

Learning and Skills Council

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Local Strategic Plan 2002-2005

Northumberland



Learning+Skills Council
Northumberland

With thanks to Alan Sinclair (Learning and Skills Council Northumberland) and Northumberland College who provided the front cover photography.

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> Introduction by the Chairman and Executive Director

This is the first strategic plan developed by the Learning and Skills Council Northumberland.

It covers the period 2002 - 2005 and sets out: our vision for learning in the County, the Learning and Skills Council's mission, our analysis of Northumberland's labour and learning markets, the strategic issues we have identified, and the targets we have set ourselves. It also expresses the way we need to work in Northumberland.

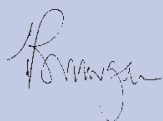
At the heart of the strategy is the principle of **distributed learning**: we want to make learning opportunities more accessible, more available and more appropriate to all who live and work in the County. Only by doing this can we ensure that more people participate, successfully, in learning activity.

The strategy is set within the national vision and mission developed by the Learning and Skills Council. We have also taken on board the strategies and priorities of other organisations operating in the Region and County. We will work with those organisations: we cannot achieve our objectives alone.

Our actions will be founded on a sound basis of analysis: quite simply, we want to know what the need for learning is, what provision currently exists and how we can work with others to bridge any gaps. This strategy is based on our initial findings but we will continue to develop a better understanding of the labour and learning markets in Northumberland. We will take a structured approach to identifying need, on an area by area, a thematic, or a countywide basis. As our understanding of the data on learning develops, we shall develop more specific baselines and targets (which could, for example, be geographically based) against which to monitor our progress. And we will make sure that the impact of our activity is evaluated.

We have access to programme resources, our Local Initiative Fund and we are a co-financing agency for ESF Objective 3. We will harness those resources and bring them together with those controlled by others, to maximise their impact in support of our priorities.

We have consulted widely on the analysis and ideas underpinning this plan. The advice and guidance we have received has been helpful and we look forward to continuing that dialogue.



E Barry Morgan
Chairman

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Susan Bickerton
Executive Director

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> 1. Background and Context

The Learning and Skills Council was set up in April 2001 to integrate the planning and funding of all post compulsory learning except Higher Education. It is a national organisation, led by a national Council. At the same time, 47 local Councils were established, bringing together a range of people drawn from employers and from the wider community. One of those local Councils serves Northumberland.

We believe that a radical improvement in skills is important for the continued development of the competitiveness of the economy, to enable people to find and retain satisfying work and to develop their talents to the full. More than that, we are convinced that learning is important in itself: it enriches lives and strengthens communities. It is that belief in learning which drives our thinking and our actions.

The Learning and Skills Council has a vision: it is that by 2010 young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world. Our mission is to raise participation and attainment through high quality education and training, which puts learners first. The key tasks for the national office and for each local office are to:

- > Raise participation and achievement by young people;
- > Increase demand for learning by adults and equalise opportunities through better access to learning;
- > Engage employers in improving skills for employability and national competitiveness;
- > Raise the quality of education and training delivery; and
- > Improve effectiveness and efficiency.

We have a statutory duty to **encourage participation in education and training** and this puts the learner at the heart of the system. A second duty is to **encourage employer participation** in the provision of education and training. Together, these duties will ensure that the skills needs of the economy and society are fully met. This will only be possible if we can work effectively with other agencies and providers and make the best of initiatives under way in the Region.

There are five key objectives with associated targets to be met by 2004. These are set out on the following page, together with the targets we have set ourselves in Northumberland to represent our contribution to their achievement.

Key Objectives	Targets for 2004	National Position 2000	Northumberland Position 2000	Northumberland Target 2004 (With numerical improvement required)
Extend participation in education, learning and training.	80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning.	75%	75%	82% (+898)
	Set baseline and targets for adults in next year's plan.	National methodology under development		
Increase engagement of employers in workforce development.	Develop measure of employer engagement in next year's plan.	National methodology under development		
Raise achievement of young people.	85% at Level 2 by age 19.	75%	70%	75% (+184)
	55% at Level 3 by age 19.	51%	38%	42% (+152)
Raise achievement of adults.	Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults.	Up to 7 million adults with literacy and numeracy difficulties.	Approximately 48,000 people with numeracy and / or literacy difficulties.	Reduction of 6.2% of the total (+2995)
	% of adults with Level 2 target to be set in next year's plan.	National methodology under development		
	52% of adults at Level 3.	47%	43%	48% (+7119)
Raise quality of education and training and user satisfaction.	Set baselines and targets in next year's plan.	National methodology under development		

> 2. The North East Region and Northumberland

The Learning and Skills Council Northumberland is keen to work with the Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast (ONE), to help address the priorities it has defined for the Region. They are to:

- Create wealth by building a diversified, knowledge driven economy;
- Establish a new entrepreneurial culture;
- Build an adaptable and highly skilled workforce;
- Place universities and colleges at the heart of the regional economy;
- Meet 21st century communication and property needs; and
- Accelerate the renaissance of the North East.

Similarly, we have an active County partnership: the Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP). The NSP has adopted the priorities of One NorthEast and recast them in the context of the County, its characteristics, and its needs.

We have participated in the development, from those priorities, of the NSP's Action Plan for the Regional Development Agency's single funding pot for economic development and regeneration.

We are a public body and will work in close conjunction with the Government Office for the North East.

Our own strategies will support the priorities of these other county and regional organisations. In some areas we will lead, in others our role will be to support the work of other bodies and agencies. At Annex 1 we have identified the key partnerships in the County and presented the links between our strategies. By open communication and active involvement in partnership structures, we will ensure that our work and our efforts enrich and add value to those of other agencies.

> 3. The Evidence of Need in Northumberland

This section provides a summary of the learning and skills needs analysis undertaken as part of our planning process. A more detailed breakdown of sectors is at Annex 2. The full analysis is available as a separate document.

Geography and Learning Infrastructure

Northumberland is the most northerly and one of the largest Counties in England. With a population of 310,000 and a total area of 2,000 square miles it is also the most sparsely populated: around 50% of the population live in just 5% of the total area.

The learning infrastructure mirrors the settlement pattern. The County has only one Further Education College with main sites in Ashington (in the South East of the County) and at Kirkley Hall and a range of outreach and joint provision in various locations across Northumberland. Newcastle and Derwentside Colleges also have outreach provision in the County. The Learning and Skills Council Northumberland currently contracts with 25 Work Based Learning Providers, of which the majority are in the South East of the County. The 15 High Schools are a key part of the learning infrastructure for 16-18 year olds and are also the most common place for adult and community learning, although a further nine Providers offer some of this provision.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

The County suffers from high levels of deprivation, particularly in the South East of the County (Blyth Valley and Wansbeck). According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, 14 wards in Northumberland are ranked in the lowest 10% in England and of those, 12 are located in this part of the County. The rest of the County is characterised by poor access: 35 wards in Northumberland are in the lowest 10% of wards in England in respect of access to services. The maps at Annex 4 present this graphically.

The population of Northumberland has a higher proportion of residents aged over 40 years old than the average for England. Amongst the older age groups the County also has a higher level of economic inactivity, at 38% compared with the England figure of 29.5% for those aged 50 to retirement (source: Labour Force Survey, 2000).

Unemployment in the County is relatively low (at 4.6%) by North East standards but is still above the national average (3.3%). This overall picture masks significant variations: pockets of persistent long term unemployment are concentrated in the former coalfield areas of the County.

Post-16 Participation and Achievement

Basic Skills

Redressing poor attainment of basic skills is recognised as a key national priority. The levels of poor literacy and numeracy both stand at 24% of the adult population in England. Northumberland has a greater problem: 26.3% of adults living in the County are recognised as having poor literacy and 25.9% have poor numeracy. We have, in conjunction with partners, produced a detailed action plan for basic skills.

Other Participation and Attainment

The Learning and Skills Council has set interim targets for participation and attainment to be achieved by 2004. The table below shows the Learning and Skills Council's targets, national achievement and the current position for Northumberland.

Target For 2004		National Current Position	Local Current Position
16-18 Participation	80%	75%	75%
Level 2 by 19	85%	75%	70%
Level 3 by 19	55%	51%	38%
Level 3 for Adults	52%	47%	43%

Source: Learning and Skills Council Northumberland

It is clear that participation for 16-18 year olds in Northumberland matches the national figures. However, in terms of attainment levels the County fares less well. The explanation for this is unclear. Attainment for 5+ GCSEs (grades A*-C) has tended, over a number of years, to be high in regional terms and in line with the national average: in 2000 the Northumberland figure was 49.6% compared with 49.2% for the England average. However, beyond Year 11 attainment in the County falls well behind. This is partly due to the fact that the targets for achievement up to the age of 19 are measured on the basis of where people learn, not where they live. A proportion of learners who are resident in Northumberland learn outside the County and are therefore not included in the statistics for Northumberland.

However, the target for Level 3 achievement by adults is a residence-based measure. It is clear that there is a significant gap between the County performance and the national average by this stage.

Underpinning our thinking and this strategy is the need to get to grips with the reasons for this disparity and to tackle it. We think that widening information and choice, through distributing learning more effectively (based on area reviews), will be key. Our ongoing research and evaluation will make for a better understanding of the problems and will help us target our interventions more precisely.

Workforce Development and the Skill Needs of Employers

According to the Annual Business Inquiry 1999, Northumberland has a greater reliance on public services employment (31.5%*) than is the case regionally (29.4%) and nationally (23.7%). A major structural weakness is the lower proportion of employment in other service industries. Manufacturing accounts for a slightly lower share of total employment opportunities in Northumberland (13.8%) than nationally (15.7%) and this is also lower than the regional average (18.1%). Construction accounts for a higher share of employment in the County (8.3%) than nationally or regionally (4.5% and 5.6% respectively). The County has also recently been hit by the effects of foot and mouth disease, though its impact on the rural economy has not yet been fully researched.

*Includes health, education, public administration

A slightly different perspective on the employment structure shows the County to have a lower share of knowledge intensive services and medium technology manufacturing than the regional and national averages. On the face of it, the share of employment in high technology manufacturing appears to be higher than the national and regional averages. But because of the nature of the operation in those sectors in the County, a significant proportion of the employment opportunities are at the lower skills end of the spectrum. The table below shows the structure of knowledge based employment in the County.

Knowledge Based Employment			
	Northumberland	North East	Great Britain
Medium Technology Manufacturing	4.3%	6.0%	4.4%
High Technology Manufacturing	2.0%	1.4%	1.3%
Knowledge Intensive Services	4.9%	8.9%	16.0%

Source: ABI, 1999

The County fares reasonably well in terms of employment change. Over the period 1996 to 1999, employees in employment increased by 10.6% compared with 6.9% nationally. The table in Annex 2 highlights how the major employment sectors have changed over this period. Amongst the top 6 employment sectors only one (Education) has seen the numbers employed decrease. Of the 18 sectors contributing more than 1% to the employment base only 6 have experienced a decrease in the numbers they employ.

Job opportunities arise from current employers having vacancies or from new firms starting or locating in the County. The majority of job openings arise from the former and these tend to provide a larger proportion of all recruitment activity within the area. In 1999-2000 only 20.6% of Northumberland employers had vacancies, compared with 32.4% for England as a whole and 25% in the North East Region (source: Employer Skills Survey 1999). According to data from the Employment Service the majority of vacancies in the County in April 2000 were in distribution, hotels and restaurants (27.5%), public administration (28.6%), banking, finance and insurance (17.2%) and manufacturing (10.1%). These translate into the following occupational areas: administrative occupations (16.4%), sales occupations (10.8%) and unskilled manual work (32.5%). Manufacturing related craft and operative vacancies accounted for 17.4% of the total.

Hard To Fill Vacancies and Skill Shortages

Mismatches with the external labour market manifest themselves as hard to fill vacancies. This can arise either because there is genuinely a lack of people with the skills and experience required by employers, or because the terms and conditions offered are not attractive to potential employees. In 1999-2000 some 7.7% of Northumberland establishments were experiencing difficulty in filling their vacancies. This compares to 16.5% for England and 10% in the Region.

The main areas where recruitment difficulties existed were:

- Corporate managers and administrators;
- Science and engineering professionals;
- Teaching professionals;
- Health associate professionals; and
- Other skilled trades.

Recruitment difficulties in the above occupational areas have become more widespread over recent years (source: NTEC Employer Surveys 1998 and 1999). These occupational areas clearly require higher level skills, most of them requiring intermediate or degree level qualifications.

In terms of real skill shortages, Northumberland does not appear to have an acute problem. In work conducted by the National Skills Taskforce (Employer Skills Survey 1999) only 1.3% of employers were considered to be suffering from real skill shortages (compared with 7.7% in England and 4% in the North East). So while individual skills shortages can of course represent a major constraint to employers, at the County level there is no evidence of great difficulty. In practice, transport and location issues cannot be ignored and may be the reason behind a number of recruitment difficulties. Although these may not manifest themselves as real skill shortages, attracting people with the right skills may impose a wage premium on the employer.

Skill Gaps

A skills gap is defined as a mismatch between employees' skills and business need. On the evidence, 13.9% of establishments in Northumberland considered themselves to have a skills gap. The equivalent figure for England is 20% and for the North East it is 16.5%. Although a lower figure could be seen as a positive feature of the County, the fact that Northumberland has a relatively low skilled employment base suggests that this lower figure is a negative feature. If employers were moving towards engaging in higher level markets and modernising their production techniques then a wider skills gap would be expected.

The main skill gap areas for employees in the County (this information is only available for the Coalfield area but is consistent with previous surveys) have been identified as:

- IT literacy;
- Personal skills: motivation and fitting in;
- Verbal communication skills;

- Basic practical skills;
- Craft / technician level skills;
- Basic literacy;
- Team working;
- Problem solving; and
- Customer care / service.

A number of these skills are essential to any occupation and so closing these gaps is not only important to the employer but also to the employee: removing these skill deficiencies will enable people to progress in their current employment and access other opportunities as they arise.

This learning and skill needs analysis represents an initial starting point. As part of our plan we will continue to develop our understanding of the needs of learners and non-learners in the County whether they are residents or employees. A separate research document will provide details of proposed research and analysis activities over the life of this Plan.

> 4. Our Approach

We have agreed a set of statements, which express the way in which we want to behave as individuals and as an organisation. They are to:

- > Be ambitious and not afraid of taking risks;
- > Take collective responsibility for our actions;
- > Show respect for others, be generous in spirit and take a statesmanlike approach;
- > Encourage and respect diversity, emphasising results and outcomes; and
- > Be open and transparent in communication.

These in turn, support our approach, which is to:

- > **Base our decisions and actions on the best available evidence** (and be prepared to be challenged on that evidence);
- > **Recognise that there is no single solution for the County:** different, local solutions will apply within a single strategy for the County;
- > Be clear that **distributed learning** (taking the learning to the learner) will, in different ways, form a major part of those solutions;
- > Ensure that our interventions **put the learner at the centre of the process**;
- > Through our direct and indirect interactions with employers and individuals, help them better articulate their needs and thus **educate** their **demand** for learning;
- > Work actively to develop the **quality of provision** and ensure that the learner's experience is enhanced, rather than compromised, as new ways of delivering learning are tested and implemented; and
- > Insist that all our actions **broaden accessibility**, widening opportunities for all so that no person or group is excluded or disadvantaged.

A robust, needs led approach will, we think, support equality of access and opportunity whilst recognising the need for diversity. In this way the plan is "rural proof". In other words, it ensures that the needs of the smaller settlements in the North and West of the County, especially those that have relied on rural industries, are addressed as well as those of the populated South East of Northumberland.

> 5. Our Strategy: Analysis and Structure

The tables on pages 16-23 of this document are the heart of this Plan: they show the issues we have identified on the evidence of need, the strategic response and the strategic actions we will take. They also suggest the impact and output measures we will put in place.

We have structured the tables under four headings. They are: **demand for labour, demand for learning, supply of learning, and supply of labour**. We have chosen this structure because our analysis suggests a model (see Annex 3) of a learning market and a labour market, neither of which are functioning effectively in Northumberland and which, in addition, are not in balance with each other.

It is clear though that a part of our mission is to prepare people who live in Northumberland to take advantage of learning and employment opportunities wherever those opportunities may be: in that sense our vision is not limited to the County. We must also offer opportunities to people who have been disappointed or unsuccessful in previous learning or employment activity, who are at risk of exclusion or who have a learning difficulty or disability.

Our Strategy: Summary of our Priorities

Strategies imply priorities. In brief, ours are that we will:

1. Address the learning infrastructure by:

- **Moving towards a new structure of learning delivery in Northumberland**, by reconfiguring provision based on the evidence of need, the evidence of demand and on the specific economic, demographic and geographical characteristics of the County. In doing so we will: work with the grain of policy developments in education; increase the emphasis on the hard to reach (whether for reasons of geography, disaffection or other); work towards developing a more coherent 14-19 phase of education and training (particularly establishing a sound basis for work with the High Schools of the County). The analysis will lead to a new pattern of contracted learning provision, with an increased emphasis on the quality of that provision.
- **Developing and implementing the principle of distributed learning**; making appropriate use of all modes of learning, including the use of ICT; but also maximising the potential of mixed use venues (including, particularly, the County's network of libraries). At Annex 4 is our case for distributed learning.
- **Developing the provision of information, advice and guidance**; the levels of knowledge of and access to materials; support to learners (including teachers and trainers).

2. **By distributing and supporting learning more effectively increase choice, increase the level of participation and, crucially, increase the proportion of participants who succeed by:**
 - **Building pathways** (through better distributed learning provision and better information) **to increase the number of individuals who progress**, from informal to formal learning and, within formal learning, from lower to higher levels.
 - **Listening to learners**, and to those who are not yet engaged in learning
3. **Increase our understanding of the needs of employers and of the sectors, and respond more effectively by:**
 - **Working with employers in the public, private and voluntary sectors to enable them to become exemplars of good practice** and encourage them to share this within their sector, supply chains, and geographic locations.
 - **Reflecting regional strategy in relation to sector based activity**, given the relatively weak employer base and the importance, for the many of those living in the County, of the economy of other parts of the Region. We will also retain a focus on areas of strategic importance for the County: these are, for the private sector: manufacturing; construction; land-based industries; tourism and pharmaceuticals and for the public sector: health; education and public administration. We will also work with the NSP to investigate the options around the area of sustainable energies.

Our strategy will succeed if it supports, and is in turn supported by, actions led by others. These include:

- **Developing and enriching the economic base of the County**, increasing access to jobs at high skill levels;
- **Developing communities** at local, District and County levels: supporting regeneration activity and ensuring that learning takes place within it;
- **Increasing the strength and effectiveness of partnership structures**, to make the best of the capacity within a County with a small population and institutional infrastructure;
- **Putting in place the ICT infrastructure**; addressing the collective needs of public and private sector requirements in the County, but recognising that this will need to be public sector led; and
- **Taking a broad view of access issues**, and supporting efforts to address transport needs.

Cutting across all our activities, are the following themes:

- **Retaining the emphasis on quality and on health and safety**, particularly where learning is delivered using non-traditional modes and in unusual places. We have produced a Quality Improvement Strategy (the summary is at Annex 9). This will be followed and will itself be reviewed to ensure its continued effectiveness. We also have a draft policy statement on health and safety (see Annex 10).
- **Adhering to a comprehensive equality and diversity strategy** in what we do and in the way in which we behave as an organisation. We will produce and publish a strategy, as a companion document to this plan, and our policy statement is at Annex 11.
- **Ensuring that financial propriety is maintained** in the use of our own, of European and of other resources.
- **Continuing to develop our understanding of need and supply and evaluating the impact of our interventions systematically** (see Annex 5).

Lastly, we are ambitious, for the Learning and Skills Council and for Northumberland. We want to be noted for our excellence in:

- **Designing and implementing an imaginative and versatile strategy for distributed learning and, through that strategy, making a step change in participation, retention, achievement and progression; and**
- **Understanding the County and basing our interventions on that knowledge: in short, demonstrating evidence based practice.**

Issue	Evidence	Strategic Response	Strategic Actions	Impact Measures
A small number of large private sector employers.	26 private sector employers employing more than 250 employees.	Understand their needs and contribution to skills development.	<p>Develop and implement an employer engagement strategy and support and encourage large employers to become learning champions.</p> <p>Develop effective mechanisms for obtaining skill needs assessments and feeding this into the Learning and Skills Council planning processes.</p> <p>Coordinate the activities of employer intermediaries to minimise duplication and reduce the burden on employers.</p>	<p>Learning and Skills Council measure of employer engagement in workforce development. (To be developed).</p> <p>20 large employers recognised as a learning champion.</p> <p>Large employers achieving Investors In People (IIP) recognition – 2 per year.</p> <p>2 joint employer events and publicity material developed per year.</p> <p>2 large employers to be accredited as Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Providers in 2002.</p> <p>Learning Centres established and used by family, friends and the community – 1 per year.</p>
	99% of establishments employ less than 200 people.	Develop mechanism for engaging Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in workforce development.	<p>Work collaboratively with other local Learning and Skills Councils, One North East (ONE) and the newly established Sector Skills Councils to develop sector skills plans in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing • Construction • Land-based • Tourism and Culture • Renewable Energy <p>Work with Business Link for Northumberland (BLfN) to promote and implement workforce development activities with SMEs.</p> <p>Promote SMEs as exemplars in workforce development.</p> <p>Develop an integrated approach to workforce development with BLfN, which integrates assisting and supporting new entrants into employment, supports succession planning and implements effective management development programmes.</p> <p>Develop effective mechanisms for obtaining skill need assessments, in collaboration with BLfN and feeding this into the Learning and Skills Council planning processes.</p>	<p>5 plans developed (2 in 2002, 2 in 2003 and 1 in 2004).</p> <p>SMEs receiving support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 key workers achieving Level 3 • 100 learners achieving Level 2 / 3 • 100 basic skills learners achieving Foundation / Level 1 <p>150 managers developed to Level 3 / 4 .</p> <p>4 SMEs to be accredited as IAG Providers in 2002.</p> <p>90 SMEs achieving IIP recognition (25 in 2002, 30 in 2003 and 35 in 2004).</p> <p>Joint approach to workforce development reflects the skills needs of SMEs.</p>

DEMAND FOR LABOUR (CONTINUED)

Issue	Evidence	Strategic Response	Strategic Actions	Impact Measures
....and the public sector makes a significant contribution to the employment base of the County.	35.8% of employment is in the public sector.	Encourage public sector to become exemplars in workforce development.	Develop sector skills development plans for the following public sectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Social Care • Education • Public Administration Promote and support the development of workplace learning centres with open access for friends and family.	3 plans to be developed by 2004 (1 per year). Learning Centres established and used by family, friends and the community – 1 per year. Public sector employers achieving IIP – 10 per year.
There is considerable external ownership and control of the employer base.	25 of the 26 large employers are branches or subsidiaries of larger organisations with Head Offices outside the County.	Understand the need and contribution of externally owned employers building on the ethos of the parent company.	Develop a better understanding of the workforce development protocols and activities undertaken by firms in the organisation's home country. Customisation of workforce development interventions.	The County's Workforce Development Strategy reflects the needs of branch / subsidiary organisations.
The County shows a concentration of low skill activity and low levels of growth...	Only 11.2% of employment is in the knowledge based industry.	Use management development to raise aspirations of businesses in the County, in the context of wider regional strategies and in conjunction with other agencies.	Work closely with the Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP) and Jobcentreplus to engage Northumberland employers with developments around regional clusters and innovation strategies. Work with BLFN and Learning Providers to deliver appropriate management development programmes to employers.	30 owner managers achieving Level 3.
		Support the development of knowledge based employers in the County through workforce development.	Develop a better understanding of the workforce development needs of knowledge based businesses. Through the NSP develop effective links between employers and Universities to facilitate effective knowledge and technology transfer mechanisms.	Workforce Development Action Plan to be developed for knowledge based businesses in 2003.
		Develop the skills base of the population to exploit higher level opportunities wherever they may be.	Ensure that reasonable and proper provision of higher level learning opportunities is widely available. Enhance IAG to cover learning and employment opportunities from elsewhere.	Impact measures to be developed over the life of the plan in consultation with National Office.

DEMAND FOR LABOUR (CONTINUED)

Issue	Evidence	Strategic Response	Strategic Actions	Impact Measures
....and there is a growing recognition of the importance of the voluntary sector to employment.		Develop the capacity of the voluntary and community sectors by enhancing the skills of their employees so that they can deliver their services more effectively.	Create a workforce development forum for the voluntary sector. Develop mechanisms for supporting management development. Develop a better understanding of the voluntary sector's contribution to the employment base.	Voluntary sector workforce development forum to be created by April 2003. 30% of voluntary sector organisations to have engaged with the forum by September 2003.
A significant number of people commute into and out of Northumberland on a daily basis for employment.	Data from 1991 Census is the only reliable source but is out of date.	Develop mechanisms to understand the impact of regional developments on Northumberland people and businesses.	Work with regional partners in the development of Regional Frameworks for Employment and Skills Action (FRESA).	Impact measures to be developed by ONE.

DEMAND FOR LEARNING

Issue	Evidence	Strategic Response	Strategic Actions	Impact Measures
Participation at 16-18 is higher than the average for the Region and close to the figure for England...but there are significant local variations...and it is not matched by achievement at Levels 2 and 3.	75% of 16-18 year olds in the County are in structured learning in Northumberland.	Widen choice and information, and improve the quality of provision. Develop a better understanding of why people choose to learn and why they leave learning before completing. Identify and look to meet wider support issues. Differentiate that understanding by population group and by area.	Better distributed, integrated provision to increase choice available. Develop wider provision of information, advice and guidance before, during and after participation. Address quality of learning provision through the Quality Improvement Strategy. Listen to learners and non-learners.	16-18 participation to be at 82% by 2004 (76% in 2002, 78% by 2003, 82% by 2004). 19 year olds achieving Level 2 to be 75% by 2004 (72% by 2002, 74% by 2003, 75% by 2004). 19 year olds achieving Level 3 to be 42% by 2004 (40% by 2002, 41% by 2003, 42% by 2004). 100% of Providers to be assessed as part of Provider Performance Review as satisfactory or better by 2004.
There is considerable evidence of shortfalls in basic skill levels held. ...similarly, the spread of basic skills needs is uneven.	Approximately 48,000 people have low levels of literacy and / or numeracy.	Increase the capacity for training in basic skills and deliver more flexibly and imaginatively.	Develop capacity to offer training in basic skills, in conjunction with partners including the Basic Skills Forum and Jobcentreplus. Increase modes of basic skills delivery (alongside other forms of distributed learning) in the community, within formal and informal training and in the workforce (as part of an integrated workforce development strategy). Target supply to areas of greatest need, linked where appropriate to other community based activity.	50% of current trainers to be qualified to City and Guilds 9285 standard by 2004 (35 additional people to attain higher level qualification – 10 in 2002, 15 in 2003 and 10 in 2004). 2995 people to have improved their basic skills levels to Entry Level 3 or above by 2004 (500 in 2002, 1000 in 2003 and 1495 in 2004).
There are relatively few jobs at higher skill levels in Northumberland: this might limit incentives to take up learning or to progress.	Only 11.2% of employment is in knowledge based industries.	Ratchet up the level of economic activity in the County by supporting the work of the NSP and other agencies. Raise aspirations by giving more information about opportunities elsewhere.	Through the Workforce Development Strategy (and in partnership through economic development work) raise the level of economic activity. Increase information about higher level jobs outside the County.	Targets will be developed as part of the Workforce Development Strategy.

DEMAND FOR LEARNING (CONTINUED)

Issue	Evidence	Strategic Response	Strategic Actions	Impact Measures
Participation in Higher Education is relatively high overall but there are great variations between Districts.	11.4% of 16-19 year olds in the County entered Higher Education compared with 7.6% nationally. Participation is high in Castle Morpeth and Tynedale and low in Berwick and Wansbeck.	Broaden progression pathways.	Through offering a wider range of learning opportunities and better information, increase the number who progress through learning. Target interventions in areas of low participation and low aspiration.	

SUPPLY OF LEARNING

Issue	Evidence	Strategic Response	Strategic Actions	Impact Measures
A fragmented and limited learning offer particularly in the rural areas...	The majority of Providers are concentrated in the South East corner of the County. There is limited outreach provision in other parts of the County.	Initiate area by area and thematic reviews to inform the reconfiguration of learning provision. Implement recommendations progressively.	Conduct initial area and thematic reviews. Define and refine process, including strengthening data collection and analysis in the light of need. Define programme and timescale of reviews. Start implementing outcomes progressively (in terms of structure, provision and curriculum choice) developing models for the distribution of learning. Evaluate the process systematically. Support the development and take up of learndirect provision.	Two area reviews completed per year. Two action plans to be developed per year.
...provision of information, advice and guidance is similarly constrained...		Work closely with Connexions to implement the Connexions Strategy in schools and fuller, more integrated, support to young people. Support the further development of the adult IAG infrastructure, and integrate into new forms and modes of learning delivery.	Close involvement with Connexions and IAG partnerships will influence the design of the provision and the means of delivery to achieve a fit with the emerging model of distributed learning. Develop links with partner organisations to support people new to learning.	Numbers of people receiving information and advice differentiated by basic skills, Levels 2 and 3 learners, employed, unemployed (impact measure to be developed over next 12 months). 6 Providers to gain Guidance Accreditation Board (GAB) accreditation in 2002. 3 additional IAG hubs to be created in 2002. 2 Sure Start Providers to be accredited as IAG Providers.
...both are exacerbated by transport difficulties...		Develop distributed learning infrastructure to reduce the effect of transport difficulties. Inform and support developments in the transport infrastructure.	As above. Initiate and manage a cross-sectoral group on distributed learning to advise on the issues. Work with LEA, Local Authorities, and providers of public transport to identify issues and options.	
...leading to limited choice for learners.		Broaden choice, improve access to information about options and increase take up.		Participation rates from 16-18 year olds. (Some of the increased participation will be achieved through improved retention. The contribution of this will be developed as part of the Quality Improvement Strategy). Increased adult participation rates (impact and baselines to be developed with National Office).

SUPPLY OF LEARNING (CONTINUED)

Issue	Evidence	Strategic Response	Strategic Actions	Impact Measures
The current state of infrastructure development limits the options for ICT based learning.	Much of the County does not have access to broadband.	Actively support NSP efforts to invest in the ICT infrastructure.	Executive Director to chair NSP working group. Align developments in the learning infrastructure.	100 additional tutors to be trained (20 in 2002, 50 in 2003 and 30 in 2004). 10 additional ESOL trainers to be trained by 2004. 6 dyslexia support workers to be trained by 2004. 10 additional on-line learning tutors per year. Increased participation and achievement by people with disabilities and learning difficulties (impact measures to be developed once robust baselines available).
Capacity issues exist in respect of learning places, learning materials, learner support and educators.		Identify capacity constraints more precisely: we know they exist in basic skills and in support for remote learners, but not to what extent or in what other areas. Address resource and support issues inhibiting the take up of distributed learning through partnership activity.	Consider means of addressing capacity constraints. Promote awareness of ways to meet the needs of people with disabilities and learning difficulties.	100 additional tutors to be trained (20 in 2002, 50 in 2003 and 30 in 2004). 10 additional ESOL trainers to be trained by 2004. 6 dyslexia support workers to be trained by 2004. 10 additional on-line learning tutors per year. Increased participation and achievement by people with disabilities and learning difficulties (impact measures to be developed once robust baselines available).
Progression pathways are limited by lack of choice and lack of information.	Provision is concentrated in the South East of the County.	Address choice and the provision of IAG as above. Work in close step with community based partnerships (both rural and urban).	Monitor provision and take up of IAG by partnerships and its impact on learning activity and on progression. Align development of the distributed learning model with partnership development activity. Consider local as well as District and County delivery mechanisms in that context.	Numbers progressing to higher levels of learning (impact measures to be developed as ILR capability allows).
There is no University in the County (although HE provision exists).	Some HE provision is available through Northumberland College and the Longhirst campus.	Address the provision of HE through distributed learning with an approach open to all options, national and international.	Define the need clearly, assess the availability of current provision and identify the gaps. Explore options at home and overseas.	
The quality of provision, and how it fits with the needs of employers and people, should be developed further.	Quality inspection reports on Providers.	LSC Northumberland to lead a comprehensive Quality Improvement Strategy based on inspection evidence and underpinned by joint activity.	Develop, in conjunction with the Learning Partnership, area based learner forums. Implement a Quality Improvement Strategy.	100% of Providers to be assessed as part of Provider Performance Review as satisfactory or better by 2004. More learners and increased progression / achievement (impact measures to be developed as part of the Quality Improvement Strategy).

SUPPLY OF LABOUR

Issue	Evidence	Strategic Response	Strategic Actions	Impact Measures
The County shows constraints on mobility due to geography and transport.	According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation much of Northumberland is amongst the most inaccessible in the Country.	Integrated distributed learning strategy.	Address the nature of the learning offer against agreed learner entitlement criteria and realign accordingly after area review. Support partners in developing the transport infrastructure.	
.... and pockets of persistent unemployment.	Blyth Valley and Wansbeck have higher levels of unemployment than the rest of the County. Long term unemployment is also more of a problem in these areas. However a more diverse picture emerges at a ward level.	Work in an integrated way with employment services.	Work with NSP and Jobcentreplus to develop good practice from Action Teams for Jobs across the high unemployment area of the County. Link job search and brokerage services with workforce development activities.	Reduction in unemployment (ILO count). Number of people provided with 'in work' support funded from NSP, co-financing and other sources.
		Work in step with community development activity.	Work closely with the Local Strategic Partnerships, Rural Community Council and other partnership groups to understand the needs of local communities and develop partnership solutions to address the needs.	Extent to which local community plans embrace learning and skills priorities. Improvement in local employment rates. Improvement in learning participation rates by ward.
A higher than average percentage of the population is over 40.		Promote inter-generational learning.	See 'Learning Supply'.	
		Create an appropriate mix and mode of delivery (to meet requirements for specific age groups).	See 'Learning Supply'.	

> 6. Consultation and Next Steps

The Learning and Skills Council Northumberland elected to consult, during Autumn 2001, on the framework of analysis and thinking that underpins the plan. The objective was to ensure a real dialogue, unbounded by an existing draft document. Some 30 meetings were held with individuals or groups within the County (listed at Annex 6a). In addition, two consultation meetings were held with regional partners (Annex 6b lists those who attended) and a number of meetings were held with employers in the County (see Annex 7). The local Council was also fully consulted (a list of Council Members can be found at Annex 8). Following that stage, a written, draft strategy was produced and circulated to partners. Their comments have informed this, the final version of the plan. However, the dialogue is ongoing and we are developing specific approaches to communicating with the County's employers.

We hope that our ongoing work with partners and partnerships will help us develop our thinking, in the light of circumstances and policy developments. We will pay particular attention to developing a framework for ongoing consultation with employers, particularly SMEs.

Over the life of this plan we expect to make an impact. Earlier in the plan, we set out three priorities. They were to:

- Address the learning infrastructure;
- By distributing and supporting learning more effectively and by increasing choice, increase the levels of participation and crucially, increase the proportion of participants who succeed; and
- Increase our understanding of the needs of employers and of the sectors, and respond more effectively.

We will translate our impact into numerical targets in our yearly Operational Plans. The most telling evidence will be the number of people who participate in learning, their success and their willingness to progress. For this reason the key measure will be the progress we make towards the targets we have set ourselves against national performance measures (given in the 'Background and Context').

Annexes

The Links and Partnerships

One expression of our partnership work is the establishment of links and cross-references with other strategies and action plans under development across the County and the Region. And we will share our own, ongoing, strategic thinking with our partners. Where it is appropriate, we will lead. But we take seriously the need to be an effective and generous partnership player.

The links to the ONE Regional Economic Strategy and to the NSP's Action Plan for the single funding pot have been noted. Our contribution to the Action Plan, and the activities we expect to be supported from the single pot, will complement Learning and Skills Council funded activity and support the implementation of this strategy.

We will be engaged in the development of the County's Community Plan, and increasingly so with local strategic partnerships at district level. We are in close communication with the LEA on its Education Development Plan. We are engaged in other countywide groups, for example those dealing with area based regeneration (e.g. the South East Northumberland / North Tyneside Task Force) and thematic issues (eg health, culture, rural issues, childcare and enterprise support). We support the work of the Regional Education Forum, and the establishment of a Skills Observatory for the North East. We are liaising regularly with the North East Assembly. We are also working with the regional TUC and Unions, including joint work on the development of the regional LSC / TUC Learning For All Fund, and joint approaches to workforce development. Through the NSP and the Government Office we will link with others, less directly concerned with our priorities.

Lastly, we will work with Jobcentreplus as it moves towards developing an employer centred approach to meeting the needs of the County and an 'employment first' approach to people.

The second expression is our active participation in partnership bodies in the County and beyond.

In terms of formal partnership groups, our engagement (in addition to our central role in the NSP) includes:

- **The County's Connexions Partnership:** without an integrated approach to the provision of help and support to young people, we will not achieve a step change in achievement for young people in the County.
- **The Learning Partnership** and its sub groups: with the Learning Partnership's Basic Skills Forum we are developing a Basic Skills Action Plan, bringing together the statutory and private sector providers of learning, the voluntary and community sector, and employers. Working closely with the Learning Partnership's 14-19 Sub Group we are developing an approach to self-assessment as a precursor to an area wide inspection. This is helping to strengthen our partnership with Northumberland College and the High Schools.
- **The Education Business Link Organisation:** in addition to holding the contract, we have given the consortium active support in addressing its capacity issues.

We are developing our own, linked strategies, including:

- **Our Workforce Development Action Plan:** emerging in the light of national policy developments. The plan, and its targets, will reflect the higher level statements and targets in this plan.
- **Our Equality And Diversity Strategy.** Its approach will be interlinked with the principles of this strategy and will ensure that we clearly address the needs of disadvantaged and minority groups within the County. This is particularly important as many of these groups are not easily identified in statistical data obtained from the national level.

Major Sectors and their Skill Need

The following sectors contribute more than 8% of the total employment of the County and therefore make a significant contribution to the employment base of Northumberland. Although other sectors also have skill needs and deficiencies, understanding the needs of these large sectors will help us address the workforce development needs of a large proportion of the County's employees.

Health and Social Care (14.4%)

This sector is relatively more important to employment in the County than is the case regionally or nationally. Over recent years (1996-1999) the numbers employed have grown significantly. Associate professional occupations, such as nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and radiographers are the main skills shortage areas for the sector. Changes to the sector are also increasing the demand for IT and management skills across a wider range of medical professionals.

Retail (11.4%)

Small retail outlets dominate the sector in the County: the majority of shops are concentrated in the market towns in the rural areas and the major settlements in the urban areas. Increasing demands for time flexibilities from employees are making job opportunities less attractive to some potential employees. The main recruitment problems are related to management. The main emphasis for skills development is in the areas of interpersonal skills and sales, and of problem solving.

Hospitality - Hotels and Catering (11%)

The hospitality sector is a key element of the tourism sector in the County. Particular skills gaps identified by the sector include communication and customer service skills. Vacancies for chefs and for bar and waiting staff continue to cause recruitment problems for the sector.

Public Administration (9.2%)

This sector is relatively more important to employment of the County than is the case nationally and the number employed in Northumberland has also grown. The main areas of skill shortages are around administration and management. Greater emphasis is being placed on client centred service and eGovernment will place more demand on customer service and IT skills.

Construction (8.3%)

The sector is composed primarily of very small firms, and many of those working in the sector do so on a self employed basis. Increasing demand to improve the quality and sustainable content of building projects is placing new requirements on the sector. The prevalence of sub contracting in the sector and the existence of bonuses and penalties relating to project completion are increasing the demand for skills such as a project management. Craft trades such as bricklaying are posing recruitment problems.

Education (8.0%)

This is the only one of the large employment sectors in the County to have shown a decline in the numbers employed in recent years. Particular skill shortages affecting the County include teaching staff and basic skills tutors. IT skills and administrative skills are growing in importance across a range of teaching staff and a major requirement for many is to keep up to date with curriculum developments and teaching methods.

Land-based Industries (2.4%)

Given the rural nature of the County, land-based industries have a key role to play and although they are not one of the largest employment sectors they are of greater significance, in employment terms, to the County relative to the regional and national averages.

Like many of the parts of the Country employment in agriculture and other land-based industries has been in decline for many years. The recent impact of Foot and Mouth Disease within the County is only beginning to be fully understood. For some employers this will mean rebuilding their businesses in their original form, for others they may decide to diversify into different activities. Major support will be needed to help the sector address the skills needed to pursue these changes and to continue to develop the sector.

MAJOR EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN NORTHUMBERLAND

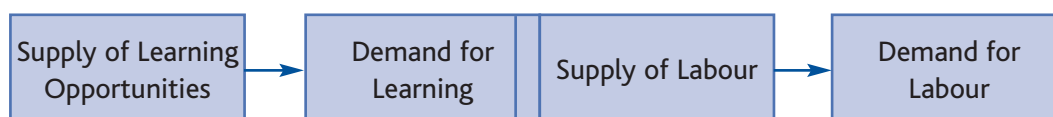
Sectors Employing More Than 1% of the Total		Northumberland's Share of Employment	Relative Importance (GB)	Relative Importance (NE)	Change 1996-1999
Health and Social Work		14.4%	Significantly Higher	Significantly Higher	Increase
Retail		11.4%	Higher	Significantly Higher	Significant Increase
Hotels and Catering		11.0%	Higher	Higher	Significant Increase
Public Administration		9.2%	Significantly Higher	Significantly Higher	Increase
Construction		8.3%	Higher	Higher	No change
Education		8.0%	Higher	Higher	Decrease
Other Business Services		3.6%	Significantly Lower	Significantly Lower	Increase
Chemical Manufacture		3.4%	Significantly Higher	Significantly Higher	Significant Increase
Recreation, Culture and Sport		2.6%	Higher	Higher	Significant Increase
Agricultural, Hunting		2.4%	Significantly Higher	Significantly Higher	Decrease
Motor Vehicle Sales and Repair		2.3%	Lower	Higher	Decrease
Land Transport		2.0%	Higher	Higher	Increase
Wholesale		1.8%	Significantly Lower	Lower	Decrease
Other Service Activities		1.6%	Higher	Higher	Significant Increase
Food and Drink Production		1.5%	Significantly Lower	Lower	Decrease
Membership Organisation		1.5%	Significantly Lower	Lower	Significant Increase
Manufacture of Rubber and Plastic Products		1.2%	Significantly Higher	Higher	Decrease
Financial Intermediation		1.1%	Significantly Lower	Lower	Increase

Source: Annual Employment Survey 1996; Annual Business Inquiry 1999.

The Skills Market in Northumberland

We have developed an understanding of our task in terms of overcoming market failure in two inter-related markets. These are the learning market and the labour market.

There is a strong relationship between the learning and labour markets, as the following diagram illustrates:

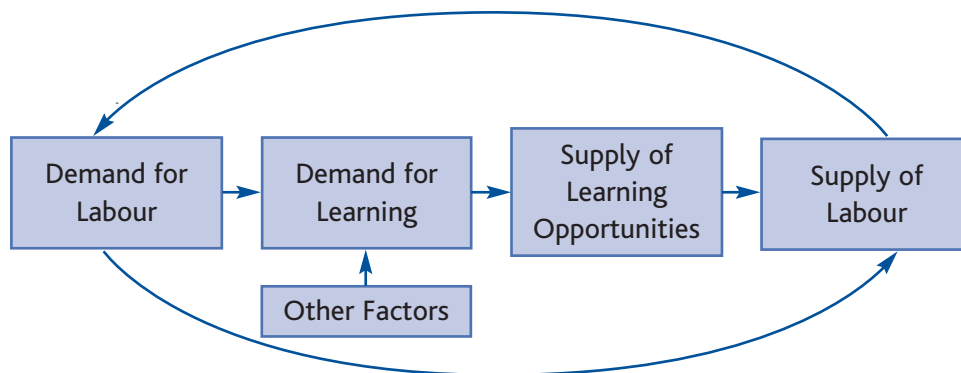


The learning market consists of the supply of learning opportunities available to individuals, employers and communities, and of the demand for learning from those groups. The demand for learning is not fully understood, but as a generalisation, it is conditioned by the learning offer and its accessibility. So where there is limited choice because only a few small Learning Providers operate, the effective demand is likely to be a reflection of supply rather than of learning needs and desires. Other factors operate, of course, including peoples' aspirations to learn and progress, and gender issues.

The labour market has been more fully researched. The supply of labour is not just the number of people in or seeking work: it also includes their skills, knowledge and experience. Because the supply of labour can be enhanced through learning, the demand for learning is a major influence on the labour market. The supply of labour is influenced by the demand for labour but communications about skill requirements have not always been clear.

Market failure happens when the supply of learning does not meet the demand for learning and / or when the supply of labour does not meet the demand for labour. Moreover, if there are inaccurate market signals (for example, employers are unable to articulate their skill needs) the **interaction** of the two markets will not be in equilibrium. The failure of the interaction between the learning and the labour markets tends to manifest itself in the form of skill shortages and skill gaps.

The Learning and Skills Council needs to create an effective skills market if it is to make effective interventions and achieve its objectives of raising participation and achievement. If that market were to function effectively, the demand for labour would (in conjunction with other factors, such as the wish to learn for other reasons) more directly drive the demand for learning. This would in turn affect the availability of learning opportunities. In turn the supply of labour (which, as we have established, includes peoples' skills, knowledge and experience) would more directly reflect labour demand.



However, this needs to be an iterative process, adjusting to the changing labour market and to economic conditions. The role of the Learning and Skills Council is to address the supply side issues in the skills market so close work with partners is required to bring about a high skills equilibrium.

We believe that the skills market within Northumberland does not operate as effectively as it might. Part of our role, then, is to intervene to assist in addressing this for the County.

The Northumberland skills market is not constrained by the County boundary. The residents and employees of Northumberland also access a wide range of learning and employment opportunities outside the County.

Firstly then, the Learning and Skills Council Northumberland must work closely with the Northumberland Strategic Partnership and One NorthEast: their intervention can help raise the demand for skills to higher levels, by encouraging current employers to move to higher value added markets and products and by attracting and assisting the creation of new firms.

Secondly, because our mission is to put the learner at the heart of the system, we need to plan and fund interventions that help people to fulfil their potential and therefore access the best opportunities for learning and employment wherever they may be.

The Case for Distributed Learning

The case for distributed learning recognises the need to take learning closer to the learner in both the urban and rural areas. This Annex presents the evidence to support the case.

Northumberland is the most sparsely populated County in England, with 310,000 people spread across an area of 2,000 square miles. The area of highest population density is the South East corner, covering approximately 5% of the total area, where 50% of the population live.

The geography of the County presents a number of challenges in terms of providing both proper and reasonable provision for Northumberland residents. Much of the learning provision (in volume terms) is located in the South East of the County, with 6th form provision and some adult education provision being delivered through the fifteen High Schools across the County. Northumberland College has its main campus in Ashington (in the South East of the County) but also offers a range of outreach and joint provision in various locations across the County. This outreach provision is limited in scale and scope due to the constraints associated with cost and resources required to deliver certain capital intensive, and higher level, provision away from the main site.

Northumberland suffers from being a relatively inaccessible area. The Index of Multiple Deprivation Access Domain places large proportions of the County's wards in the worst 10% of wards nationally, in terms of access to services. This indicates that access to the main settlements, which tend to house the majority of Learning Providers is a problem for people living in the more rural areas (Map 1).

It is generally recognised that those individuals suffering from material deprivation are less likely to participate in learning activities post-16. This has been highlighted in a number of studies, most notably by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) (Learning Works) and the Cabinet Office (through the Policy Action Teams) but also in successive analyses of the Youth Cohort Study. Within Northumberland material deprivation is most concentrated in the South East of the County (Map 2). A lack of job opportunities is also a factor that may act as a constraint to people pursuing learning opportunities. Again unemployment, as measured by the Claimant Count, is concentrated in the South East of the County, although there are other pockets of high unemployment across Northumberland (Map 3).

Putting these elements together Northumberland is characterised as being either inaccessible or having economic and social characteristics which may limit engagement in learning.

Looking at attainment levels and continuation in learning from the High Schools in the County illustrates a diversity of performance that is not clearly divided into urban and rural areas. Three of the High Schools (all in the urban South East of the County) have continuation in learning rates significantly lower than the others. However, there is no clear correlation between GSCE performance (5 A*-C grades) and continuation in learning (Table 1). Overall, as shown under 'background and context' of the plan, the County has relatively good participation rates for 16-18 year olds but this does not translate into performance at 19 at Level 2 or Level 3. The reasons for this are not clearly understood and more work is required to assess the constraints leading to relative underperformance

compared with GCSE grades (although at the level of the school there is some correlation between GCSE performance and A Level point score).

For adult engagement in learning, participation is not clearly delineated into urban and rural issues. Using an assessment of enrolment rates in FEFC (now LSC) funded provision by residents aged 16+ in the County it can be shown (Map 4) that relatively high and low enrolment rates are evident in both the urban South East of the County and the rural areas. At a finer grain of analysis (ward level) significant variation in enrolment rates emerge. The highest enrolment rates are in Amble West, Mickley and Castle (all greater than 19%), whilst the lowest enrolment rates are in Wooler, Seton, Tipalt and Chatton (all of which have rates lower than 6%).

If the Learning and Skills Council is to make an impact on both 16-18 year old and adult participation then making learning opportunities more attractive and accessible is an essential part of the strategy. Although in the rural areas there is clearly a need to improve access to, and choice of, learning opportunities for young people and adults, engaging people in the urban areas may also mean taking learning closer to the learner.

It is recognised that the cost of providing learning closer to the learner can be high but the imaginative use of distributed learning (using a range of venues and delivery mechanisms including e-learning) should enable the choice and access to learning to be widened. However, the nature and approach used will need to vary with local circumstances. For example, it may be necessary to provide neighbourhood learning facilities in some of the more deprived urban parts of the County, whilst making provision within a reasonable travelling time may be the answer in the more rural areas. The area review process that we propose will recommend the appropriate solution for issues in a particular area. The use of non-traditional learning locations provides the opportunity to widen the choice and access to learning but also brings with it additional quality and financial assurance requirements.

It is generally accepted that entry level provision needs to be accessible locally. Although at this stage we do not have a clear analysis of the demand for learning at this level, basic skill needs can be used as an approximation for this. As Maps 5 and 6 show the numeracy and literacy need of adults within the County do not show a clear urban - rural divide. High levels of basic skill needs are evident across the County. Delivering provision locally across the County will be a major challenge and again distributed learning will be key to achieving this.

If Learning and Skills Council Northumberland simply wished to hit its share of the Learning and Skills Council targets then concentrating activities in the South East corner would enable this to be achieved. However, given that equality and diversity is integral to our strategy, it will be essential to ensure that individuals are not disadvantaged due to their geographical situation.

Table 1

District	School	Continuing in Learning ¹	GSCE Performance ² (5 A*-C Grades)	A Level Average Point Score per Student	A/AS/AGNVQ Average per Entry
LEA Average		89%	49.6%	16.4	5.3
Alnwick	Coquet	93%	39%	11.6	4.4
	Duchess	91%	46%	14.0	4.5
Berwick	Berwick	96%	39%	12.2	4.7
Blyth	Astley	88%	45%	16.0	5.1
	Blyth Community College*	80%	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Cramlington	89%	64%	17.6	5.7
Castle Morpeth	King Edward VI	95%	70%	19.0	6.1
	Ponteland	89%	70%	20.2	5.7
Tynedale	Haydon Bridge	93%	45%	16.6	5.9
	Prudhoe	92%			
	Queen Elizabeth	93%	69%	20.4	6.7
Wansbeck	Ashington	91%	37%	11.2	3.5
	Bedlington	76%			
	Hirst	82%	34%	14.2	5.2
	St Benet Biscop	89%	49%	16.4	4.8
Berwick	Longridge Towers			16.2	5.1
Wansbeck	Northumberland College			7.8	3.8

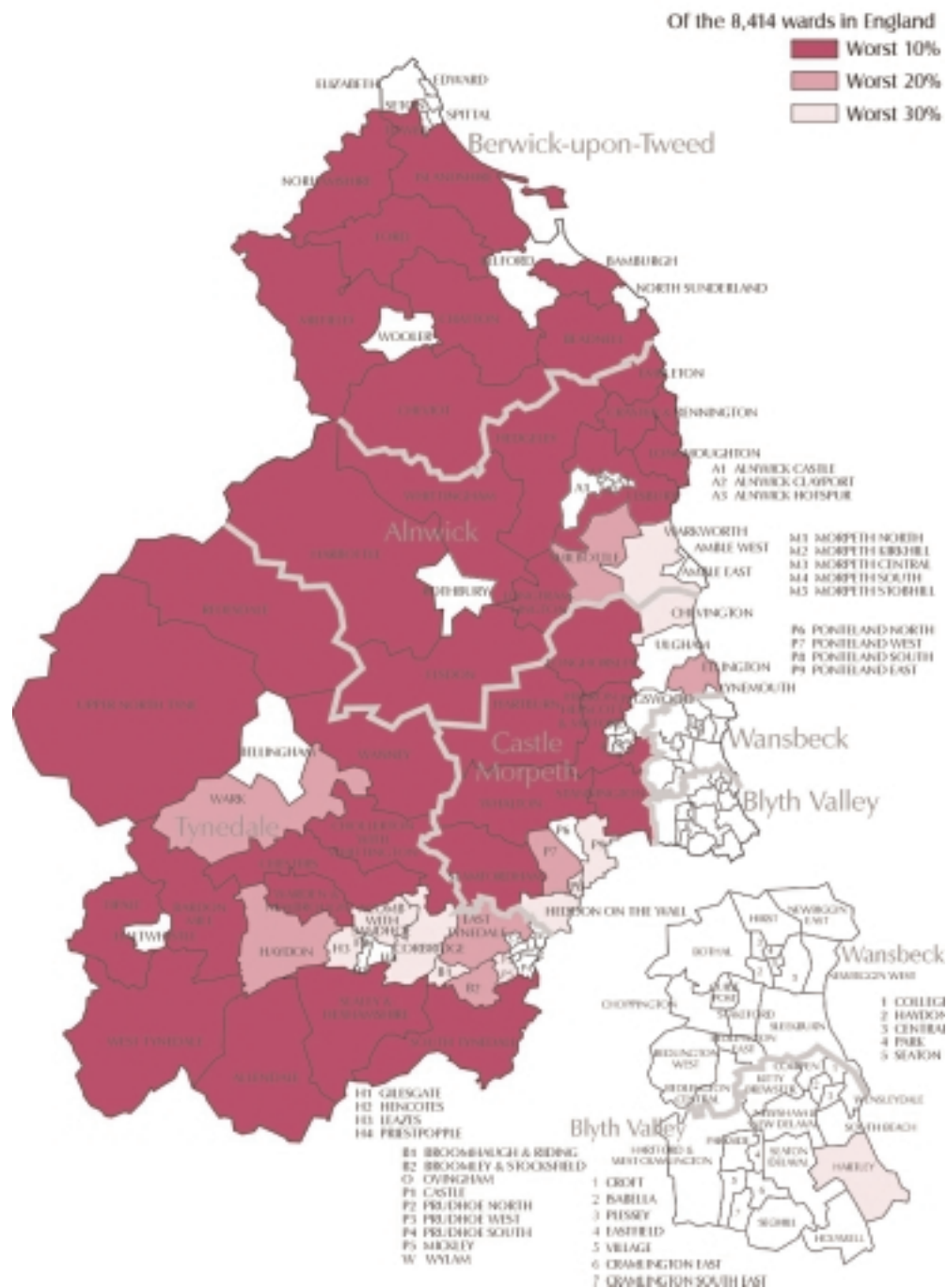
* Created through the merger of Tynedale and Ridley High Schools

¹ Source: Northumberland Guidance Company Activity Survey 2000. These figures include all those from the school in question who continue in learning, whether at the school or through other means (college, work based learning etc).

² Source: School Performance Tables, 2000

The Case for Distributed Learning

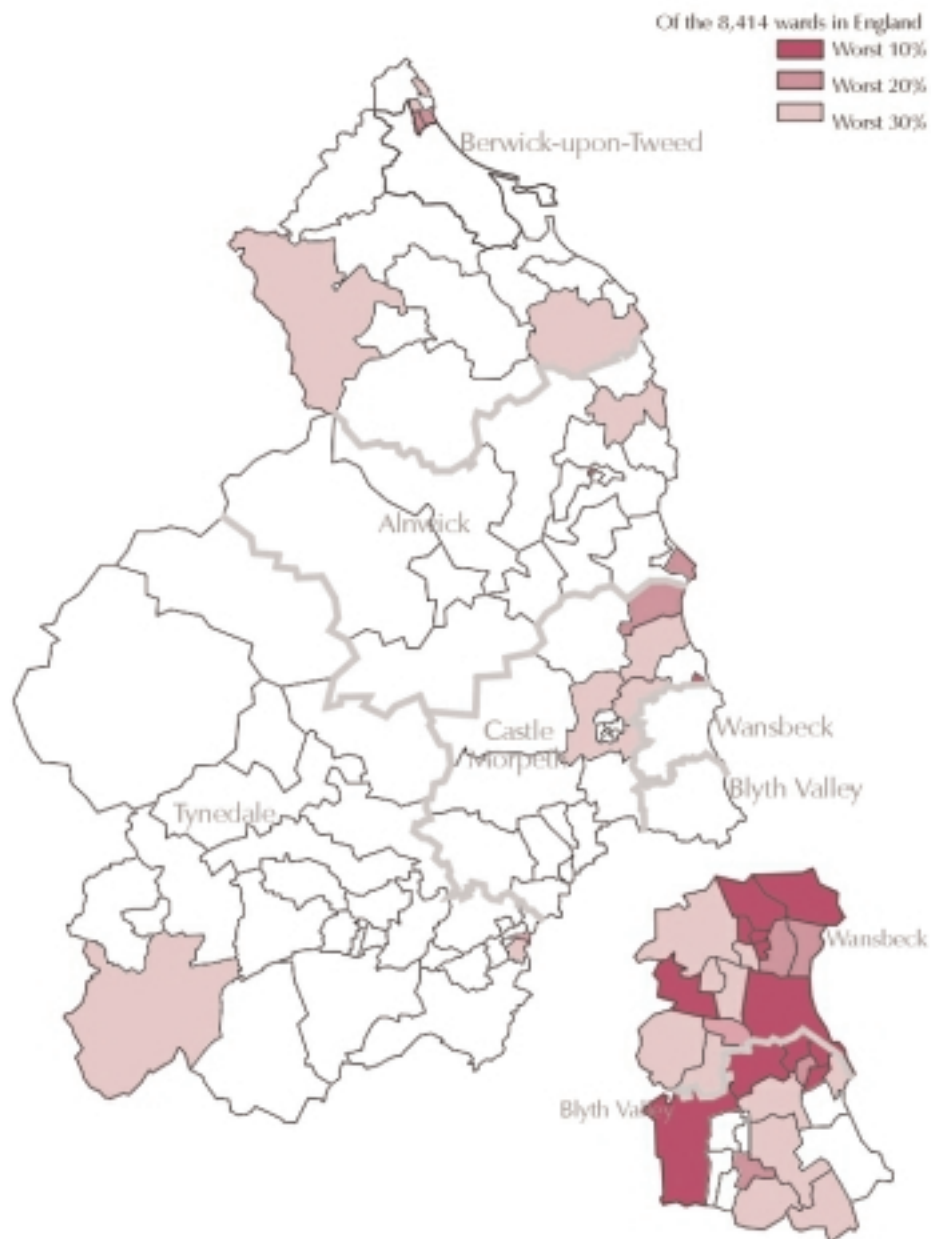
Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000: Access Domain



Map 2

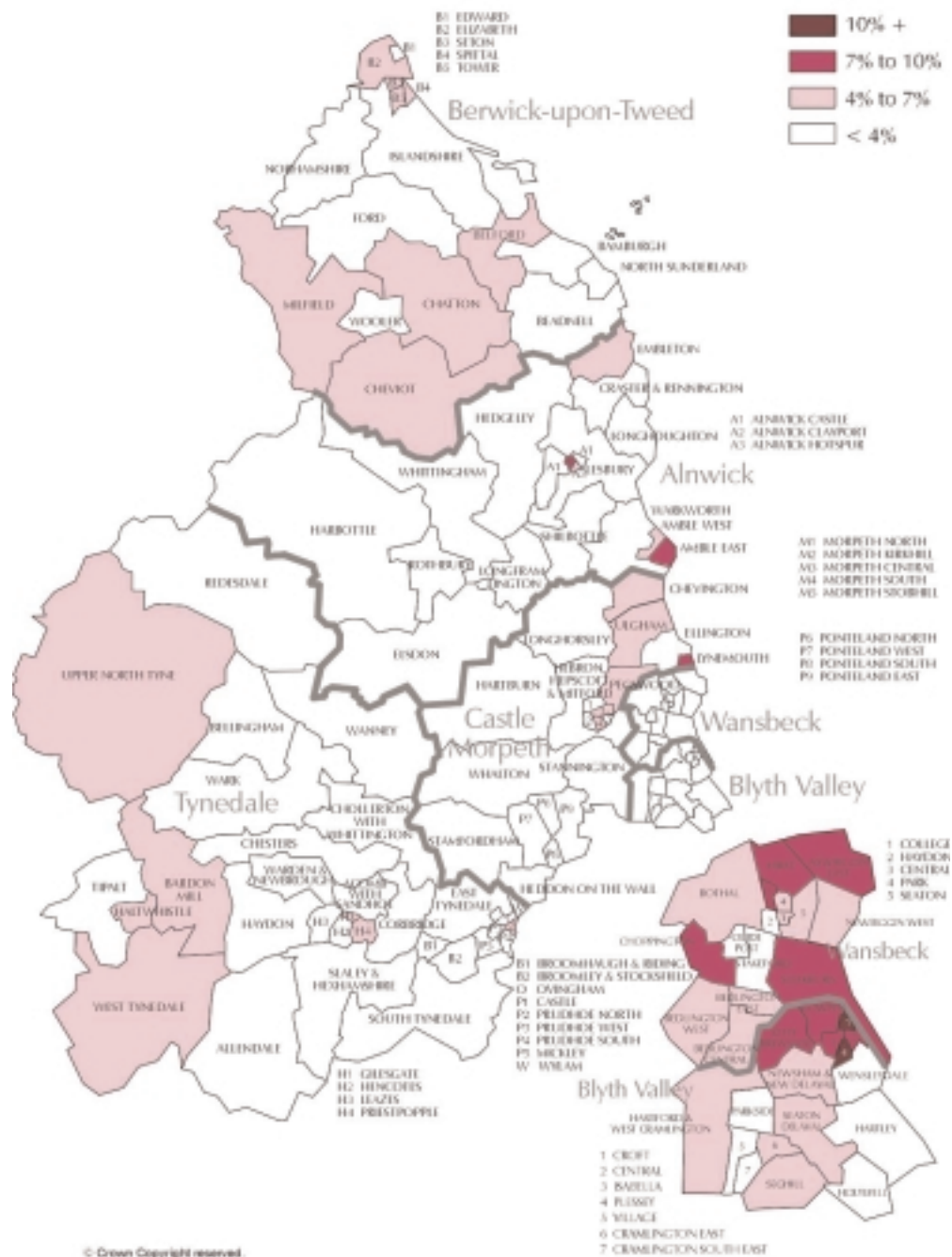
The Case for Distributed Learning

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000: Overall Ward Scores



The Case for Distributed Learning

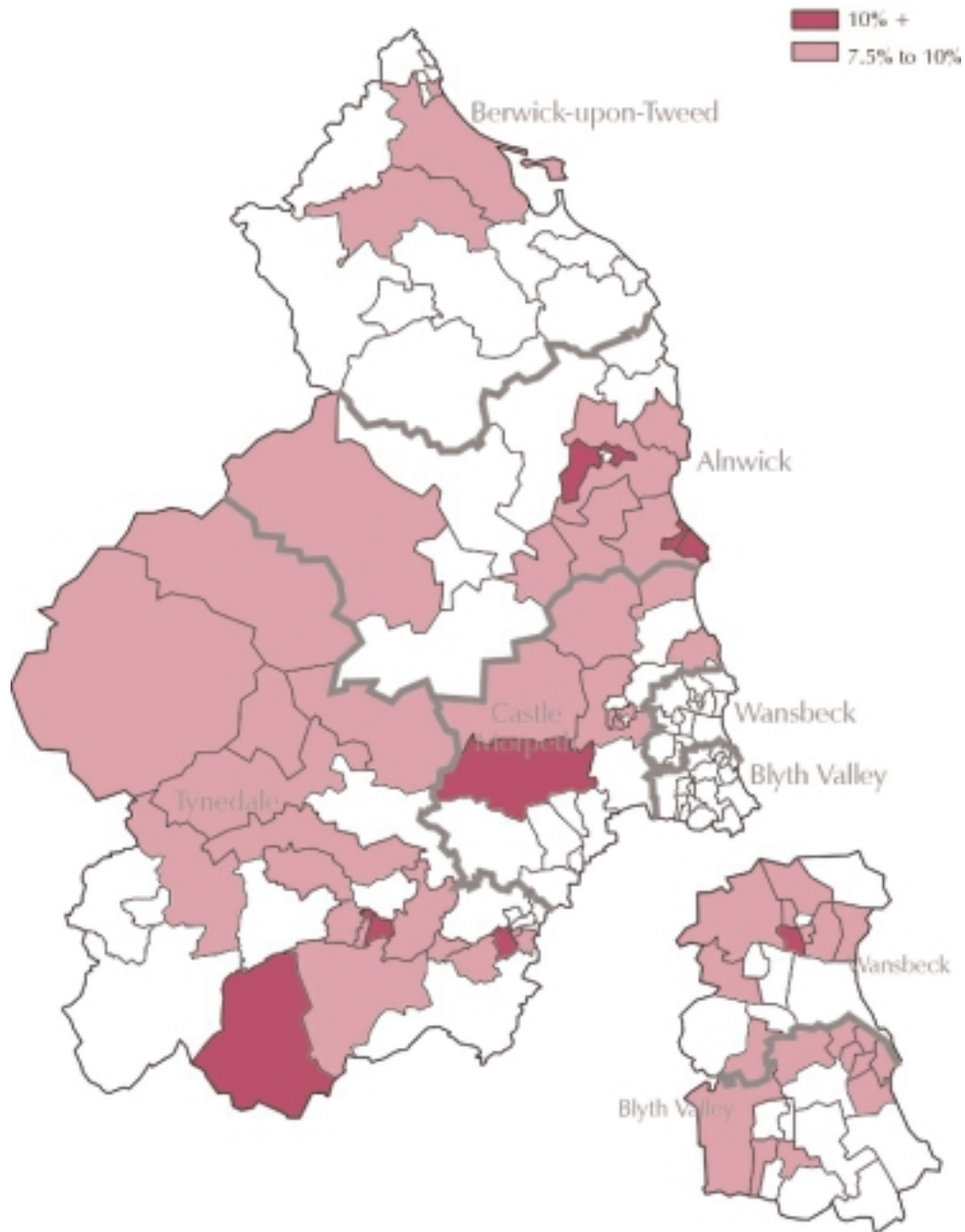
Unemployment by Ward (April 2001)



Map 4

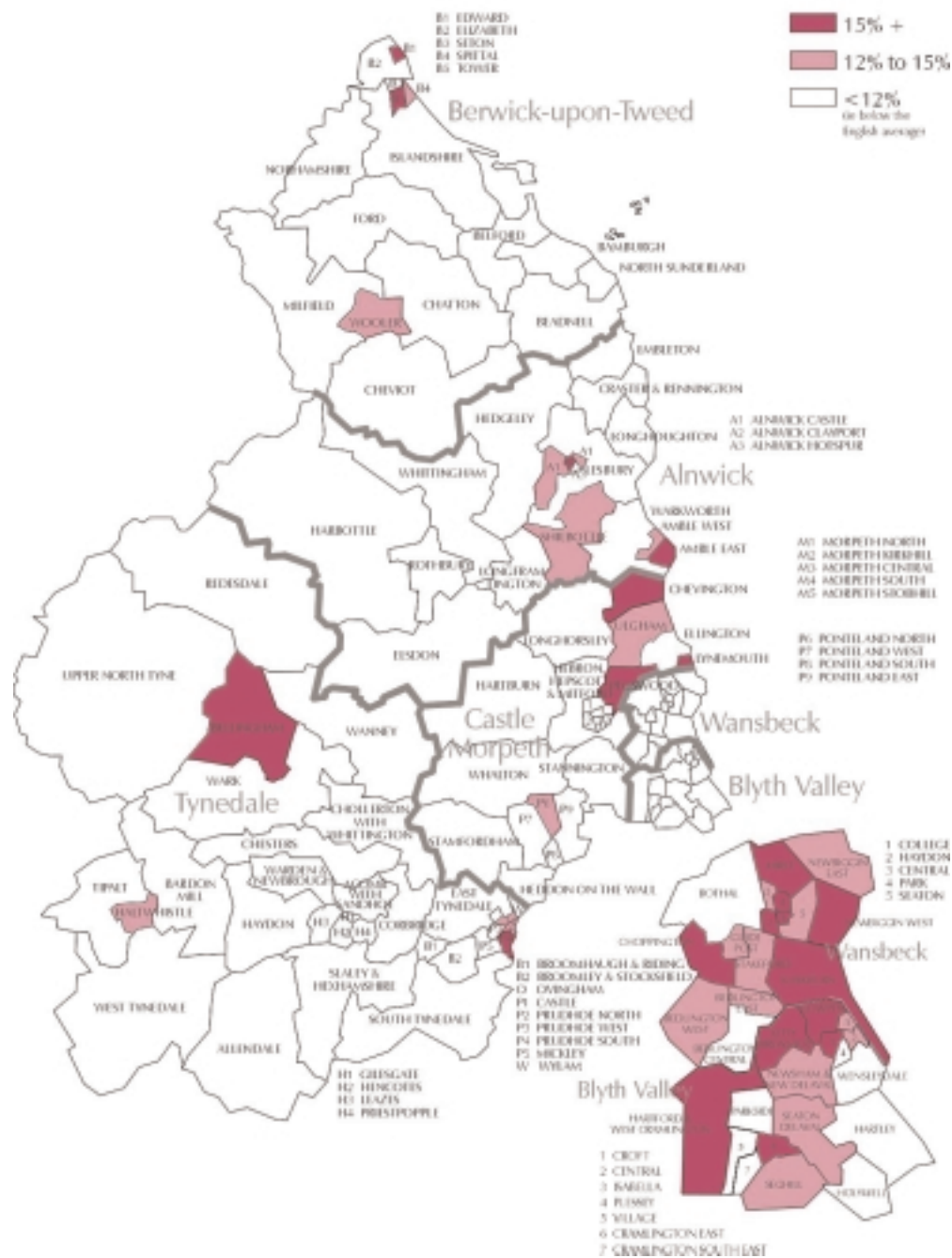
The Case for Distributed Learning

FEFC (Adult Education) Ward Enrolment Rates
(1999 / 2000)



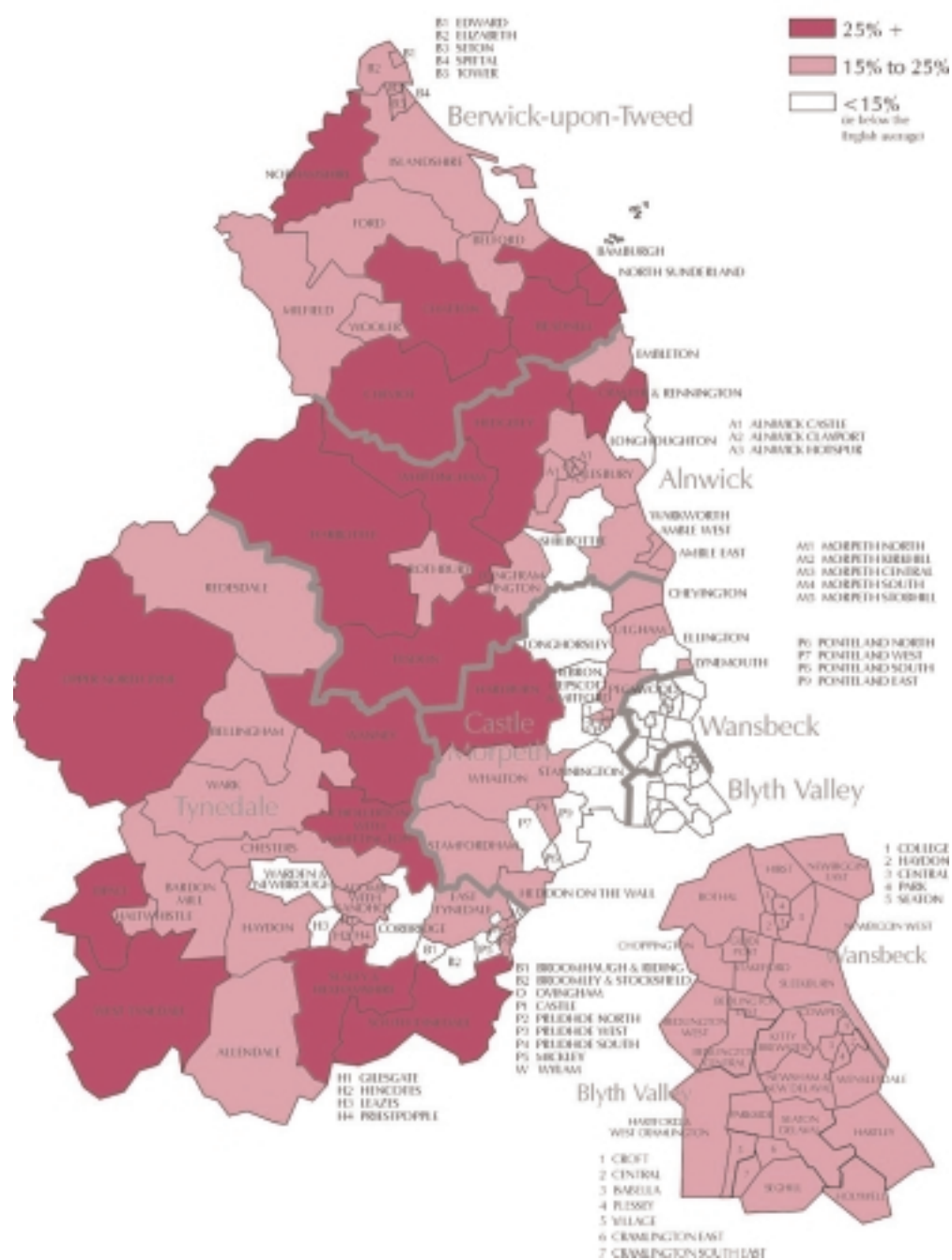
The Case for Distributed Learning

Poor Numeracy Skills in Northumberland 1998 (Revised)



The Case for Distributed Learning

Poor Literacy Skills in Northumberland 1998 (Revised)



Impact and Evaluation Framework

The core of the evaluation and impact measures will be the progress made towards achieving Northumberland's contribution to the Learning and Skills Council's national targets. The broad aim of the evaluation and impact framework therefore is to have additional measures that help monitor the extent to which our actions are addressing the priorities and actions of this plan.

Part of the ongoing evaluation of the plan should be the extent to which the actions that we pursue stray from those set out in the plan and how this impacts (positively or negatively) on achieving the Learning and Skills Council's objectives and outcomes.

Although many of the impact measures detailed in the tables are concerned with monitoring quantifiable events and outputs, our evaluation activities need to be much wider than this. A key part of our work is to understand why our interventions are successful, or why they fail. This more qualitative approach will be built in to all our discretionary activities. We will also learn from others, and from piloting and testing innovative approaches. By learning from good practice within the County and beyond, (including other local Learning and Skills Councils) we aim to benchmark our activities and interventions in ways which ensure we understand our performance and how it compares with that of others.

Local Partners Consulted by Individual Meetings

- Alnwick District Council
- AVYON
- Advisory Group on Distributed Learning
- Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council
- Business Link
- Blyth Valley Council
- Castington Prison
- Castle Morpeth Borough Council
- Community Council
- Northumberland Connexions Partnership
- County Council
- Employment Service
- Northumberland Guidance Company (Careers Service Provider)
- Head Teachers of High Schools in the County
- Head Teachers Advisory Group
- Members of Northumberland Learning and Skills Council
- Northumberland Learning Partnership
- Newcastle College
- North East Chamber of Commerce – Northumberland Board
- Northumberland College
- Northumberland Information Network
- Northumberland Strategic Partnership – Executive and Board
- Providers of Work Based Learning for Young People
- Wansbeck District Council

Strategic Plan Regional Consultation – Organisations Which Attended the Consultation Events on 26 - 27 November

- Adult Learning Inspectorate
- Association of Colleges for the North
- Cramlington College
- Churches Regional Commission
- Countryside Agency
- Dilston College of Further Education
- Gateshead College
- Rural Directorate, Government Office for the North East
- National Training Organisation - National Council
- National Institute of Adult and Community Education (NIACE)
- North East Chamber of Commerce
- Northern Business Forum
- North Tyneside College
- Open University in the North
- One North East
- Small Business Service
- University of Northumbria at Newcastle
- University for Industry
- Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE)

Employers Consulted to Date

- Alcan Smelting and Power UK
- Cheviot Foods
- Cova Products
- Crouch Mining
- Dewhirst Ladieswear
- Draeger Limited
- Egger UK Limited
- House of Hardy
- Jennings Ford Limited
- Jus-Rol
- Lite-On Limited
- Merck Sharp and Dohme
- The Officers Club Limited
- Pharmacia
- Procter and Gamble
- Rhodia Chirex Limited
- SCA Hygiene UK Limited
- Thompson's of Prudhoe
- UK Coal PLC
- Vald Birn UK Limited
- Welwyn Components
- Welwyn Systems

Learning and Skills Council Northumberland Council Members

E Barry Morgan (Chairman)

Former Managing Director of Rolls Royce Materials Handling Ltd

Susan Bickerton

Executive Director, Learning and Skills Council Northumberland

Jackie Axelby

Chief Executive, Northern England Workforce Development Confederation

Dr Tim Capron

Principal and Chief Executive, Northumberland College

Dr Lindsey Davies

Director of Education, Northumberland County Council

Veronica Dunn

President, UNISON

Pauline Norton

Director of Training, Age Concern England

Moir Rankin

Freelance Consultant

Vice Chair, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (North East)

Terry Robson

Managing Director, Robson Walker Northern

Richard Rutherford

Managing Director, Rutherfords of Morpeth

Jackie Sewell

Managing Director, J&J Training

Sue Wilson

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Learning and Skills Council Northumberland Quality Improvement Strategy (Draft)

This strategy is based on the concept that:

“Every learner has the right to high quality learning”

David Blunkett, Secretary of State

Statement of Commitment

Learning and Skills Council Northumberland is committed to ensuring that LSC funded post-16 learning provision in the County is delivered to a consistently high standard which meets the needs of learners, employers and the wider community in general.

Northumberland LSC will:

- Ensure that all learners are made aware of their learner entitlement;
- Only fund provision which meets the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework;
- Understand and seek to meet the respective needs of the learner, employer and the community;
- Ensure that assessment of Provider quality improvement influences the funding and contracting process;
- Work tirelessly to promote a culture of continuous quality improvement;
- Ensure that all LSC funded learning provision:
 - ~ Meets agreed minimum criteria;
 - ~ Leads to high retention and achievement rates;
 - ~ Leads to high levels of customer satisfaction;
 - ~ Is delivered by competent and qualified staff;
 - ~ Offers equality of access;
 - ~ Provides a safe supportive environment;
 - ~ Is well managed and well led; and
 - ~ Delivers value for money.
- Develop a culture of Provider continuous improvement through:
 - ~ Supporting, approving and rigorously monitoring Provider self-assessment reports and development / action plans;

- ~ Supporting and approving Provider target setting, linked to national targets;
 - ~ Collection, analysis and benchmarking of achievements, retention rates, learner / employment satisfaction;
 - ~ Implementing systematic and rigorous Provider Performance Review;
 - ~ Assisting in the allocation and monitoring of the Standards Fund;
 - ~ Ensuring that decisions regarding the realignment of learning provision take into consideration quality criteria;
 - ~ Ensuring that Providers follow a staff development programme commensurate with their level of development; and
 - ~ Dissemination of best practice.
- Implementation of an LSC Staff Development programme which will support staff effectively and efficiently to carry out their roles and responsibilities
 - Work closely with LSC National Office to ensure national guidelines are communicated and implemented.

The management and staff of Northumberland LSC will:

- Place high quality at the heart of everything we do;
- Meet the requirements of all our customers and continuously strive to exceed these whenever possible; and
- Implement procedures and practices, which will encourage and support internal as well as external continuous improvement.

The implementation of the Quality Improvement Strategy will be the collective responsibility of all staff.

Learning and Skills Council Northumberland Health and Safety Policy (Draft)

This policy statement is based on the belief that:

'Learning should take place in a safe and supportive environment'

David Blunkett, Secretary of State

Learning and Skills Council Northumberland will promote and influence healthy and safe good practice across all Learning and Skills Council activities. We will clearly and frequently communicate to our Learning Providers that the primary duty of care for the implementation of health and safety policy and practice rests with them. We will ensure that all contracted provision meets the legislative and LSC requirements that maintain safe and healthy learning environments.

Through our policies, procedures and practices we will promote the safe worker ethic and take a pro-active approach to the maintenance and continuous improvement of levels of health and safety within contracted learning provision and our own work force.

Additionally, we will seek to act as an exemplar to other organisations with whom we have influence in the County.

External Health and Safety

LSC Northumberland will:

- Ensure that all Providers adopt and implement robust health and safety management policies and practice;
- Only fund provision which meets legislative and LSC requirements;
- Conduct regular appraisal of provider practice, incorporating findings into the Provider Performance Review process;
- Compile frequent health and safety management reports which clearly track movements in Provider health and safety performance;
- Promote continuous improvement in Provider health and safety performance, incorporating benchmarking, accident analysis and target setting where appropriate;
- Encourage the use of Standards Funding for continuing professional development of Provider staff and to enable swift action to be taken to address weaknesses identified through self assessment, LSC monitoring or inspection;
- Promote the development of the 'safe worker' concept as a means of maximising learner achievement and experience; and
- Ensure that people, especially in the more remote rural locations in Northumberland, who take advantage of distance and remote learning opportunities do so in a safe and secure environment.

Internal Health and Safety

LSC Northumberland will:

- Ensure that all staff operate in a safe and healthy working environment;
- Ensure that all staff receive health and safety training commensurate with the requirements of their job description and the 'safe worker' ethic;
- Identify an appropriately qualified senior member of staff to have the functional responsibility for ensuring high standards of health and safety management internally and externally;
- Convene a Health and Safety Advisory Group to regularly and systematically review health and safety management procedures and practices; and
- Identify a member of the Council to promote and champion the cause of health and safety in learning provision and workforce development.

The implementation of a safe and healthy working environment will be the collective responsibility of all staff.

Learning and Skills Council Northumberland Equality and Diversity Policy Statement (Draft)

The Learning and Skills Council Northumberland embraces the government's vision of 'creating a learning society in which everyone has the opportunity to go as far as their talents and efforts will take them' and of an environment in which 'everyone has the chance, through education, training and work, to realise their full potential and thus build an inclusive and fair society and a competitive economy'.

We will place equality of opportunity at the heart of our culture and operational practices. Our Council Champion will drive forward the development of our local Equality and Diversity Strategy and Plans.

LSC Northumberland will:

- build on the National Learning and Skills Council Equality and Diversity Strategy: Widening Participation and Promoting Inclusion, 2001-2004 by adding a local dimension which will ensure that the particular needs of Northumberland are fully addressed.
- seek to ensure that no disadvantage is caused by:
 - ~ ability / disability
 - ~ ethnicity
 - ~ offending background
 - ~ age
 - ~ sexual orientation
 - ~ gender
 - ~ behavioural / mental / health problems
 - ~ religious persuasion
 - ~ geographical situation
- work with others, locally, regionally and nationally, to ensure that learner / potential learner needs are addressed.
- develop an annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan to ensure that the Strategy is communicated, remains relevant and is fully implemented. The Plan will include targets, which will be monitored by the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group, the Council, and by senior management. We will benchmark our performance and aim to continuously improve and exceed our targets.
- publish an annual report, detailing achievements and recommendations and plans for future action. The Strategy will be made available in a variety of formats for ease of access.
- consult regularly with partners and stakeholders to ensure that the Strategy is effective.

The implementation of the Equality and Diversity Strategy will be the collective responsibility of all Learning and Skills Council Northumberland staff.

Documents Considered in the Preparation of this Local Strategic Plan

- County and District Community Development Plans (emerging)
- Equality in Practice: A Guide To Mainstreaming: Learning And Skills Council
- Family Learning Action Plan
- In Demand: Adult Skills in the 21st Century: Policy and Innovation Unit
- Learning and Skills Council Corporate Plan: Strategic Framework to 2004
- Learning Northumberland IAG Partnership Strategic Framework Statement and Business Plan 2001 / 2002
- Memorandum of Understanding between Learning and Skills Council Northumberland and Northumberland Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (draft)
- Northumberland Adult Learning Plan 2001 / 2002
- Northumberland Adult Learning Plan 2002 / 2003 (draft)
- Northumberland ESF Co-financing Plan 2002 / 2003
- Northumberland Connexions Partnership Draft Business Plan July 2001
- Northumberland Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership Strategic Plan 2001-2004 and Implementation Plans 2001 / 2002
- Northumberland Health Action Zone Implementation Plan 1998-2002
- Northumberland Lifelong Learning Partnership Basic Skills Development Plan 2001 / 2002
- Northumberland Rural Development Strategy 1999
- Northumberland Strategic Partnership Action Plan 2002-2005
- Northumberland Workforce Development Plan 2001
- NTO Sector Workforce Development Plans
- Our Countryside: The Future. A Fair Deal For Rural England: DETR
- Our Towns And Cities: The Future. Delivering An Urban Renaissance
- Report from the Forum on Learning Difficulty and Disability
- South East Northumberland / North Tyneside Sub-regional Strategy and Action Plan 2001
- Unlocking Our Potential, Regional Economic Strategy for the North East. One NorthEast
- Business Plan: North East England Workforce Development Confederation
- Northumberland LEA: Consultation Pack for the Education Development Plan 2002-2007
- Northumberland Cultural Strategy
- Northumberland Environmental Strategy
- Northumberland College: Strategic Plan
- Northumberland Learning Partnership: Strategic Development Plan

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Learning+Skills Council
Northumberland