consortium Business Plan.	SEBP, Business in the Community, Business Dynamics, Young Enterprise
P1.6	Respond effectively to the implementation measures resulting from the report "Modern Apprenticeships: The way to work" (Cassels, 2001).	FE Colleges Training Providers
P1.7	Identify areas of inequality of provision within post-16 destinations and develop approaches to address the significant issues identified.	Connexions, FE Colleges Training Providers, Employers
P1.8	Increase the retention rate of 16-18 year olds by developing collaborative activities with Connexions to ensure IAG is given for all types of post-16 learning in an effective and timely way.	Connexions, STIAG FE Colleges, Training Providers

P2. Adults in Learning

We will work with partners to raise the aspirations of adults in the Shropshire LSC area, stimulating and encouraging a greater number of people into learning and seeking to instil a culture of lifelong learning. We will target those classed as "non-learners" but also encourage those adults already in some form of learning to progress to higher levels or other areas of learning.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
P2.1	Secure sufficient, high quality provision for education and training leading to relevant and marketable qualifications, provided by FE Colleges, WBL providers and Adult & Community Learning providers.	FE Colleges Training Providers LEAs, Jobcentre Plus
P2.2	Stimulate ideas for, and develop other methods of learning and training delivery responding to the issues of rurality, isolation (resulting from illness), family circumstances and culture. e.g. "Learning Bus", ICT, distance learning, community leadership, neighbourhood renewal and outreach.	FE Colleges, Training Providers LLPs, STIAG, NACRO, Ufi, Jobcentre Plus
P2.3	Deliver dynamic and innovative Adult & Community Learning Plans that reach learners in employment, those seeking employment and those learning for pleasure.	LLPs, STIAG, Local Strategic Partnerships, LEAs, FE Colleges
P2.4	Encourage those non-participating adults to engage in forms of learning that will motivate them to participate further. e.g. follow up on the Bite Size course campaign to encourage further progress in participation in learning.	LLPs, STIAG Training FE Colleges, Training Providers, Ufi
P2.5	Encourage and enable potential learners from "older age groups" in our area to access and utilise learning provision, especially provision for those not in work that improves employability.	LLPs, Ufi, FE Colleges, HEIs, LEA, Schools, Jobcentre Plus

P3. Maximising Participation

We will target activity towards the reduction of the major barriers to successful participation in learning in the Shropshire LSC area which include: rural issues; gaps and quality of provision; isolation due to disability, family circumstances, culture, communication, language, finances, stereotyping and discrimination both individual and institutional.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
P3.1	Identify and make efficient use of appropriate funding streams to encourage examples of good practice that demonstrate widening participation, anti-discriminatory practice and progression routes.	LLPs, STIAG
P3.2	Improve the ease of access to learning by producing and developing information and materials on key issues and making this information widely available. e.g. information on financial support for learning.	LLPs STIAG, LEAs, FE Colleges
P3.3	Establish robust monitoring and tracking systems that enable progress to be measured and evaluated to identify current barriers to participation.	LLPs STIAG, Connexions
P3.4	Develop projects and support long term initiatives to address the difficulties selected learners in rural areas have in travelling to learn/work, accessing ICT or distance learning arrangements.	District Councils C of C Transport agencies Employers, Community Council, Countryside Agency, CVS, Connexions, FE Colleges
P3.5	Develop increased childcare provision in collaboration with the EYDCP for isolated parents/guardians.	EYDCP, Sure Start, FE Colleges
P3.6	Provide sufficient affordable and accessible childcare facilities for learners in the workplace or at college. e.g. efficient use of Childcare Places Grant by FE Colleges to increase provision.	Social Services, Employers Colleges, Local Councils, Childcare Outlook, EYDCP
P3.7	Encourage "Informal Carers" into learning, piloting and supporting a range of activity to release them from their responsibilities and duties as carers.	General Social Care Council, OfSTED, Cross Roads, Community Council, Community Childminding Scheme, EYDCP, Red Cross
P3.8	Raise awareness and demonstrate the relationship between Basic Skills deficits and equality of opportunity as a major barrier to learning / training / employment and progression, to encourage more effective advice and guidance.	BSA FE Colleges Training Providers Employers

P4. Equal Opportunities

We will "Champion Equality and Diversity" challenging and overcoming discrimination with respect to participation in learning throughout the Shropshire LSC area funding activities addressing: age; unemployment; gender; ethnicity; disability or health; special needs; those with learning difficulties.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
P4.1	Raise the awareness of the need for inclusion amongst the business community e.g. Develop a business case for equal opportunities and disseminate to employers.	Business Link , C of C, ES Disability Service
P4.2	Actively encourage employers to employ those with special needs or learning difficulties, using case studies to help overcome prejudices, especially focusing on young people. e.g. Encourage the participation in established schemes such as Positive about Disabled People.	C of C, TUC, ES Disability Service, LAs, Enable, Connexions, DIAL, Disability Consortium, Community & Mental Health Services Trust, FE Colleges
P4.3	Encourage ethnic minority groups to access WBL as a route to attainment and employment e.g. increasing participation rates in colleges for females particularly from ethnic groups in Telford & Wrekin.	Ethnic minority groups, CRE Telford Race Leadership Group LLPs, Training Providers FE Colleges, Jobcentre Plus
P4.4	"Champion Equality and Diversity" by establishing a county wide strategic steering group, celebrating positive and proactive activity, challenging poor and unacceptable practice and striving to be an organisation focused on good practice.	LEAs Health Service Social Service Business Link Community groups ES Disability Service, Training Together for Learning Disabilities FE Colleges, Training Providers

P5. Voluntary and Community Sector

We will strengthen the links with the Voluntary sector and other Community groups in the Shropshire LSC area in order to widen participation in learning. We will collaborate with partners to develop a common strategy for supporting more people back into learning especially those socially or economically excluded.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
P5.1	Engage Voluntary sectors and Community groups in the LSC's priorities and actions which are targeted at reaching new learners who do not currently participate in education and training.	Voluntary / Community organisations, Local Strategic Partnership, SAPTC
P5.2	Develop a clear understanding of the client groups that the Voluntary sector and Community groups work with and the learning opportunities that are required or can be delivered. e.g. map the activities of the Voluntary sector and Community groups in our area.	Voluntary / Community sector, Local Strategic Partnership, SAPTC, FE Colleges
P5.3	Support the Voluntary sector to increase its capacity in order to boost the coverage and effectiveness of their work for the client groups that they engage with, capitalising on their ability to engage with disadvantaged learners.	Voluntary / Community organisations, Local Strategic Partnership, SAPTC
P5.4	Consult the sector on the needs of the many individuals it supports ensuring that the qualitative data and feedback on barriers and needs are acted upon.	Voluntary / Community sector, Local Strategic Partnership, SAPTC

P6. Information, Advice and Guidance

We will work with partners to increase the demand for, and the quality of information, advice and guidance by all members of the community in the Shropshire LSC area. We will focus our resources on encouraging better participation, retention and achievement.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
P6.1	Support the delivery of STIAG's Business Plan to increase the demand for information, advice and guidance.	STIAG
P6.2	Improve the quality and access to information advice and guidance by developing impact measures for IAG and encouraging the development of relevant skills for IAG advisors.	STIAG, Cluster Group (SCC)
P6.3	Ensure IAG can be accessed by all groups in the community in an appropriate form and language. e.g. evaluate the participation in IAG amongst ethnic groups, people with disabilities and by gender. e.g. Working with "learning reps" to develop and promote a central and consistent contact point for employees in organisations seeking information, advice and guidance on all aspects of learning opportunities.	STIAG, Business Link, C of C, TUC, Voluntary sector Community groups, Jobcentre Plus
P6.4	Develop systems to measure progress on participation, retention and achievement for individuals who have accessed IAG.	STIAG

Learning Strategy

L1. Basic Skills

We will work with partners to identify and reduce literacy, numeracy and self-confidence problems in the Shropshire LSC area. We will together develop enhanced ways of stimulating participation and deliver high quality provision that meets people's and employers' needs.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
L1.1	Stimulate participation and the delivery of high quality provision, disseminating and encouraging good practice where appropriate, working with Shropshire's Basic Skills Development worker.	BSA, DfES, FE Colleges Training Providers, Employers STIAG, Connexions, LEAs, EYDCP, Ufi, Jobcentre Plus
L1.2	Identify geographically the target areas for priority focus and support the most relevant provision in these areas.	BSA, District Councils, Jobcentre Plus
L1.3	Establish the most appropriate type of basic skills support across the academic and vocational learning routes and provide a choice of learning methods to suit individuals.	Training Providers, Jobcentre Plus, BSA, FE Colleges
L1.4	Encourage participation in basic skills by families e.g. Sure Start.	Family Learning Centres / Officers, FE Colleges
L1.5	Work with the Community Council and CVS to identify best practice in increasing provision for those with needs working in the voluntary sector. e.g. establish a confidential advice line in partnership with voluntary and community groups to offer advice and guidance on basic skills.	Community Councils, CVS Voluntary Organisations STIAG
L1.6	Develop innovative, suitable methods of learning for improving the Basic Skills levels of low achievers.	YOT, Probation Service Connexions, Prince's Trust LEAs, Training Providers, LLPs FE Colleges.
L1.7	Develop and roll out methods of learning to deliver basic skills to employees in the business community through work related activities. e.g. Encourage companies to include basic skills when planning the future development of the workforce e.g. Encourage employers with trade unions to adopt the "learning rep" initiative.	BSA, Training Providers, Recruitment Agencies, liP Team, Business community, Ufi, TUC, STIAG Connexions, FE Colleges
L1.8	Develop work place Basic Skills programmes, encouraging the use of innovative practice in delivery, in support of the national strategy targeting especially the public sector bodies of our area.	LAs, Health service Related Unions Connexions, STIAG, FE Colleges

L2. Quality Improvement

We will establish and support processes to improve the quality of all post-16 learning provision in the Shropshire LSC area increasing both retention and achievement. This will ensure that more learners have a positive experience and all learning providers will maintain an approach that focuses on the learner. We would aim for the Shropshire LSC area to be recognised as excellent because of its high quality of training and education.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
L2.1	Address disparity between high and low achievers in our area e.g. by benchmarking locally, regionally and nationally to identify and implement the most appropriate means to raise performance and aspirations.	Other LLSCs, LEAs, LLPs
L2.2	Develop specialist local provision to meet the needs of our regional and local key sectors e.g. through Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs).	Employers, NTOs, C of C, AWM (clusters), FE Colleges, Training Providers
L2.3	Develop innovative ways to maximise effective quality improvement identified through the inspection and performance review processes e.g. effective use of the Standards Fund.	ALI, Ofsted, FE Colleges, Training Providers, LEAs
L2.4	Maximise the quality and equity of learners' feedback. Ensure that all learners can easily voice their views about their learning experience and that the information is used effectively.	FE Colleges Training Providers, LEAs, Connexions
L2.5	Encourage and assist providers to proactively develop the capabilities that allow them to readily adapt to the changing cohorts. e.g. use of Standards Fund to help address the providers' needs to cater for the increasing numbers of SEN pupils in schools.	6th Form Schools, FE Colleges, Training Providers
L2.6	Ensure providers and employers promote equality of opportunity and take positive steps to widen participation e.g. addressing the gender differences in participation and achievement.	CRE, Shropshire CC, Telford & Wrekin Council, ES Disability Service, FE Colleges Training Providers

L3. Employability Skills

We will encourage learning provision in the Shropshire LSC area that develops skills to maximise the employment potential of individuals. These academic, vocational and generic skills, act as a measure of quality and need to be matched to the economic structure of the Shropshire LSC area and/or to national employment trends to ensure their relevance.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
L3.1	Assess the local learning provision to ensure it matches the employment needs of individuals e.g. Link with Community Partnerships to seek feedback from local people.	District Councils Community Partnerships, Local Schools, LLPs, FE Colleges
L3.2	Enable 14-16 year old school pupils to experience the world of work and the skills required by encouraging and improving vocational education and business links.	EBP, C of C, NTOs, Schools & Colleges, LEA
L3.3	Ensure that there is sufficient breadth of local learning provision available to learners and employers e.g. Analyse the geographical distribution of provision.	District Councils, C of C, Voluntary sector learning providers, FE Colleges, LEAs
L3.4	Ensure that the appropriate provision is in place to meet the needs of the emerging 14-19 vocational curriculum, providing the skills required for effective employment in the local economy and progression into FE and HE.	LEAs, Secondary Schools, FE Colleges, 6th Forms

L4. Teaching and Learning Methods

We will seek to establish innovative methods of teaching and learning appropriate to current and potential learners so that the Shropshire LSC area is at the forefront of realising the benefits of new technology. This encompasses the development of existing techniques of teaching and learning and the adoption of new approaches to ensure that all learners can achieve and further their potential in their preferred way.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
L4.1	Increase the choice of online provision available by further developing or acquiring appropriate learning materials.	NTOs, Delta Institute, HEIs, FE Colleges, Training Providers, Ufl
L4.2	Develop new and existing methods of learning to enable learners to participate e.g. Using Capital Funds to improve access to provision.	NTOs, Delta Institute, HEIs, FE Colleges, Training Providers
L4.3	Develop new methods of measuring progress and recognising achievement especially within courses that are not certified.	FE Colleges, Training Providers, Awarding Bodies
L4.4	Establish and develop online guidance to inform and advise local learners about electronic learning.	LEA, FE Colleges, Training Providers, NTOs, Delta Institute, HEIs
L4.5	Champion ICT in Learning throughout our area by marketing and promoting good and innovative practice e.g. the "Learning Lab" at Wolverhampton University and the "National Grid for Learning" in Telford & Wrekin.	Wolverhampton University, LEAs

L5. Maximising Value

We will work closely with our provider base to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all post-16 learning provision in the Shropshire LSC area. We will encourage collaborative activity where appropriate and seek to support centres of excellence to raise the standards where feasible.

Ref.	Strategic Objectives	Key Partners
L5.1	Encourage collaboration between learning providers to ensure that courses are delivered viably and efficiently by building on the geographical analyses of existing provision.	Training Providers, FE Colleges, School 6th Forms, ALI, LEAs
L5.2	Develop centres of vocational and academic excellence that specialise in delivery of one or more subject areas.	Training Providers, FE Colleges, School 6th Forms, DfES, LEAs, Local businesses
L5.3	Develop innovative ideas and practices to establish and improve provision, as deemed appropriate fully utilising the "Capital Programme" funding that is available.	Training Providers, FE Colleges
L5.4	Provide appropriate measures to ensure that suitably qualified teachers/trainers/coaches practice in our area sufficient to meet the demand for learning, and work with teach providers to address any skill shortages.	LEA, FE Colleges, Training Providers, Voluntary Sector learning providers
L5.5	Ensure that the learning provision is responsive to the changing requirements of the economy.	Training Providers, FE Colleges, Employers, TDA, SIB, Business Link, C of C

> 9. Evaluation of the Plan

Evaluation process

This strategic plan is one of two key documents in the Learning & Skills Council's planning process. Alongside this document (which relates to 2002/05) is our annual published Business Plan for 2002/03 detailing the financial aspect and local council structure to a greater depth. The milestones in the planning process until April 2003 are included in Appendix 5.

The strategic objectives in this plan have set out the direction that we aim to move over the next three years. These will be supported by the Local Business Plan for 2002/03, which will contain greater detail of the activities underpinning each strategic objective with success indicators for each. It is these that will form the basis of our evaluative process. The activities undertaken should, have a direct or indirect positive affect on our performance against the local interim learning targets.

Formal evaluation of the activities will occur at quarterly intervals as a minimum throughout each year utilising feedback from associated partners where appropriate.

We shall regularly monitor our progress towards the local learning targets and the joint local impact measures using appropriate datasets as they become available. This takes the form of disaggregated national survey data i.e. Labour Force Survey and local administrative data i.e. learners' records. We must ensure that there is parity with the measurements made by our National Office and the data used. Work is ongoing to ensure this occurs and the results are accurate.

Following the end of the financial year in March 2003 the final evaluation will take the form of a strategic review and will be used to commence the planning of the priorities and objectives for the subsequent year 2006 thus enabling the plan to follow a rolling 3-year format. This review will summarise the progress made in the preceding year against the original proposals and the impact made on the local learning targets.

> 10. In Conclusion

The Learning and Skills Council Shrophire has an essential strategic planning role, both locally and regionally, feeding into national policies and this plan sets out our Key Strategic Priorities and strategic objectives for the next 3 years.

It is at this local level that the relationship between learners, employers, FE institutions, training providers and local communities will be developed, budgets deployed and contracts managed, which will be key to achieving our overall mission and vision:

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

The creation of the Learning and Skills Council with its 47 local arms represents the most comprehensive reform of post-16 learning in England in the past 50 years. It presents us, the Learning and Skills Council Shropshire with the opportunity to genuinely "Champion the Power of Learning" and show that "Learning has the power to transform lives", drawing on the essential involvement and collaborative support of our key partners to deliver this strategic plan.

Together we can make the Shropshire Learning and Skills Council area one that provides better opportunity for all and builds skills that enable robust economic growth.

> Appendix 1: Learning & Skills Council Shropshire - Council Members

Name	Title	Organisation
Professor Gerald Bennett	Pro-Vice Chancellor	University of Wolverhampton
Doug Boynton	Principal	Telford College of Art & Technology
Sarah Bury		Voluntary Sector
John Clayton	Partner	Barbers Chartered Surveyors
Philip Cleary	Chief Executive Officer	SmartWater Europe Ltd.
Professor Paulene Collins OBE	Director of Quality Assurance	The College of Law
Dr Philip Extnace	Executive Director	Learning & Skills Council - Shropshire
Dr Tony Harris OBE	Board Member	Advantage West Midlands
Peggie Harrison	Councillor	Telford & Wrekin Council
Robert Hartley (Chair)		
Caroline Morris		National Care Standards Commission
Cliff Murray	Branch Secretary	GMB
Nigel Pursey	Chief Executive	Shropshire County Council

Observers

Name	Title	Organisation
Lindsey Bucknor	Pathfinder Manager	Jobcentre Plus
Leo Castledine	Team Leader Education Team	GOWM
Lorraine Holmes	Chief Executive	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and Business Link
Steve Jackson	Chief Executive	Connexions

> Appendix 2: Learning Providers contracted with and working in our operational area

(including school sixth forms, FE Colleges and private training providers) as at March 2002. Only trainees within the Shropshire LSC area are included for the WBL providers. FE Colleges may have two entries if they contract to deliver WBL and FE provision. Sixth form numbers relate to the number of years 12 and 13 pupils on roll during the academic year 2000/2001, except the independent schools where an estimation is used because the participation data was not available. Independent schools are not funded through the LSC but are included here for completeness.

Over 500 learners	County Training	WBL
	RAF Cosford	WBL
	Shrewsbury Sixth Form College	FE College
	Ludlow College	FE College
	New College, Telford	FE College
	Walford & North Shropshire College	FE College
	Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology	FE College
	Telford College of Arts and Technology	FE College
Between 200 and 500 learners	Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology	WBL
	Shrewsbury School (Independent)	Sixth Form
	Concord College (Independent)	Sixth Form
	Thomas Telford School (City Technology College)	Sixth Form
	The Thomas Adams School, Wem	Sixth Form
	Adams' Grammar School	Sixth Form
Between 100 and 200 learners	Walford & North Shropshire College	WBL
	SBC Training & Consultancy	WBL
	Telford College of Arts and Technology	WBL
	NACRO New Careers Training	WBL
	Callow Training	WBL
	Hospitality Plus (UK) PLC	WBL
	Ministry of Defence (Shawbury)	WBL
	Shrewsbury High School (Independent)	Sixth Form
	Sir John Talbot's School	Sixth Form
	William Brookes School	Sixth Form
	Oldbury Wells School	Sixth Form
	Bridgnorth Endowed School	Sixth Form
	Idsall School	Sixth Form
	The Grove School	Sixth Form
	Wrekin College (Independent)	Sixth Form
	Oswestry School (Independent)	Sixth Form
	Ellesmere College (Independent)	Sixth Form
Between 50 and 100 learners	Blenhiem Organisation	WBL
	Ministry of Defence (ABRO)	WBL
	Protocol Skills	WBL
	Sentinel Training	WBL

Between 50 and 100 learners continued	Bedstone College (Independent)	Sixth Form
	Newport Girls' High School	Sixth Form
	The Community College, Bishop's Castle	Sixth Form
	Moreton Hall School (Independent)	Sixth Form
	Blessed Robert Johnson Catholic College	Sixth Form
Between 25 and 50 learners	West Midlands GA	WBL
	Sports Skills Ltd	WBL
	Hotel & Catering Training Company	WBL
	Forward Training Ltd	WBL
	J T Ltd	WBL
	NOVA Training Ltd	WBL
	Performance through People	WBL
	Lift Truck Training	WBL
	Triangle Training	WBL
	Corporate Vocational Training	WBL
	SCT UK	WBL
	Adcote School for Girls (Independent)	Sixth Form
Less than 25 learners	CS County SEAT Ltd	WBL
	SEAL	WBL
	RICOH UK	WBL
	TTC Training	WBL
	Aspire Training Centre	WBL
	Omega Training Services Ltd	WBL
	Francesco Group	WBL
	Powys Training	WBL
	Kingswood Learning & Leisure Group	WBL
	Stafford College	WBL

> Appendix 3: Qualification Equivalents

The table below shows the nationally recognised qualifications that are equivalent to the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) levels of achievement.

NVQ Level	Equivalent Qualifications
NVQ level 1	Less than 5 GCSEs; GNVQ
NVQ level 2	5 or more GCSEs at grade A-C 1 Advanced level 2 AS levels GNVQ Intermediate RSA Diploma City and Guilds Craft BTEC General
NVQ level 3	2 or more Advanced levels 4 or more AS levels RSA Advanced Diploma ONC/OND National BTEC City and Guilds Advanced Craft Advanced GNVQ
NVQ level 4	First Degree Teaching Qualification HNC/HND RSA Higher Diploma
NVQ level 5	Higher Degree

> Appendix 4: Strategic analysis of the Shropshire LSC area

SWOT Analysis

Using the themes that emerged from the key focus areas contained in section 6 an observation and associated action was generated. This was done in consideration of the main strength, weakness, opportunity and threat relating to each theme and the results are detailed below.

Within each box there is an observation and an action as per the following example.

• Observation: normal text

Action: Bold Italic Text

The highlighted box is the one that is deemed the highest priority at present. They were a strong influence of the Key Strategic Priorities.

Focus areas from LSC area overview	Key Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Economy	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher than average levels of employment <i>Continue to ensure relevance of learning provision to the economy across the entire LSC area</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large concentration of employees in a small number of employment sectors e.g. manufacturing, land based industry <i>Maximise the access to learning, raise the aspirations of employees and assist employers in diversifying their business</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential employees in latent workforce and unemployed groups. <i>Offer learning in the areas of need and enable these groups to access this provision and move into employment</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline of a major sector will significantly impact on levels of employment e.g. Manufacturing <i>Maintain the "employability" of local people to attract investment into/within Shropshire</i>
	Self-Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant number of self-employment in specialist craft industries which are important to tourism e.g. Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. <i>Develop these industries to become learning centres for future workforce</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of management skills amongst entrepreneurs which restricts their company growth <i>Ensure the necessary learning provision is available in the appropriate learning style to maximise participation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likelihood of self-employment in Shropshire increases with age with the highest proportion amongst the 55+ age group. <i>Tailor programmes and initiatives in conjunction with BL for these people to improve the sustainability of their businesses</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline of industry if specialist skills are not transferred to other employees <i>Market and expand the specialist craft industries augmenting growth and influence of businesses</i>
	Employment Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sectors in Shropshire which are potential sectors of excellence, e.g. Polymers, Food Processing, Land Based industry <i>Utilise the expertise within the workforce to attract further complementary businesses into the county</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for skill developments become limited to the current industries <i>Raise aspirations of the workforce and encourage further workforce development to increase flexibility</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key priorities on AWM's agenda include high technology M54 corridor, rural regeneration and sector clusters. <i>Work with AWM to ensure that businesses are aware of the benefits of investing in Shropshire, ensuring that the potential workforce have the necessary skills to support these areas of focus</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversification and inward investment is restricted if Shropshire becomes synonymous with certain industrial sectors <i>Market and attract further related business into the area using the wealth of experience and knowledge within the workforce</i>

**Focus areas
from LSC
area
overview**

**Key
Themes**

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

Learners

Engaged in Learning

- Improving level of skills attainment caused by better than the national and regional averages for staying on rates in post 16 learning
Maintain breadth and depth of skills opportunities available to 16-19 yr through use of academic & vocational courses

- Poor attainment at level 3 qualifications thereby reducing individual career prospects and the potential number of supervisors in businesses.
Provide the necessary provision and raise the aspirations of learners via closer use of industry within education & training

- Govt initiatives to encourage people to stay in learning including Connexions and their remit for 14-19 yr olds.
Maximise the collaborative work with Connexions to focus on main areas in order to raise participation in learning

- Lifelong learning stops once level 2 is reached
Encourage further learning whilst engaged in level 2 provision to encourage further progression or a broadening of learning

Workforce

- Experienced ageing workforce equipped with the knowledge and skills relevant to the local businesses.
Continuously monitor the relevance of learning provision to the local economy ensuring the breadth and depth of skills is available

- Ageing population in areas of Shropshire could give rise to lack of skilled workforce in future on attaining retirement age.
Assist businesses to work at minimising the impact of loss of skilled workforce using education and training of younger employees

- Development of company training and workforce development facilities
Collaborate with appropriate agencies to encourage companies to adopt in house training and learning facilities

- Drain of highly skilled young workforce out of county thereby reducing the potential workforce available.
Increase potential HE participation and encourage the availability of appropriate employment opportunities for graduates

Basic Skills

- Better than regional average level of Basic Skills in general so providing business with skilled workforce
Continue to develop provision through range of organisations to instil culture that motivates people to attain levels necessary for work

- Lack of innovative methods in the teaching of Basic Skills that appeal to and targets those who require it.
Work with BSA and other LSC areas to investigate new methods to tackle innumeracy and illiteracy

- Increasing access to learning via new local learning centres and in-company learning facilities, using new innovative methods i.e. ICT
Encourage participation on basic skills courses (challenging and overcoming embarrassment and discrimination) using the local centres and distance learning

- The deprived status of an area is not improved if the low achievement rate remains unaffected
Focus effort on good quality provision in conjunction with key partners to effectively raise community aspirations

**Learning
Delivery**

Efficiency of delivery

- Reasonable geographical spread of learning providers catering for the needs of a majority of potential learners
Continually monitor both learning demand and supply to ensure sufficient coverage

- Lack of detailed geographical analysis to determine if there are areas of inefficient delivery or areas poorly served.
Analyse the spread of all learning providers throughout the county to establish efficiency of delivery

- New ICT technology enables distance and interactive learning across all geographical areas.
Ensure rural areas have access to new technology and innovative methods of learning are adopted

- Lack of breadth of provision as the delivery of some subjects is highly expensive
Develop and utilise centres of excellence that create innovative methods of delivery

Higher Education

- High number of entrants into HE from Shropshire residents relative to the national trend.
Raise the levels of achievement and thereby the number of potential entrants to HE

- Lack of general HE provision necessitate learners to move out of Shropshire, and remain so utilising their learning elsewhere
Actively work to establish new HE provision to retain learners and attract businesses into Shropshire

- Important Government priority to enable 50% of people aged less than 30 to benefit from HE in the next 10 years
Collaboratively work towards enabling Shropshire to have an increased HE presence and meet the local demand regarding the courses offered and the learning methods i.e. full- or part-time

- Reduced number of highly skilled people due to the increasing barriers preventing access to HE provision.
Work with partners to encourage HE provision and degree equivalent qualifications

Focus areas from LSC area overview	Key Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some good quality provision that creates positive experiences and instils a desire to learn <i>Identify the good qualities and disseminate to attain improvements elsewhere</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some provision is of poor quality decreasing retention, reducing attainment and potentially putting people off future learning <i>Invoke quality improvement strategies and the various funding mechanisms to improve the quality of provision</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased remit of the LSC allows contracts with a wide variety of potential learning providers. <i>Encourage working relationships with a variety of local groups utilising their strengths and building existing providers using the new methods adopted by these new providers</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some poor retention and achievement levels due to poor advice <i>Ensure that the information and advice available is current and relevant to the needs of each learner</i>

Links to Key Strategic Priorities

The following highlights the focus of the Key Strategic Priorities on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
S2. Key Sector Focus	S1. Skill Needs	S3. Building Capacity	L3. Employability Skills
P5. Voluntary & Community Sector	S4. Enterprise & Growth	P1. Young People in Learning	
L2. Quality Improvement	S5. Employer commitment to Learning	P4. Equal Opportunities	
L4. Teaching & Learning Methods	P2. Adults in Learning		
	P3. Maximising Participation		
	P6. Information, Advice and Guidance		
	L1. Basic Skills		
	L5. Maximising Value		

> Appendix 5: Planning Timetable

The table highlights important dates in our national and local planning process from April 2002 onwards.

Date	Strategic Plan	Business Plan
April 2002	2002/05 Plan finalised and issued Prepare Strategic Review for 2001/02	
June 2002		2002/03 Plan finalised and published
August 2002	Drafting of Strategic Plans for 2003/06	
November 2002	Consultation on draft Strategic Plan 2003/06 Strategic Plan 2003/06	

> Appendix 6: Glossary of terms

ACL	Adult and Community Learning
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
AWM	Advantage West Midlands
BL	Business Link
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CFO	Co-financing organisation
CIF	Common Inspection Framework
CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
C of C	Chamber of Commerce
CoVEs	Centres of Vocational Excellence
CRE	Council for Racial Equality
CVS	Community Voluntary Sector
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DIAL	Disability Information and Advice Line
EBP	Education Business Partnership
EBL	Education Business Link
EEF	Engineering Employers Federation
EMTA	Engineering Manufacturing Training Association
ESF	European Social Fund
EYDCP	Early Years Development Childcare Partnership
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FRESA	Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action
GTA	Group Training Association
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HETB	Heart of England Tourist Board
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IiP	Investors in People
ILA	Individual Learning Account

IOD	Institute of Directors
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
LIF	Local Initiative Fund
LLDD	Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
LLP	Lifelong Learning Partnership
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LLSC	Local Learning and Skills Council
MCI	Management Charter Initiative
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NFU	National Farmers Union
NHS	National Health Service
NTO	National Training Organisation
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SAPTC	Shropshire Association of Parish and Town Councils
SBS	Small Business Service
SCC	Shropshire County Council
SME	Small & Medium Enterprise
SIB	Shropshire Investment Bureau
SPIC	Shropshire Partnership in Care
STIAG	Shropshire Telford Information Advice and Guidance for Adults
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
TDA	Telford Development Agency
TSC	Training Standards Council
TOPSS	Training Organisation for Personal and Social Services
TUC	Trades Union Congress
T&W	Telford and Wrekin
Ufi	University for Industry
WBL	Work Based Learning
YOT	Youth Offending Team

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Learning+Skills Council
Shropshire