

Learning and Skills Council

Northamptonshire

Strategic Plan 2002-2005

Our key tasks

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

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

Contents

	Page
Chairman's Foreward	
Summary	
1 The Learning and Skills Council Remit	
2 Local Context	
3 Analysis of need	
4 Local priorities and challenges	
5 The strategy for action	
6 Consultation	
7 Risk assessment	
8 Arrangement for monitoring and evaluation	
9 Delivering the plan	
10 Council Members	
 Annexes	
1 Targets – explanatory notes	
2 Glossary of terms	

Chairman's Foreword

Dear Partners and Customers

As I write, our LSC team for Northamptonshire has completed the first ten months in post. Thanks to a great deal of hard work, much has been accomplished in drawing together the strands of the previous post-16 funding regimes and in commencing the planning process for the future.

Prior to drafting this strategic plan, we have consulted widely with you, our partners and our customers, to understand the learning issues in our county and to review our options for going forward. As a result, the plan sets out, not only our commitment to the national targets, but as importantly, the focus on our own local targets and the measure necessary to their achievement.

To succeed in raising the take-up of post-16 education and training across the county, we are asking you, where appropriate, to match your strategies and plans to the plans in this document so that we have a common agenda for the application of the funds available to us. Furthermore, if we are to make a real difference, we must work with you to try out new ideas, reduce duplication, improve take-up and delivery and bring fresh thinking to post-16 education.

I am particularly concerned that we improve the skill levels in support of the needs of both the private and the public sector. We shall be looking to your expertise to help in the development of innovative ways to bring together the resources and requirements of both providers and employers for the benefit of the community. Together, we will improve communication about the learning available for all of us who are post-16 but in particular, to those who have not yet taken full advantage of the learning opportunity and the life enrichment that it brings.

Thank you all for your ongoing support.



Chris Ripper
Chairman
LSC, Northamptonshire

Photo

January 2002

Summary

Mission and vision:

The LSC's mission, as stated in the national strategic plan, is to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training which puts learners first.

The vision is that, by 2010, young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world.

Key objectives and targets:

To guide the LSC towards its vision, a few clearly defined objectives have been set at national level.

National objectives:

- Extend participation in education, learning and training
- Increase engagement of employers in workforce development
- Raise achievement of young people
- Raise achievement of adults
- Raise the quality of education and training and user satisfaction

These are supported by national outcome targets for the period 2002-2004. On the basis of nationally-derived target ranges, and as a result of local consultation, local targets have also been set against each of these 5 objectives.

Within Northamptonshire, our main aim is to meet the learning and skill needs of the people and businesses of Northamptonshire and to ensure equality of opportunity, whatever the social and ethnic background, gender or disability of individuals. By raising the skill and educational levels of young people and adults in the county we will:-

- Increase the employability of individuals and equip them with the skills to adapt to the changing social and working environment
- Help to combat social exclusion
- Improve the match between the skills required for Northamptonshire businesses to prosper and the skills of the local workforce
- Improve the skills base and the quality of learning provision in the county, thus making it a more attractive location for inward investment

Targets 2002-2004:

(see annex 1 for explanatory note)

| **National target for 2004**

| **Local target for 2004**

Target 1	80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 75%) Increase of 5%	2,220 additional young people Equivalent to a 4.6% increase
Target 2	85% at level 2 by age 19 (2000: 75%) Increase of 10%	501 additional young people Equivalent to an overall increase of 9.86%
Target 3	55% at level 3 by age 19 (2000:51%) Increase of 4%	429 additional young people. Equivalent to an increase of 3.74%
Target 4	Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults. Increase by approx 10%	8,650 people (aged 16+) gaining basic skills qualifications Equivalent to 10%
Target 5	52% of adults at level 3(2000:47%) Increase of 5%	22,500 adults Equivalent to an increase of 4.7%

Northamptonshire LSC objectives

Following consultation and an assessment of need in Northamptonshire, and taking into account the five national objectives, eleven key objectives have been set for the period 2002-2005. These will guide our priorities and approach over the next three years.

- 1 To re-engineer the approach to planning and delivery of learning in Northamptonshire to deliver innovative and effective solutions to meeting the learning needs in the area
- 2 To raise aspirations and increase the demand for learning amongst Northamptonshire residents
- 3 To increase the accessibility of learning opportunities within the county
- 4 To improve significantly the accessibility and quality of information, advice and guidance about learning opportunities and methods of accessing them
- 5 To raise the participation of young people
- 6 To raise the achievement of young people
- 7 To extend the participation in education and learning by adults
- 8 To raise the achievement of adults
- 9 To raise literacy and numeracy skills
- 10 To increase engagement of employers and employees in workforce development

11 To raise the quality and effectiveness of education and training

A summary of our targets and budgets and how these objectives will be met are detailed in the following sections and summarized in section 9 on page

Section one

1 The Learning and Skills Council Remit

The Learning and Skills Council is a national organisation, established in April 2001 to raise the levels of skills, knowledge and understanding of all adults and young people to world-class standards. Its extensive remit covers the planning, funding and quality assurance of all post 16 education and skills, except Higher Education. The Northamptonshire Learning and Skills Council is one of 47 local branches. A Council made up of local people from the private, public and voluntary sectors steers the local team, led by Rob Wye, Executive Director.

Northamptonshire LSC directly funds colleges of further education, work-based training providers, LEA adult and community learning, local information advice and guidance, education business link consortia and school sixth forms. It also supports workforce development and the learning and skills agenda through contracts with other local organisations. The national corporate plan outlines the national context and the national tasks and targets. The focus for Northamptonshire LSC is to provide a local response to the learning and skills agenda, tailoring it to fit the specific circumstances within the county whilst contributing to the East Midlands regional agenda. We are charged with ensuring that the learning and skill needs of the people and businesses of Northamptonshire are addressed and met within a climate, which combats inequality and promotes social inclusion.

This strategic plan contains our overarching strategy and outlines our targets and approach. It provides a framework to support joint working by a variety of agencies and providers in pursuit of skills development in Northamptonshire. It is supported by a set of separate, more detailed strategy documents and by our annual business plan which will be published in June.



Strategic plan – February 2002. fi

2 Local context

2.1 Location

Northamptonshire is strategically located midway between London and Birmingham. It is a diverse county, combining a mix of urban and rural settlements. Its proximity to the southeast has contributed to one of the fastest growth rates for any UK county in the last decade. Although located within the East Midlands region, it also shares common features with a number of adjoining regions, for example within the context of the Oxford/Cambridge Technology Arc. Travel to work patterns are diverse with many people, particularly those with higher levels of skill, commuting out of the county to London and elsewhere.

The county's major urban centre is Northampton, which provides both the administrative centre and major base for employment, housing and shopping in Northamptonshire. The county also has a number of other towns including Corby, Daventry, Kettering, Rushden, Wellingborough, Brackley and Towcester. This network of market towns and connected communities is a particular feature of the area and presents considerable opportunities for the development of learning and skills in the county. On the other hand, rurality poses particular issues for some residents and businesses in the south and east of the county.

2.2 Population

The population of Northamptonshire is around 620,000 (mid 1999 estimate) and is projected to grow to over 652,000 by the year 2006. This would equate to an increase of 20% since 1981. The largest growth projection are in the 35-54 age group and the 54+ age group. Unemployment in the county has fallen steadily and, at 2.2% (January 2002) is consistently below the East Midlands and national averages. Unemployment is highest in Corby (2.7% according to January figures) and lowest in South Northants (1.2%). Whilst there is relatively full employment, those in employment do not necessarily have high skill levels and there are substantial numbers of jobs in the low skill, low wage economy. Affluent wards exist alongside areas of considerable disadvantage.

2.3 Demographics

Projected population growth is matched by projected economic growth and increased employment opportunities. Several parts of the county have been designated as special development areas, these include Wellingborough East and Corby. Although Northamptonshire is home to a number of major world-class companies, it also has a high proportion of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Eighty four percent of businesses (1998 figures) employ fewer than ten people. In a recent business survey (Chamber 2001), almost a half of companies responding had recruited in the past year but 63% of respondents with current vacancies reported that they were hard to fill. The most likely reasons cited were a lack of applicants with the required skills and qualifications (27%), lack of the required work experience (12%) and lack of technical or practical skills (3%).

Occupational changes are following regional and national trends and, whilst the service sector is buoyant, employment in manufacturing has fallen. Due to its strategic location and proximity to major road networks Northamptonshire has a significant number of logistics companies. It also has a strong financial services sector which includes the headquarters of Barclaycard. The recent development of Rockingham Motor Speedway in the north of the county has consolidated Northamptonshire's place as a centre for motor sport, built around the existing Silverstone racing circuit. The growth in population and the buoyant economy has supported continued growth in catering and hospitality.

2.4 Structure of post 16 education

Post-16 education and training is delivered through a variety of routes. Secondary education comprises a mix of 11-16, 11-18 and 13-18 schools and a City Technology College. There are 46 sixth forms (including private schools) in the county. A review of the Northampton school system is currently being undertaken. Almost half the young people in the area stay on in school sixth forms to pursue post compulsory education, the remainder follow work based learning routes or courses at local colleges. The county's further education (FE) is provided by two general FE colleges, a tertiary college and a specialist agricultural college. They also contribute to the delivery of higher education alongside University College Northampton. A network of approximately 30 training providers offers modern apprenticeships and work-based NVQ training. The lifelong learning and libraries services of the County Council support community based provision for adults. A range of other statutory and voluntary organizations also provide advice, guidance and support for learning to both adults and young people within the county. The county's Connexions service is due to become operational in September 2002.

2.5 Educational achievement

Educational participation and achievement of young people in the county is around the national norms but below that of several neighbouring areas, for example Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes, particularly at level 3. The position in relation to adults needs further investigation but current evidence suggests that participation in qualification bearing education and training is low and that performance at levels 2, 3 and level 4 are below the national average and the average for similar Local LSCs (labour force survey 2000/2001). The county has a solid provider base and recent inspections have judged the majority of post 16 provision to be satisfactory or good, although the proportion of "excellent" provision is low.

3 Analysis of Need

The national LSC targets recognise that performance in terms of learning and skills nationally needs improvement. Within the local context, the recent successful Northamptonshire Partnership application to East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA), to become a sub-regional strategic partnership within the East Midlands, highlighted the low overall levels of skills and productivity in the county. These have an impact both in terms of availability of a suitably skilled local workforce to meet the demands of the future and on achieving social inclusion.

3.1 Participation

In order to raise levels of skill it is necessary to address both levels of participation and success rates. Although staying on rates for young people at 16 are around the national average, approximately 16% do not continue with any type of education or training. By the age of 19 this percentage has grown. Participation amongst adults in Northamptonshire is relatively low and almost a quarter of adults in a recent household survey (2001) indicated that they did not anticipate a need for any further learning. Feedback from consultations suggests that perceptions of what is available and how learning is delivered and supported are often inaccurate, although there is still considerable scope for matching provision to learner and employer need and expectation. There is substantial support for widening the scope of learning to reflect the social as well as the economic benefits and to design approaches which attract those from groups currently under represented. The importance of non-qualification-bearing courses was emphasised repeatedly as an important step onto the ladder of learning. Initiatives such as “Bitesize” have illustrated the attraction of short tasters as a means of encouraging people back into learning. Similarly, there is a demand for “just in time” training which helps individuals to carry out their current job role and does not necessarily lead to a qualification.

In order to increase participation it is important to understand the barriers and to take action to overcome them. For young people our research suggests that the main barriers to be overcome are:

- negative perceptions about learning arising from poor previous experiences (especially for the 54% of young people who did not achieve five good GCSEs at 16 in 2000)
- lack of affordable transport to suitable training venues
- parental/peer group pressure and the competing attraction of earning a wage in an area with high employment
- the cost of full-time education, especially for those in rural areas and/or those on courses with high equipment costs
- lack of awareness or misconceptions about work based learning as an option
- the availability of suitable local provision and competition between providers of learning rather than collaborative effort aimed at achieving maximum participation and retention across the provider spectrum
- the unwillingness of some employers to support work based learning (2000 figures show 5.3% of young people in Northants enter jobs without training at 16)
- the high proportion of agency working without associated training in some parts of the county

More research is needed to capture learner views and provide a better understanding of how young people make choices. This will be undertaken over the next twelve months.

For adults our findings suggest a wide variety of factors, which need to be addressed if participation is to increase:

- the lack of flexibility and ability to tailor attendance patterns and content of learning to their own needs (including ability to learn at weekends, at home and at work, to change the mode of attendance from week to week and the ability to “fast-track” or take longer)

- the requirement to take a qualification (especially for those returning to education without existing qualifications or with poor previous educational experiences)
- the availability of an appropriate range of learning opportunities to suit individual need and development
- previous poor experiences and perceptions of learning leading, in some cases, to a fear of returning
- the perceived cost (including course costs, travel, childcare and materials and equipment)
- time to undertake training due to work or family commitments
- accessibility of training/learning venues, especially for those in rural and/or sparsely populated areas, and affordable, convenient childcare facilities
- the difficulty of finding clear information about suitable learning opportunities to meet individual needs
- a view that further training is not needed, linked to the perceived lack of a clear link between qualifications and a better job in the Northamptonshire labour market

For both adults and young people the closest or most convenient point to access learning is not always within Northamptonshire. It is essential, therefore, that we work closely with LSCs in adjacent areas to ensure coherent and effective planning and provision of learning opportunities and access to them.

Employers have an important role in encouraging and supporting participation in training but feedback suggests that they often find it difficult to access information about how to meet the training needs of their employees and how to access funding support. The benefits of training to achievement of business objectives and increasing productivity are not always fully recognized. National and regional research indicates that older workers and part-time and agency staff are less likely to have access to or participate in training.

3.2 Achievement

Recent data indicates that the performance of Northamptonshire's 19 year olds is above the national averages at level 2 but that only half of twenty one year olds achieve a level 3 qualification. Within the context of the increasing demand for level 3 skills in the modern job market and the government target of 50% of people progressing into higher education, this is a cause for concern. National research indicates a clear link between qualification levels and earning potential yet adult performance at level 3 in Northamptonshire is below the level needed to attract new high value industries and jobs into the area and increase the GDP. Of those who embark upon learning programmes, many do not complete the full programme. There are also marked differences between achievement rates at different levels of qualification and between providers. Good practice studies and feedback from participants at our consultations suggest that the following factors would be likely to have a positive impact on performance:

- ensuring that recruitment is onto a suitable course at an appropriate level
- encouragement and effective guidance, support and feedback during the learning experience (mentoring being especially important for adults returning to learning)
- appropriate levels of skill in literacy and numeracy and/or targeted support to help the development of these skills alongside the main programme of study

- enthusiastic, knowledgeable tutors able to communicate well
- flexible approaches which help individuals cope with life changes which could otherwise lead to dropout
- assessment at shorter intervals based around units of learning clear learning outcomes for all programmes of study irrespective of whether they lead to a qualification

3.3 Disadvantage

Whilst Northamptonshire has areas of considerable affluence and enjoys a buoyant economy, there are significant pockets of disadvantage in both urban and rural areas. According to the ONS/DETR index of multiple deprivation (2000), the county has three of the 500 most educationally deprived wards in the country (Queensway, Thorplands and Brickhill). For some, the rural nature of parts of the county inhibits the ability to participate easily in learning. Almost a quarter of the adult population in the county, and around a third of the adults in Corby, would benefit from help with literacy and numeracy (BSA survey 2000).

Priority groups

- residents and employees with low levels of educational attainment
- individuals with disabilities
- residents within disadvantaged wards
- residents within rural and sparsely populated areas
- mature workers
- those with low levels of basic skills including those for whom English is a second or alternative language
- members of ethnic minority groups
- offenders and ex-offenders
- asylum seekers and refugees

Our strategy emphasises our commitment to overcoming discrimination, tackling educational disadvantage and promoting equality for all. We will work closely with the LEA, other local authorities and statutory agencies, community and voluntary groups to develop integrated solutions which meet the needs of disadvantaged individuals and communities. A complementary equality strategy sets out in some detail how the local LSC will work with these partners to address skill challenges associated with diversity and social inclusion.

3.4 The demand for skills

Priority sectors and clusters for learning and skills

Northamptonshire has a broad mix of business sectors and clusters. From an analysis of local, regional, national and sectoral data the following priority sectors have been identified. They have been selected on the basis that they offer projected growth in employment opportunities in the future and that there are gaps in the skills needed to meet the future demand in these sectors (as evidenced through local research and research by NTOs). During the period of the plan, much of our work with employers and many of our development activities will focus around these sectors.

In some cases the demand is for replacement skills whilst in others it is an increase in employment overall combined with an upskilling of existing staff. Further work will be undertaken to explore the specific skill requirements in these sectors more fully and to ensure that the needs of both large and small companies are taken into account. The priorities will be reviewed regularly, in conjunction with the Northamptonshire Partnership (the SSP) and Sector Skills Councils, to take account of changing circumstances and emerging future demand.

	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Logistics and distribution	✓		
Food processing and production	✓		
Care (including childcare and care of the elderly)	✓	✓	✓
Education (including a range of roles in education)	✓	✓	✓
Hospitality	✓	✓	
Construction	✓	✓	
Engineering manufacture	✓		
Motor sport including supply chain companies and associated sectors eg retail, automotive engineering	✓		
Footwear	✓		
Environmental and sustainable development	✓	✓	✓
The voluntary sector workforce			✓
Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)	✓	✓	✓

Footwear is included in our priority sectors because of the regional niche in this area although the demand is primarily for replacement staff. The voluntary sector is a significant employer in the area and is identified as a cluster development by EMDA. Its inclusion amongst the priority sectors emphasises the commitment to building capacity within this sector in Northamptonshire. Similarly, the inclusion of SMEs recognises the need to focus attention on the particular requirements of the significant number of smaller organisations in Northamptonshire.

Skills gaps

The significance of skill gaps is continually increasing. Businesses in Northamptonshire are reporting increasing difficulty in filling vacancies. The most recent Northamptonshire Chamber Business Survey (2001) and feedback from our consultations revealed skill gaps both within specific sectors and across sectors including:

- Supervisory and management skills
- Skills for self-employment
- Basic skills – literacy, numeracy and ESOL (English as a second or other language)
- Customer service skills
- IT user skills for all types of employee
- Employability and key skills

Reports from EMDA and from National Training Organisations (NTOs) relevant to sectors within Northamptonshire reinforce these findings. Employers indicate that skill requirements in their average employee are increasing. Reasons cited are changes in process, automation and ICT. Many jobs now require multi-skilled individuals. The majority require at least a basic level of competence in IT. This indicates a need for continual upskilling and retraining as well as appropriate training for new entrants. The Moser report and other national research including that by the Basic Skills Agency, the DfES and NIACE highlights the need to address low levels of basic literacy and numeracy. This need was also a recurring theme during our consultations.

These generic skill shortages exist across a wide range of sectors and within large and small companies but there is confusion about the plethora of training solutions on offer, a lack of a co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs and a considerable variation in cost and quality. Whilst much of the current training is provided by publicly funded education and training organisations, a significant amount is also available through private firms. Options do not always accommodate the particular needs of smaller firms. There is scope for greater collaboration between large and small firms to provide cost-effective and convenient solutions to meeting training needs. Our workforce development, community and ICT strategies provide a more detailed explanation of our approach to meeting these skills within a range of sectors, organisations and communities.

4 Local priorities and challenges

Performance across the county is inconsistent. To achieve our overarching aim and meet our targets we need to work with a wide range of partners and ensure that our resources are used effectively to support services which match learner and employer need. We have a dual role of providing a broad service to all learners but also targeting resources at improving performance in those areas of the county, and amongst those groups and sectors, where participation and skill levels are lowest. The main priority groups and sectors are identified in section 3 and highlighted within the tactics in section 5 of this plan, but a more detailed coverage of the specific target groups and areas is contained within the supporting strategies.

Our analysis has generated a number of important local priorities and desired outcomes: -

- to raise aspirations and increase the demand for learning
- to address the low levels of educational achievement in parts of the county
- to improve the availability, clarity and appropriateness of information, advice and guidance
- to re-engineer the approach to the planning and delivery of learning in Northamptonshire to generate innovative, co-ordinated and effective solutions to meeting the learning needs in the area
- to build strong, productive partnerships to support planning and delivery and raise standards
- to create a high quality infrastructure to improve accessibility and flexibility and to support learning and achievement across Northamptonshire.
- to combat disadvantage through locally targeted action to address the learning needs of residents from disadvantaged groups within Northamptonshire
- to expand and improve opportunities for learning ‘in the workplace’

- to increase the capacity for the delivery and support of learning within the county and improve the learning experience of all participants
- to strive for excellence within each stage of the individual's learning journey

These priorities underpin the achievement of the overall national targets around participation, achievement, employer involvement and quality and cost-effectiveness and provide the focus for our broader range of objectives.

Section 2

5 The strategy for action

5.1 Planning and partnerships

There are many partnerships and networks in operation in the county. It is recognised locally that these need to be replaced by fewer, more effective groups which have the drive and capacity to bring about real change. The development of community strategies by local councils, the emergence of local strategic partnerships within each borough and district and the establishment of a countywide Northamptonshire Partnership offer powerful vehicles for multi-agency working around the social and economic agendas within the county.

Objective 1: to re-engineer the approach to planning and delivery of learning in Northamptonshire to deliver innovative, co-ordinated and effective solutions to meeting the learning needs in the area.

To achieve this objective we will:

- Clearly articulate our strategy in relation to learning and skills within the county and require, support and encourage partnership working between our current and future delivery partners to support its implementation and promote the creation of a learning society within Northamptonshire
- Ensure congruence between the LSC strategy and priorities for learning and skills in the county and the strategies and delivery plans of our education providers, focusing the allocation of funding on achieving specified outcomes rather than mechanistic distribution between providers
- Establish and promote the LSC as the key strategic leader for post 16 learning and skills in Northamptonshire and, working closely with the Northamptonshire Partnership, local strategic partnerships, the LEA and employers, promote and implement multi-agency approaches to raising the demand for learning and to improving skill levels
- Engage with existing networks and establish well-defined partnerships with a range of organisations whose collaboration and co-operation will be vital to delivering our targets, ensuring that they are outcome focused and committed to joint working towards the achievement of our objectives
- Develop an effective communication strategy and a strong, supportive working relationship with our provider network (including schools) which includes a joint approach to evaluation of performance against the LSC strategic plan

- Identify the policy and process areas, for example funding and quality improvement, where we need to influence regional and national bodies to support the achievement of targets and to meet local need

5.2 Raising aspirations and increasing the demand for learning

Although data suggests that the skill content of jobs will continue to increase in the future and employers are reporting skill shortages, there are currently many young people and adults who are not participating in learning. Aspirations in relation to learning and qualifications amongst many of the residents of Northamptonshire are low. This applies both to those in work and to those entering the labour market. Although the position has improved significantly compared with the early 1990s, the GCSE performance of the county's young people is below that of other statistical neighbours (similar counties). As indicated in section 3 some of the factors inhibiting participation relate to a lack of demand by both adults and young people, often on the basis of previous experience. The low skill, low wage economy in some parts of the county, combined with high employment levels overall, combine to act as a disincentive to learning and the acquisition of skills and qualifications.

Objective 2: to raise aspirations and increase the demand for learning amongst Northamptonshire residents

To achieve the objective we will:

- Work with local, regional and national agencies to drive forward a co-ordinated approach to raising awareness of the social and economic benefits of learning and training and the opportunities in Northamptonshire
- In conjunction with the Northamptonshire Partnership, and using the county's strategic economic development areas, especially those at Corby and Wellingborough East, promote the creation of more highly skilled job opportunities and work with local agencies to develop strategies to raise the skills of the local workforce to meet these skill needs
- Work with local strategic partnerships and networks to increase awareness of the potential of learning as a driver of regeneration and to integrate learning into regeneration plans
- Working with the new Connexions service, research alternative approaches to re-engaging young people in learning and training and increase our understanding of the factors which motivate young people to learn
- Work in partnership with schools, community groups and voluntary agencies to 'reach out' to those least likely to become involved in learning
- Work with a variety of statutory and voluntary agencies to develop and promote short modules of learning and training, which are responsive to learner interest and circumstances and provide a step back onto the learning ladder
- Emphasise the importance of progression and develop progression strategies with individual providers which focus on raising aspirations and promoting progression to at least level 3
- Build on the local 'widening participation' project in conjunction with UCN, schools, local providers and employers to increase progression to full and part-time higher education
- Work with schools, colleges, the LEA, work-based providers and employers to develop and instill positive attitudes to learning and training amongst young people

5.3 Improving the accessibility of learning

Both national and local research indicates that there is a link between participation and the accessibility of learning venues and access points. The development of a high quality infrastructure to improve accessibility, increase flexibility and support learning and achievement across Northamptonshire is critical to aiding participation and achievement and promoting equality. Increasingly this will encompass both direct and ICT-based access, especially for those in rural areas, to increase access in the workplace and to provide access to very small groups of learners or to minority subjects.

Objective 3: To increase the accessibility of learning opportunities within the county

For young people we will seek to ensure access to a broad, balanced range of learning opportunities, within each area of the county. We will build on current work in the county to introduce further examples of joint delivery in areas where there is a lack of, or imbalance in local provision, seeking to promote collaboration not competition.

For adults we will promote the development of learning in local communities utilising a range of community venues supported by strategically located specialist centres to support learning at all levels including higher level programmes.

For both young people and adults we will seek to increase the opportunities for learning in the workplace and for combining workplace and off-site learning.

Over the period 2001-2005 we will:

- Make a strategic assessment of the current position, develop a local plan to map desired locations of learning centres and access points to provide coverage across the county and evaluate any proposals for new developments in the context of this overall local plan
- Promote new developments and work with the LEA, other local authorities, providers and employers to develop innovative approaches to improving accessibility to a broad range of learning opportunities
- Ensure safe, healthy learning environments which take appropriate account of the needs of all learners
- Build on the work of the Lifelong Learning Partnership (LLP), the FE/HE Federation, Learn Direct, Business Link, the LEA and the library and information service to develop further a countywide ICT infrastructure which fosters equality and enables access to learning, especially for those in rural areas, to be increased
- Work with the relevant agencies and providers to ensure that venues (especially community venues) and the infrastructure to support learning accommodate the needs of those with disabilities

- Work with providers and the local authorities to provide an integrated solution to the provision of transport for 16-19 year old learners
- Work with the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) to identify gaps in childcare provision to support learning and to establish a joint approach to meeting the need
- Increase the opportunities for accessing learning within the workplace by working with local employers and sharing effective models of workplace delivery

5.4 Improving the availability, clarity and appropriateness of information, advice and guidance

Feedback at our consultation events consistently highlighted the importance of accessible, intelligible information and impartial, high quality advice and guidance to assisting individuals and organisations in making informed choices about how to address their career aspirations and skill needs. Our needs analysis, based both on our own findings and research carried out by other agencies, has highlighted a number of issues pertinent to Northamptonshire:

- the lack of a coherent picture and easy routes for accessing information about learning opportunities in Northants that embraces both that for 16-19 year olds and that available for adults
- the confusing nature of learning related information, especially for those with limited knowledge of the education system and qualifications
- organisational changes leading to concerns about the availability of independent advice and guidance to aid the majority of young people in making career and post-16 choices
- the shortage of high quality careers development and training related advice and guidance for adults
- the lack of integrated information and advice systems which can meet the needs of both employers and individuals and respond rapidly to changing situations, for example major local redundancies
- the inaccessibility of information, advice and guidance for those in rural communities
- the need to strengthen the link between analysis of demand, provision of appropriate learning opportunities and the availability of effective advice and guidance

Objective 4: To improve significantly the accessibility and quality of information, advice and guidance about learning opportunities

To improve the provision of information we will:

- Build on the current Local Information Advice and Guidance (LIAG), LearnNorthants and LearnDirect developments, including the training advice and information service previously run by the LLSC, to provide a high quality, single source of information about learning opportunities for young people, adults and employers in Northamptonshire, which is accessible through a variety of media.
- Work with specialists to ensure that information promotes equality of opportunity and caters for the needs of all potential learners whatever their background or ability

- Develop a joint approach with providers, Business Link, the Lifelong Learning Partnership and Northamptonshire library and information service to ensure that information services effectively support promotional activities including national campaigns to improve the quality of advice and guidance we will:
- Work with Careerpath, the new Connexions service and with providers to develop innovative approaches which improve the quality, relevance and impartiality of advice and guidance to learners, parents and other stakeholders
- Explore methods of rewarding providers for ensuring that young people are given comprehensive, objective advice and guidance about post 16 options and encouraged to continue in structured learning post 16 through a route most suited to their individual needs
- Work with the LIAG consortium, the voluntary sector and other relevant providers, to enhance the level and quality of support available for adults through an extended, county wide adult guidance service
- Investigate the particular needs of those from disadvantaged groups and communities and ensure that approaches to the provision of information, advice and guidance take account of their specific needs
- Further develop our work with trade union learning representatives in the county to provide information, advice and guidance to those in work
- Develop a co-ordinated approach between providers, the LSC, unions and Business Link, to increasing understanding amongst employers in the wider community, of the learning opportunities and funding sources available to support skills development and aid business growth

5.5 Increasing the participation and raising the achievement of young people

As indicated in section 3, some 16% of young people leave school at 16 and do not continue into a recognised form of learning. There is considerable variation between staying on rates in different parts of the county and between the various institutions. By the age of 17 the number not participating in education has fallen further although we do not currently have exact figures. The high level of employment and the easy availability of work, often through agency working, for those with low skills are believed to be a major contributory factor. Many young people do not progress beyond level 2.

There is currently a broad range of provision if the county is taken as a whole and it is possible for young people to study within any academic or vocational area. However, options become more limited when young people wish to stay within one institution or remain within a particular geographical area. Although there is some collaboration between providers and some joint provision there is considerable scope for extending this further and looking at innovative ways of improving choice.

Objective 5: To raise the level of participation of young people

During the period of the plan we will improve the relevance, flexibility and responsiveness of learning provision, ensuring a broad and balanced range of opportunities for each and every

young person in Northamptonshire irrespective of their gender, social or ethnic background or level of ability.

To achieve this we will:

- Offer a full range of effective full-time and work-based learning opportunities for young people
- Review the rationale for existing and planned learning provision in each area of the county in the context of feedback from learners, employers and other stakeholders and its contribution to increasing overall skill levels and reshape provision accordingly
- Develop an appropriate response to the government's 14-19 strategy including undertaking a strategic review of pre-16 activity in conjunction with the Education Business Links consortium, the LEA and local providers to clarify objectives and develop a joint plan to meet them within the county
- Secure a high quality mixed offer for students at entry level and level one and complete ladders of progression through to level three and beyond ensuring that they promote equality of access
- Explore with providers ways in which non-academic forms of learning can be promoted, recognised and utilised to increase excitement and motivation in learning as a whole
- Build on the new post-16 arrangements for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and review the adequacy and suitability of provision to meet these needs within the county
- Work with the new Connexions service and other agencies to develop support strategies which reflect the particular needs of disadvantaged students pre and post-16 and which encourage their participation, retention and subsequent achievement
- Trial work related strategies to encourage 16 and 17 year olds not in any form of training to participate (links to employer strategies)
- Design and implement an effective post-16 transition strategy in conjunction with other key partners to improve student choices, promote parity of esteem between qualifications and training routes and increase the proportion remaining in full or part-time learning at age 16,17 and 18
- Develop specific approaches to increasing the participation of young people from ethnic minority groups and from disadvantaged communities

The recent National Audit Office report (2000) highlighted the poor levels of retention and achievement of young people in post-16 education. In Northamptonshire, many students start

courses but do not complete them. Of those who do complete, too many do not gain the qualification for which they are entered. Our approach to improving overall achievement encompasses the twin aspects of reducing dropout and ensuring that those who complete also achieve their qualification or other specified outcome. There is a strong correlation between the quality of advice and guidance and the success rates of students and our strategies in relation to each are interlinked. Similarly, contributory approaches focusing around improving the overall performance of providers are contained within the section on 'striving for excellence'.

Objective 6: To raise the achievement of young people

To achieve this objective we will work with providers to improve retention, achievement and progression rates through:

- Building on the successful pre-16 work undertaken by the Raising Standards Partnership and Education Business Links consortium initiatives to develop a comparative approach to taking forward post 16 curriculum developments
- Extending the existing LSC initiative focusing on raising achievement at level 2 to provide innovative approaches and additional support to targeted students who, under normal conditions, might not achieve a level 2 equivalent qualification
- Developing a similar initiative to improve rates of retention and achievement at level 3
- Piloting added value approaches to evaluating success post 16 with the objective of improving measurement and increasing the degree of value added over the period of the plan
- Increasing the opportunities for moving between providers and learning programmes, and for 'mix and match' approaches to support retention, whilst ensuring that it does not detract from achievement
- Developing action plans with individual providers and groups of providers to address poor levels of retention and achievement
- Piloting new approaches to promoting progression to HE (both full-time and part-time work based) through, for example, the Student Apprenticeship scheme and foundation degrees

5.6 Increasing participation and raising the achievement of Adults

According to the most recent East Midlands Household Survey (2000), of the economically active adults in the county some 121,000 or 31% have no formal qualifications, but many see little or no prospect of needing any formalised learning in the near future. Within the context of an increasing demand for more highly skilled employees (see 3.4) and a national drive to increase the overall skill level of the workforce at levels 2 and 3, this presents a considerable challenge, especially in those sectors with projected growth in jobs (see 3.4). From an economic viewpoint, Northamptonshire is ideally placed to benefit from the economic overspill from the southeast but it does not currently have the skill profile to support the high value industries that might otherwise be attracted to the area. The social benefits of engagement in learning to improving health, addressing social isolation and exclusion and increasing self-confidence, and the links between skill levels and earnings power, are well-documented but there is a need to promote these benefits more effectively to local residents. Within Northamptonshire a multi-faceted approach is required, to rekindle an interest in and demand for learning (see 5.2), to ensure that learning opportunities are located and

designed in a way which is attractive to learners and facilitates participation rather than inhibiting it (see also 5.3), to promote progression to further study, thus promoting a culture of lifelong learning and to ensure that the specific skill needs within growth sectors are also reflected in learning provision (see 3.4). In seeking to increase participation amongst adults (and involvement of employers) it is important to recognise that, at least in the early stages, learning may not always lead to a full qualification.

Objective 7: to extend participation in education, learning and training by adults

In approaching this objective we will particularly focus attention on those areas of the county which are under performing and upon addressing the needs of the priority groups and industry sectors listed on page xxxx. We will:

- Review current and planned provision for adults in the context of feedback from learners and employers, data on performance and in the light of new national programme directives for example basic skills
- Develop an adult learning plan centred around a strategic review of the role of, and priorities for, community education within the context of increasing participation by adults, especially those from under represented groups, and taking account of the views of learners and non-learners
- Build on the work of the LEA, and other agencies to increase the proportion of learning offered in local communities and work with providers to increase the range and flexibility and match delivery to the specific learning needs of adults, recognising the barriers to, and anxieties about, learning faced by many adults
- Promote training for those in work and engage new employers, employer organisations, Sector Skills Councils, Learn Direct, providers, local and regional agencies, to develop new learning programmes that satisfy the needs of identified sectors, address generic skill shortages (see section 3 and the workforce development strategy) and are responsive to the needs of the learner
- Work alongside the county, borough and district councils through local strategic partnerships, neighbourhood renewal groups and other local partnerships to develop and implement locally focused multi-agency approaches to meeting learning needs within identified disadvantaged communities
- Work with a range of statutory, voluntary sector and private providers, to use the increasing demand for IT awareness and skills as a tool to attract adults into learning
- Develop a range of community based strategies to address the learning needs of adults living in rural communities, harnessing ICT as one of the important strands of such development
- Promote the role of family learning as a means of encouraging participation by adults
- Work with EMDA, UCN, relevant voluntary agencies, providers and employers to adapt the regional mature workforce initiative to meet the training and development needs of older workers in Northamptonshire. Explore the needs of other mature residents.
- Contribute to the development of a co-ordinated approach between Business Link, voluntary organisations and other providers to promoting self-employment and helping individuals acquire the appropriate skills to aid success

The supporting workforce development, community, equality and ICT strategies set out our approach in more detail.

As with young people, there is considerable scope for improving the rates of retention and achievement for adults involved in learning leading to qualifications. In some cases almost 100% of those who participate complete their programme of study whilst in others the 'drop out' rate is high. Similarly, there is considerable variation in the rates of achievement between courses and between providers. Achieving success is a key strand within our participation and progression strategies and contributes to ensuring that funding is used as effectively as possible. It is essential, therefore, that learners are guided onto the appropriate learning programme (see 5.4) with the appropriate support and that they complete it successfully.

Objective 8: To raise the achievement of adults

As part of our quality improvement, work with providers requires monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of learner recruitment procedures, learner support and programme design, to promoting high levels of retention and achievement

- Review current and planned provision for adults in the context of feedback from learners and employers, data on performance and in the light of new national programme directives - for example basic skills
- Explore approaches to promoting take-up of learning leading to qualifications by adults, utilising where possible, unitisation of courses and credit accumulation
- Develop initiatives targeted at improving adult retention and achievement at levels 2 and 3, particularly through strategies aimed at learning amongst employees in the workplace
- Promote more flexible approaches to programme delivery and support, including fast-track options, to aid retention and achievement
- Develop action plans with individual providers and groups of providers to address poor levels of retention and achievement
- Work with UCN and other HE providers to promote progression to higher education (full and part-time) and develop recognised pathways into higher education for non-traditional learners

It is evident from Basic Skills Agency research that a weakness in basic skills amongst up to a quarter of the population (aged 16-60) exists within the county. Inevitably, a weakness in basic skills, allied to a reluctance by individuals to articulate such a weakness, results in a shaky platform on which to base the concept of formal learning and the acquisition of particular skills. Addressing levels of basic skills is a significant aspect of combating inequality. The establishment of the national basic skills strategy unit and the publication of the 'Skills for Life' strategy provide the focus for our developments in this area. Our basic skills strategy recognises that there are differing levels of need in basic skills, from those who cannot read, write or deal with numbers at all to those who have development needs in particular areas. The literacy and numeracy strategies in schools and the work of Job Centre Plus (formerly the Employment Service) will also contribute to the achievement of our objective and targets in this area.

Objective 9: Raise the literacy and numeracy skills of the residents and employees of Northamptonshire

We will implement the national ‘Skills for Life’ strategy within a Northamptonshire context, working closely with regional and local representatives and partnerships

Over the period 2002-2005 we will:

- Conduct further research to help us understand more fully the triggers to participation in basic skills development and learner and employer views about approaches which support successful outcomes
- Building on the work of the Northamptonshire basic skills forum, establish a countywide basic skills strategy group to develop and steer a co-ordinated approach to increasing participation and raising skill levels through community based and workplace strategies
- Work with local groups and agencies to target priority groups and localities with most need in the first instance
- Disseminate good practice and workable approaches from Northamptonshire and elsewhere and adapt to suit local circumstances for example family learning, union based basic skills initiatives, work based learning programmes
- Develop the capacity of local people to help address the needs of those in their own community through, for example the neighbourhood nursery initiative
- Work with learners and relevant agencies to develop responsive and effective arrangements to address the specific needs of those for whom English is a second or alternative language

A supporting basic skills strategy document sets out our approach in more detail.

5.7 Working with employers

We embrace EMDA’s aim ‘to encourage employers to value and reward skills and learning and to support a learning continuum that develops people to meet changing needs’. In an area with increasing skill shortages and a tight labour market it is essential that we continually develop those already in employment, with the emphasis on key, transferable skills, competencies in the workplace and accredited learning. Employers have a critical role to play in encouraging their workforce to participate and in providing opportunities for learning in the workplace. Similarly, we need to work pro-actively with employers to identify future skill needs and to ensure that courses and other learning opportunities are matched to employer and learner need. In Northamptonshire where unemployment levels have been consistently low but where skills shortages have been recognised as a barrier to employment, a focus on providing learning in the workplace is particularly pertinent.

Objective 10: To increase the engagement of employers and employees in workforce development

During the period of the plan, our primary focus locally, will be on the identified priority sectors and generic skill gaps (see section 3.3). We will:

- Engage with employers through pro-active involvement in local business networks and through the development of focus groups around identified sectors and skill shortage areas,

to promote the business benefits of training, understand skill needs more fully and develop joint approaches to addressing them

- Build on existing local links and networks to pilot innovative approaches to working with micro businesses and SMEs in conjunction with Sector Skills Councils, EMDA, Business Link, trade associations and other regional and local organisations
- Share and celebrate existing good practice, in relation to learning and skills, in local firms and use it to encourage more employers to become involved
- Work with Business Link to promote the adoption of the Investors in People Standard within local companies as a means of increasing employer involvement in workforce development and promoting the benefits of training
- Build on the work of the Education Business Links Consortium, for example the successful mentoring model for young people, to increase employer engagement with providers and learners and support the skills development of adults and young people in employment
- Work with the recently established county wide Trade Union Learning Forum to increase employer and trade union involvement in workforce development
- Within the context of the county wide ICT strategy and Learn Direct and UK on line developments, promote the potential of ICT-based solutions to addressing identified skill shortages and to overall upskilling of the workforce
- Promote the benefits to employers of Modern Apprenticeships and other publicly funded workforce development models as a means of ensuring an appropriately skilled workforce
- Work with the voluntary sector and Northamptonshire Connecting Communities Partnership to build the capacity of the voluntary sector
- In consultation with the Northamptonshire Chamber, other local business networks and trade associations, develop a methodology for capturing the 'voice of the employer' and ensuring that it is reflected in future plans

A national workforce development strategy is under development in the light of the Performance and Innovation Unit report. A more detailed local response is contained in our separate workforce development strategy document and in the supporting basic skills strategy re involvement of employers in improving the levels of basic skills of their workforce.

5.8 Striving for Excellence

Our longer term aim is to develop Northamptonshire as a county of educational excellence. Our approach centres on promoting and encouraging excellence in all aspects of the individual's experience of education and training wherever it takes place and whatever the nature and level of the learning experience.

Education has been identified as one of our priority sectors (see 3.3) since it offers considerable growth and there are skills shortages in a number of areas including IT, basic skills, childcare, learning support and advice and guidance. The shortage of schoolteachers has been highlighted nationally. Local consultation suggests that there is difficulty in recruiting to most subject areas at secondary level. A supply of appropriately qualified staff is essential to achieving excellence in our educational provision.

Similarly, learning opportunities within the county are provided through a range of venues, some purpose built and others adapted for the purpose either on a permanent or occasional basis (for example village halls). Learning is also delivered through a network of providers, some large, some small, some fully funded through the public sector and others reliant on a mix of public and private sector support. The financial security of some of these providers is often tenuous and yet they are often the organisations most able to reach disadvantaged groups. Developing and sustaining an appropriate infrastructure to ensure continuity of provision for learners is crucial to achieving our goals.

Objective 11: To raise the quality and effectiveness of education and training

Over the period of the plan we will:

- Improve the mechanisms for gathering feedback from learners, employers and other stakeholders to help our understanding of user perceptions and inform policy and development
- Introduce a comprehensive quality improvement strategy and programme of monitoring and support based on developing long-term relationships with high quality providers
- ensure that learning providers in the county recognize their responsibilities and duty of care in relation to the health and safety of LSC funded learners
- Work with the LEA, schools, colleges, providers and employers to improve the quality of learning environments
- develop a network of centres of excellence (including COVEs) which act as exemplars and assist in promoting good practice within the county
- Work with employers in education, the Teacher Training Agency, the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO), University College Northampton, Connexions, LIAG, the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership and providers to develop a joint strategy to increase the numbers of people entering the education profession (see above) and to ensure that they gain the appropriate training and qualifications to support our drive for excellence
- Celebrate excellence and disseminate good practice exemplars in all aspects of the educational experience, highlighting successful strategies for promoting excellence and working with providers and employers to implement them within their particular context, thus improving the overall quality and consistency of provision in Northamptonshire
- Require that each provider regularly reviews the effectiveness of its activities through a process of self assessment and evaluation which leads to a rigorous development plan and specific actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise levels of achievement and learner satisfaction
- Explore approaches to benchmarking and assessment of added value across providers and sectors and use it as a focus for quality improvement and assessing and improving value for money
- Work closely with the inspectorates to review provider performance and follow up on the outcomes of inspection
- Bring on stream new providers and new types of provision, and rationalise existing provision, as necessary to meet learner and employer needs more appropriately, encourage innovation and improve cost effectiveness

Our supporting Quality and Health and safety strategies set out our approach in more detail.

6 Consultation

Our strategy is founded on an expectation of joint working to add value, increase impact and promote a coherent approach to addressing the key tasks. The Northamptonshire strategic plan has been developed following consultation, through a series of roadshows, meetings and focus groups with a wide range of organisations and individuals including:

Employers and representatives from local companies and trade unions
The Local Education Authority, Northamptonshire County Council and each of the 7 borough and district councils in Northamptonshire
The Northamptonshire Chamber and Business Link
Representatives from national training organisations
Careerpath and Job Centre Plus
The local information advice and guidance consortium
The county basic skills forum and the Early Years Development Childcare Partnership
Northamptonshire Lifelong Learning Partnership and Northamptonshire Federation
Education providers/funders including private training providers, colleges, Northamptonshire Lifelong Learning Service, schools, University College, LIAG Northampton, Education Business Links consortium, HEFCE
Training personnel from public and private sector organisations
Voluntary and community organisations
The regional development agency, regional government office and national LSC

A seminar was held for key stakeholders in November, to provide an opportunity to comment on the first draft and targets, prior to the formal consultation process. A draft of the plan was circulated to over 700 organizations, businesses and individuals for formal consultation in January. It was also publicized on our website and through presentations to organizations and business groups, press releases, the Chamber newsletter and interviews with local radio stations. Written responses were received from twenty four local organizations – these views have been taken into account in the production of the final version of the plan. Further consultation is being undertaken as part of the development of our supporting strategies for equality, workforce development, community development, ICT, quality, communications and basic skills and during the preparation of our operational plan. We also recognise the need to continue to seek the views of learners to ensure that we are placing them at the heart of our planning.

7 Risk Assessment

A strategic risk assessment has been prepared which identifies the key risks to delivery of the strategy and achievement of targets. The provider review process is an integral part of the mechanism for the assessment and management of risk.

8 Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

Progress towards the achievement of the plan will be monitored annually and published in the form of an annual report. Monitoring arrangements will follow national guidelines as set out in annex 1 of the national corporate plan but will include:-

- Progress towards each of the key quantitative targets
- Tracking of performance of those who will be 16 in 2001 over the period 2001-2004
- Comparison of the performance of different cohorts of young people and adults over the period 2001-2004
- Analysis of participation and achievement by age, gender and ethnic origin
- Analysis of participation and achievement according to geographical place of residence
- Analysis of participation and success rates for each provider and by type of provider for example private, voluntary, employer, college, school, other
- Recording the grade and narrative outcomes from inspection
- Evaluation against the impact measures for each objective not linked to a quantitative target

An evaluation of the impact of the proposed strategies will form a part of our self-assessment process as a part of our internal quality assurance procedures.

9 Delivering the plan

We have inherited a range of funding mechanisms to support the provision of education and training in Northamptonshire. Over the period of the plan a new, coherent national funding system, which meets individual needs and encourages higher standards is due to be introduced. At a local level we have limited discretionary funding to support local initiatives. The Local Initiative Fund will be deployed annually to support the priorities within the plan. Given the limited nature of the funding, the local Council will identify specific areas against which the discretionary funding can be most effectively allocated to tackle specific strategic issues. Other development funding will be sought, to support the achievement of our objectives, in conjunction with the local authorities, the regional development agency and national training organisation.

	Objective	Target and impact measures (by 2004)	Budget	Key partners
1	To re-engineer the approach to planning and delivery of learning in Northants to deliver innovative, co-ordinated and effective solutions to meeting the learning needs in the area	Revised approach to planning and funding implemented. Annual targets to be set as part of operational planning.	Administration budgets	Key providers, local organisations, local authorities, GOEM, EMDA, Northamptonshire Partnership (SSP), LSPs
2	To raise aspirations and increase the demand for learning amongst Northamptonshire residents	Increased rates of participation in learning – 2220 additional young people remaining in structured learning (80%) Increased numbers of adults participating in formalized learning	LSC marketing budget, LIF, ESF Co-financing, EMDA Support through activities and budgets of other agencies including LEA, probation service, Job Centre Plus and Connexions	National LSC, EMDA, Sector Skills councils, Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU), SSP, LSPs, community and voluntary groups, probation service, Lifelong Learning Partnership Employers
3	To increase the accessibility of learning opportunities within the county	Plan of strategic locations ICT infrastructure plan implemented	LSC national capital budgets, LEA budgets, FE childcare funding, LearnDirect funding, UK on-line budgets (not direct to the LSC), college core budgets	All post-16 providers, LEA on behalf of local primary schools, district and borough councils, Learn Direct, EYCDP, Business Link Employers
4	To significantly improve the accessibility and quality of information, advice and guidance about learning opportunities and methods of accessing them	Fully operational single source of information about learning opportunities in Northants	LSC LIAG budget, FE funding, work-based learning budgets, ESF co-financing funds	LIAG, Northamptonshire Lifelong Learning Partnership Learn Direct Connexions

		Learn Northants website and telephone helpline fully operational Revised, co-ordinated approach to marketing learning opportunities implemented		UCN
5,	To raise the participation of young people	An increase of 4.6% (an extra 2220 young people in structured learning)	Education Business Links budget Work-based learning budget (Modern apprenticeships, Foundation training, NVQ training) FE funding National LSC FE student support funding ESF co-financing funds LSC national project funding DFES project funding	Secondary schools, work-based learning providers, FE colleges, voluntary sector organisations, LEA Lifelong learning, Connexions service, Careerpath, employers
6	To raise the achievement of young people	An increase of 9.86% (an extra 501 young people achieving level 2) An increase of 4% (an extra 429 young people achieving level 3 by age 19)	Education Business Links budget Work-based learning budget (Modern apprenticeships, Foundation training, NVQ training) FE funding National LSC FE student support funding ESF co-financing funds LSC Standards Funds and national project funding DFES project funding	Secondary schools, work-based learning providers, FE colleges, voluntary sector organisations, LEA Lifelong learning, Connexions service, employers
7.	To extend participation in education, learning and training by adults	Increased numbers of adults participating in formal learning. Annual targets to be set as part of operational planning pending national target 2003 onwards.	FE funding Adult and community learning budget Work-based learning budget (19-24 year olds only) Workforce development budget National LSC FE student support funding EMDA and Sector Skills	FE colleges, UCN, work-based learning providers, community and voluntary organisations, Business Link, LEA lifelong learning service, EYCDP Basic skills agency, Basic Skills Task Group, employers

			development funds Sub-regional strategic partnership funding ESF co-financing funds LSC/HEFC progression funding	
8	To raise the achievement of adults	22,500 additional adults achieving level 3	Work-based learning budget (19-24 year olds only) FE funding Adult and community learning budget Workforce development budget National LSC FE student support funding EMDA and Sector Skills development funds ESF co-financing funds	FE colleges, UCN, work-based learning providers, community and voluntary organisations, Business Link, LEA lifelong learning service, EYCDP, LearnDirect, employers
9	To raise literacy and numeracy skills	An additional 8650 adults gaining qualifications in literacy, numeracy or ESOL Geographical and subject breakdowns to be included within annual operational plans	FE basic skills funding Adult and community learning budget Emda project funding Northamptonshire Partnership funding Work-based learning (learning gateway) DFES project funding	Northants Basic skills forum, probation service, Job Centre Plus, local employers, trade union learning forum , FE colleges, training providers, Connexions service, local voluntary and community organizations, LEA, LearnDirect, EMDA, Northamptonshire strategic partnership, neighbourhood nursery and surestart consortia, , BSA, Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
10	To increase employer and employee involvement in workforce development	Annual targets to be set as part of operational planning	Workforce development budget ESF co-financing funds FE funding Work-based learning budgets (modern apprenticeships)	Employers, employer groups, sector skills councils, Business Link, FE Colleges, work-based learning providers, LEA Lifelong Learning Service, private training providers, EMDA, UCN, trade union learning forum
11	To raise the quality and effectiveness of education and training	Improvements in retention and achievement rates and inspection grades of providers as measured against national benchmarks	FE Standards Fund Work-based learning Standards Fund Core budgets of all providers LSC capital funds COVE funding DFES/ LSC project funds	Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), OFSTED, UCN, sector skills councils, post-16 providers, Connexions service, EYCDP, LIAG, schools, Business Link, LEA, employers

10 List of Council members (inside back cover)

Chris Ripper (Chairman)	Scottish and Newcastle Retail
Brenda Bignold	Northamptonshire County Council
Dr Martin Gaskell	University College Northampton
John Hillier	Weetabix
Anne Linsey	YMCA Training
Siân Macdonald	Tresham Institute
William Nicholson	
Cllr Gina Ogden OBE	Northamptonshire County Council
Ian Potter	
Bob Scott	AEEU
Cllr Ian Watts	
Ron Whittaker	SATRA
Rob Wye (Executive Director)	LSC
Martyn Wylie	Northamptonshire Chamber
Dr Ron Whittaker	SATRA Technology Centre (EMDA representative)

N.B. For the printers : this needs updating before it goes to print.

Annex 1

Glossary of terms

ALI	Adult Learning inspectorate
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
DFES	Department for education and skills
EBLO	Education Business Links Organisation
EMDA	East Midlands Development Agency
ESF	European Social Fund
EYDCP	Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
FE	Further Education
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic product
GOEM	Government Office of the East Midlands
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education funding Council
ICT	Information and communications technologies
IiP	Investors in people
IT	Information technology
LEA	Local education authority
LIAG	Local information advice and guidance
LLSC	Local learning and skills council
LSP	Local strategic partnership
NIACE	National institute for adult and continuing education
NTOs	National training organizations
NVQ	National vocational qualifications
OFSTED	Office for standards in education
SME	small and medium sized enterprises
SSP	sub-regional strategic partnership - Northamptonshire Partnership
UCN	University College Northampton
Level 2 qualifications	Equivalent of 5 GCSE at grade C or above
Level 3 qualifications	Equivalent of 2 A'levels
Basic skills	Literacy, numeracy and English as a second or alternative language

Annex 2

Background information re targets

We are required by our national office to set our targets in terms of numbers of additional students within each target group by 2004. The following information is provided as a background to the local targets.

Our targets are based on an assumption that we should at least match the percentage increase at national level eg in target 1 the national increase is 5% (75% to 80%). Where we are performing below the national target in 2000 we should set a target which is more challenging than the national increase to ensure that we start to close the gap. A more detailed breakdown of the rationale for each is given below.

	National target for 2004	Proposed local target for 2004
Target 1	80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 75%) Increase of 5%	Northamptonshire was performing slightly above the national average in 2000 (around 77%) Our target is just below the national increase as we are already above the national level. Target 2220 young people, equivalent to a 4.6% increase.
Target 2	85% at level 2 by age 19 (2000: 75%)	Northamptonshire was performing slightly above the national average in 2000 (around 78%) Almost half of the 10% targeted increase nationally is projected through an increase in the percentage of pupils who achieve this at statutory school age (at 16). The target post-16 is therefore around 5%. This is in line with our proposed increase Target 501 young people, equivalent to an overall increase of 9.86%

Target 3	55% at level 3 by age 19 (2000:51%)	<p>Northamptonshire was performing well below the national average in 2000 (around 47%)</p> <p>The target should represent an increase of at least 4% to match the national increase and ideally should be higher to close the gap between performance in Northants and nationally. However, as many level 3 qualifications take 2 years to achieve, we believe that this may not be achievable within the first period as we need to allow time for strategies to become embedded and for improvements to gain momentum.</p> <p>Target 429 young people, equivalent to a 3.74% increase</p>
Target 4	Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults.	<p>Northamptonshire was performing around the national average in 2000 (23.5% against a national average of 24%)</p> <p>The national target represents approximately 10% of the overall population. At local level we should therefore be at least matching this increase but need to target more activity in areas where the performance is lower, eg Corby (30% literacy and 33% numeracy). This will be reflected in our more detailed basic skills strategy.</p> <p>Target 8,650, equivalent to raising the levels by 10%</p>

Target 5	52% of adults at level 3 (2000:47%)	<p>Northamptonshire was performing well below the national average in 2000 (around 41%).</p> <p>Our target should set a minimum 5% improvement to match the national increase but should ideally be higher in order to close the gap. We are required by National office to set a challenging target for adults at level 3 at a minimum level of 22,500 additional adults. As with the young people level 3 target, it is believed that reaching the national average may not be achievable in the first planning period as strategies will need to become embedded before momentum can be gained. The target has therefore been set at the national minimum for Northants of 22,500 although it is recognized that this will be very challenging.</p> <p>Target 22,500 equivalent to a 4.7% increase</p>
-----------------	-------------------------------------	--

- Targets are based on population figures with an inbuilt growth factor. The factor has been set nationally as follows:

Target	Population growth estimate (for target setting purposes)
1. Participation of young people (16-18)	5.8%
2. Achievement of young people at level two (19 year olds in 2004 only)	4.86%
3. Achievement of young people at level three (19 year olds in 2004 only)	4.86%
4. Basic skills	Not applied
5. Achievement of adults at level 3	2.14%

We have compared these figures to locally derived population projections and believe that they are sufficiently close to local projections to be used for this purpose.

- The targets relate to additional student numbers over and above the numbers we would achieve if we perform at current levels but with a growing population

- Target 1 – “structured learning” means full-time education in a school sixth form, FE college, City Technology College or through work-based learning (MA etc).
- Targets 2 and 3 are based on the cohort of students who will be 19 in 2004 (ie they were 16 in 2000). The current performance of young people at age 16 in schools is above the national average. It is projected to increase by a further 5% by 2002. This would mean that 51.2% of the population would already have achieved this target by the age of 16 as against 46% in 2000.
- Target 4 includes everyone post-16. It does not just relate to those below entry level ie those with very low levels. The evidence of having raised the skills is in terms of achieving a qualification (taken from a range of eligible qualifications from entry level to level 2 in literacy and numeracy and includes the key skills of literacy and numeracy and GCSE Mathematics and English). This may include a significant number of individuals who are also taking other level 2 or 3 qualifications. A more detailed breakdown of the distribution of this target across literacy and numeracy and between geographical areas will be included in the basic skills strategy but we will be specifically targeting all those areas which currently have more than 20% of residents with literacy and numeracy needs ie Corby, Northampton, East Northants, Kettering. This target includes all those over the age of 16 although the national wording refers to adults.
- Target 5 is based on survey data rather than data sources from performance tables. It includes all adults post 19. Therefore an increase in the proportion achieving level 3 by 19 will gradually have an impact on this performance.