

Learning and Skills Council

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Local Strategic Plan 2002-05

Kent and Medway



Learning+Skills Council
Kent and Medway

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> Chairman's foreword

I am delighted to introduce you to this, the Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway's (LSCKM) first Strategic Plan.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has a clear but challenging task; raising our country's skill levels to world class standards by 2010. To do that we must increase opportunities for all to participate in learning, successfully meet the needs of learners and employers, and raise significantly standards of achievement across a wide range of education and training provision.

Focussing on our customers – learners and employers – will be key to our success.

For the first time, a single organisation has responsibility for planning and funding of all post-16 education and training (excluding higher education). It is a huge undertaking, which can only be delivered with the full involvement and support of a wide range of organisations and individuals. We have consulted extensively on the strategy and valued your input. Now we have to deliver it, building on that spirit of partnership across Kent and Medway.

This Strategic Plan sets out our priorities and targets and how we will achieve them. The targets are very challenging, I also believe they are achievable, but only through a step change in the quality and range of our post-16 education and training available locally. Only that will enable us to catch up and indeed overtake, the rest of the South East.

Too many organisations spend large amounts of time writing and rewriting strategies, documents and plans to the detriment of achieving their goals. I do not want us to fall into that trap. Now is the time for concentrated and determined action. I look forward to working with you to achieving the strategy for the benefit of the people of Kent and Medway.



Allan Chisholm
Chairman, Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway
May 2002



> 1. Executive summary

National context

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is a national body responsible for all post-16 education and training in England, other than higher education. It has 47 local arms, of which Kent and Medway is one.

The Learning and Skills Council's key tasks, set by the Secretary of State, are to:

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

The LSC's mission is to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training which puts learners first.

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

Local context

At the outset of its local consultation, the Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway (LSCKM) proposed that it should set itself an overarching aim to guide its local strategy. This was that, working with its partners, by 2010 young people and adults in Kent and Medway will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in England.

This aim is highly ambitious. It will require improvement not just in line with the change needed to achieve the national Learning and Skills Council's vision for England. It implies that education and training performance in Kent and Medway must instead become closely comparable with the rest of the South East. By most indicators, current Kent and Medway performance is some way behind the rest of the South East; in certain areas it is just at or even below average national performance.

To achieve this aim will require a step change in current levels of participation and achievement in learning by the people of Kent and Medway, and in the performance of our post 16 education and training providers. It will also demand a significant shift in the behaviour of Kent and Medway employers.

Extensive consultation provided clear endorsement of this aim, and commitment to its delivery.

Local priorities

The Learning and Skills Council's national Corporate Plan sets out the wide range of activity required to achieve the national targets. Locally, the Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway is fully committed to delivering its contribution to all of these.

In light of consultation, we have agreed local priorities to help deliver our local strategic aim. In setting these local priorities we do not plan to starve other work of funds or attention: the intention is to focus extra effort where it will have the greatest impact and where there is the greatest need, reflecting local circumstances. It will also mean that the Council will set itself more demanding targets in such areas. Council also agreed that these priorities should inform the LSCKM's programme of work for the next three years, with annual reviews of progress.

Taking account of extensive research¹ and initial consultation with a range of strategic partners, Council proposed the following six local priorities in order to both address local needs and contribute to national objectives. All would apply across Kent and Medway, but in three of the priorities Council identified geographic areas where particular effort will be required:

- > widening post 16 participation in learning;
- > raising the basic literacy and numeracy skills of people aged over 16, particularly in the Thames Gateway and East Kent Triangle;
- > raising the basic Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills of the workforce;
- > raising Level 3 achievement of young people, particularly in the Thames Gateway and East Kent Triangle;
- > raising Level 3 achievement of adults, particularly in the Thames Gateway and Channel Corridor; and
- > increasing the involvement of employers, unions and others in developing the skills required by the future workforce and raising the number of employers with Investors in People (IiP) recognition.

Widespread consultation with over 400 stakeholders provided:

- > near unanimous recognition of, and support for, our high level assessment of the learning and skill needs of Kent and Medway; and
- > endorsement of the Council's proposed local priorities and that these will be significant in achieving the Council's strategic aim.

On the basis of South East LSCs' consultation on draft Strategic Plans and joint development of the South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA) Regional Plan, a number of issues have been identified as common across the region. These will be taken forward as key regional priorities and are detailed in Our learning strategy, (section 4).

¹The Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Assessment 2001, published September 2001.

Targets

The following table sets out current national and local targets across the range of the Council's work. A key point is that in local priority areas the targets are more demanding compared with what might be expected if Kent and Medway were simply to keep pace with planned national progress.

National		Local	
Key Objectives (five)	Targets for 2004	Targets for 2004	Priorities (six)
1. Extend participation in education, learning and training	80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 75%) Set baseline and target for adults in next year's plan	85% of (= an additional 6,000) 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 82% = 46,742) Set baseline and target for adults in next year's plan	1. Widening post 16 participation in learning
2. Increase engagement of employers in workforce development	Develop measure of employer engagement in next year's plan	Develop measure of employer engagement in next year's plan Local target to increase the number of liP recognitions amongst organisations with: > 10-49 employees: 445 (2000: 123) > 50+ employees: 430 (2000: 283)	6. Increasing the involvement of employers, unions and others in developing the skills required by the future workforce and raising the number of employers with liP recognition
3. Raise achievement of young people	85% at Level 2 by age 19 (2000: 75%) 55% at Level 3 by age 19 (2000: 51%)	87% (= an additional 1,339 young people) at Level 2 by age 19 (2000: 81% = 15,261) 55% (= an additional 1,424 young people) at Level 3 by age 19 (2000: 48% = 9,102)	2. Raising Level 3 achievement of young people, particularly in the Thames Gateway and East Kent Triangle

National		Local	
Key Objectives (five)	Targets for 2004	Targets for 2004	Priorities (six)
4. Raise achievement of adults	Raise literacy and numeracy Basic Skills of 750,000 adults (2000: estimate 6,000,000 lack Basic Skills)	Raise literacy and numeracy Basic Skills of an additional 25,542 adults (2000: estimate 200,000 lack Basic Skills)	3. Raising the basic literacy and numeracy skills of people aged over 16, particularly in the Thames Gateway and East Kent Triangle
	% of adults at Level 2: targets to be set in next year's plan 52% of adults at Level 3 (2000: 47%)	% of adults at Level 2: targets to be set in next year's plan 42% of (= an additional 74,000) adults at Level 3 (2000: 37% = 312,000)	4. Raising Level 3 achievement of adults, particularly in the Thames Gateway and Mid and South Kent Corridor
5. Raise quality of education and training user satisfaction	Set baselines and targets in next year's plan	Set baselines and targets in next year's plan, while taking determined action to drive up quality immediately 75% of workforce with basic ICT skills (= an additional 112,769 people) (2000: 68% = 575,360)	5. Raising the proportion of our workforce with basic ICT skills

Impact and outcome measures

The impact of our work locally will be measured in terms of outputs generated from combinations of activities we fund. Such activities are framed around numerical and percentage targets for 2004, with baseline figures taken from 2000 (the most recent available). Milestone targets for each of our four sub-areas will support delivery of our priorities and are being developed as part of our Business Plan for 2002-03. Below we quantify the difference we will make locally, with initial local impact measures expressed in terms of annual improvement:

By 2004

- 1 an additional 6,000 young people aged 16-18 will participate in structured learning, an improvement overall of 3% (constituting a year on year improvement of 0.75%);
- 2 by the age of 19, an additional 1,339 young people will attain Level 2 (an improvement of 6%, or year on year gain of 1.5%); and an additional 1,424 young people will attain Level 3 (an improvement of 7%, or year on year gain of 1.75%);
- 3 an additional 74,000 adults will attain Level 3, an overall improvement of 5%, or year on year gain of 1.25%;
- 4 an additional 25,542 adults will have improved basic literacy and numeracy skills;
- 5 75% of the local workforce will have basic ICT skills, an overall increase of 7% or year on year gain of 1.75%; and
- 6 an additional 322 small (10-49 employees) firms and 147 medium/large (50+ employees) firms will be IIP accredited, taking the recognition of small firms to 11% and medium/large firms to 52%.

Quality, monitoring and evaluation

To deliver the required step change in participation and achievement in education and training, we need to develop a first class product. This will require a major effort. Quality improvement will be a key activity underpinning all our work, driven by a senior manager through a clear strategy for continuous improvement and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all our activities against:

- > local and national targets;
- > contractual outputs; and
- > service quality measures, including customer feedback.

> 2. Introduction

This Strategic Plan outlines our planning framework and principles, area approach and commitment to equality of opportunity in its introduction. It then sets out the demand for learning from employers and individuals, which assesses the economic context, our need to raise skills and local strengths and weaknesses. Next, the Plan sets out our learning strategy for responding to these challenges, describing our proposed priorities and their rationale. The following section addresses the key issue of how we and our partners should go about delivering the strategy through better understanding, stimulating and meeting local demands for learning. Finally, to help make the Plan as accessible as possible, there are two annexes describing the key terms we use, as well as profiling our Council members.

Our planning framework

The formation of the Learning and Skills Council reflects the Government's determination to develop a learning society, with an integrated approach to all post 16 education and training. The Learning and Skills Council's Corporate Plan 2001-2004 sets out the national challenges, priorities and targets involved. The Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway, together with the other 46 local Learning and Skills Councils, will contribute to delivering those national targets.

The national Council has consulted widely on its targets, and will shortly roll forward its Corporate Plan to 2002-2005. Our local consultation from September to early November 2001 was not intended to duplicate that process but rather to consult our partners and the public about whether:

- > our local learning and skills assessment was recognisable and provided a sound evidence base;
- > we had identified key local issues; and
- > we had identified key local priorities/actions.

Our framework for identifying what we should be doing locally is simple:

- > first, we analysed the differing requirements for education and training from both employers and individuals - the demand for learning. This includes how to strengthen their influence over the supply of learning, which is currently not well articulated. As well as identifying current needs, it requires anticipating/stimulating demand for the leading edge skills that will drive economic growth;
- > second, based upon this understanding of demand, we established a learning strategy. This sets out our proposals for action in a unified way and shapes the supply of education and training that we fund - over £170 million each year from 2002-03. The strategy goes beyond reacting to expressed demand and also seeks to pro-actively anticipate and shape future needs; and
- > third, action also includes spelling out what we expect from the providers we fund and influencing the work of other key agencies, so that we have a fully responsive and flexible range of provision tailored to local needs.

Our consultation document made clear that the Council wished to make a difference and do a limited number of key things well, rather than dispersing finite resources too thinly. Local priorities would be kept under review and outcomes evaluated annually, but time had to be allowed for agreed initiatives to take effect. Developing new programmes requires investment by training providers and partners, chopping and changing priorities would be wasteful for all concerned. We proposed that our first local priorities should last for at least three years. This approach was welcomed, far too many cases of unsustainable initiatives were cited as evidence of the waste of short-termism.

An area-focused approach

Although the framework may be simple, the underlying analysis to identify demand is complex, continually being updated and in some areas still incomplete. The consultation process revealed a rich vein of new sources of information and has allowed us to develop new links and partnerships and help improve our understanding of local learning and skill needs. The Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Assessment will be updated regularly and this Plan will not replicate its findings. Rather, it concentrates on the implications of the information currently available.

Key features are the lack of consistent demand for learning across Kent and Medway and the wide geographical variations in levels of achievement and participation. Economically and socially the picture is similar. Kent and Medway has three of its thirteen local authority areas ranked in the lowest third nationally and five in the highest third. At ward level the spread ranges from the lowest one per cent to the highest one per cent. The contrast between West Kent, with serious skill and manpower shortages, and Thanet, with some of the highest unemployment in the South East, is particularly stark.

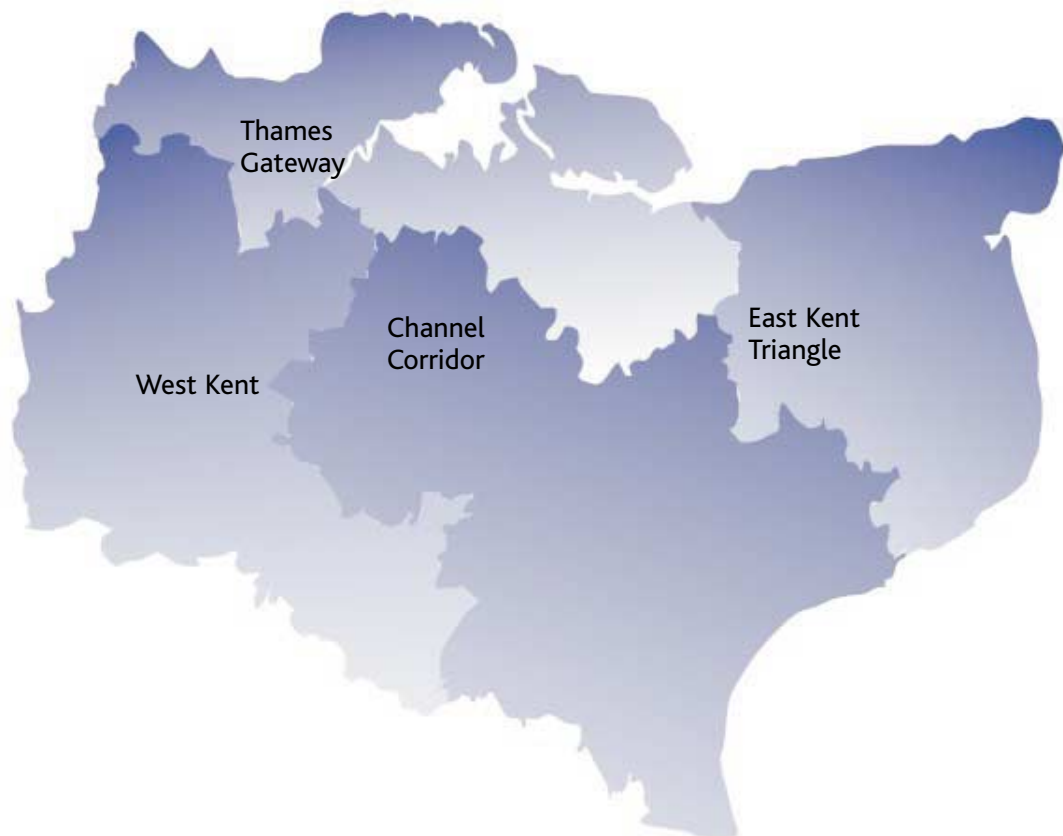
Some areas look to London, with a high proportion of the workforce commuting; other parts have experienced industrial decline on a level more usually associated with the Midlands and the North; and some employers increasingly see Europe as a major source of markets and investment.

The first draft of the Plan proposed adopting an area-based approach to our work. Consultation revealed very strong recognition of the coherence of these areas for planning purposes and our Council has agreed to develop this approach. While significant variations exist within the four areas proposed (and conversely, there are strong cross-area interdependencies), they have sufficient commonality of interest, are of the right size, and fit well with the plans of other bodies, to enable us to respond effectively to local needs.

The area focus will therefore inform our internal organisation - with teams, senior managers and Council members working to an area matrix as well as on cross-cutting issues. The Learning and Skills Assessment will therefore continue to drill down to the four sub-areas of Kent and Medway. Where appropriate, local strategies will be based upon meeting the needs of the four areas, which align with those used by a number of our major partners. These areas are:

- > Thames Gateway²: Medway Local Authority and the three districts of Dartford, Gravesham and Swale;
- > West Kent: the three districts of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells;
- > Channel Corridor: the three districts of Maidstone, Ashford and Shepway; and
- > East Kent Triangle: the three districts of Canterbury, Dover and Thanet.

Area map



²Our use of the term is not intended to cover the much larger Government Thames Gateway planning area, but rather that part of it which falls within the Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway area.

Equality of opportunity

We will, of course, work to ensure that in developing and delivering our plan, we avoid disadvantaging individuals in terms of their gender, ethnic origin, disability or age. However, we want to go beyond this by actively promoting equality. We will seek parity of participation and achievement on all programmes. Consultation on our Equal Opportunities Strategy began in February 2002.

Our proposed local vision for equality is that:

- Kent and Medway is a fully inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to reach and contribute to their full potential; a county recognised nationally as a learning environment in which diversity is encouraged and valued.

To achieve this, we must ensure there is a meaningful partnership between ourselves, learners, local communities, employers, trainers and educators based on respect and equality.

To advance Kent and Medway towards that vision, our Equal Opportunities Strategy proposes three priorities:

- develop the Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway as an organisation recognised as a leading local LSC for achieving equality of opportunity for learners and our staff;
- help all individuals in Kent and Medway access education and training, overcoming disadvantage in learning wherever they meet it; and
- help Kent and Medway businesses to adopt policies which enable them to recognise and draw on the talents of a diverse workforce.

Our primary aims and the performance indicators (PI) to underpin these are:

- 1 To develop LSCKM as an equal opportunities organisation.
 - PI 1 Minority groups are proportionally represented in staff profiles and an effective framework is in place that enables them to contribute to the full, including a system to resolve any complaints of harassment or discrimination.
- 2 To mainstream equal opportunities through all policies, programmes and actions.
 - PI 2 Equality of opportunity is built into strategic planning processes and can be identified within all programmes and projects. Views of minority and disadvantaged groups are taken into account when formulating policy.
- 3 To develop LSCKM as an equality champion.
 - PI 3 LSCKM is acknowledged for the quality of its programmes for learners and staff. Learners, employers, providers, community and voluntary organisations are aware of our equality objectives.
- 4 To monitor and report progress towards equality.
 - PI 4 Information on progress towards our equality objectives is readily available. Information on disadvantaged people within the county is collated and the results used to inform policy.

- 5 To increase the access, participation, retention and success rates of ethnic minority, disabled and other disadvantaged learners on LSCKM funded programmes.

PI 5 Ethnic minority, disabled and disadvantaged learners are proportionally represented in learner profiles and in the number successfully completing programmes.

In addition, the Strategy sets out detailed plans to combat exclusion, improve access for disadvantaged groups and raise the capacity of our education and training suppliers to provide and promote equality.

The Strategy also details the steps that we will take to ensure that the LSCKM is an exemplar equality organisation. This involves working closely with advisory, community and voluntary organisations to develop and implement the Strategy. The key to success will be our over-riding mission to widen participation and raise achievement, especially by people who traditionally do not become involved in post-16 education and training. Thus, equality of opportunity will be central to achieving our Strategic Plan, not an afterthought, and become a key driver of our local priorities. In addition, all our activities will be reviewed regularly to ensure they maximise their contribution to equality of opportunity. To underline its importance, three of our council members have taken on personal responsibility to champion equal opportunities.

> 3. The demand for learning

Our starting point

The demand for learning and skills is not highly developed or articulated in Kent and Medway. Two principal groups make up this demand:

- > employers seeking to update and equip their workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge to retain or extend their competitive advantage; and
- > individuals seeking to increase and develop their
 - immediate employability;
 - overall educational level to enhance their lifetime employability; or
 - simply to enrich their lives.

The implication for our learning strategy is that it must find ways of communicating effectively with both these groups on what learning they want and the method by which they want to undertake it. Consultation has helped to develop the articulation of demand, but this needs to continue, and more events are planned during 2002. An important bonus arising from consultation was the wealth of ideas and proposals that would help us to deliver our strategy, and which will be brought to bear in our future action planning and area focus.

The need to achieve a much closer alignment between individuals' demand for learning and employers' demand for skills also came across strongly, and was reinforced by additional consultation targeted specifically at employers.

A key issue that emerged from consultation with employers was the low level of employability of those entering the workforce for the first time, particularly from schools or higher education. In respect of school leavers, employers were concerned about the poor level of basic and key skills they encountered. They expected eleven or more years of education to have produced a higher standard. For graduates, deficiencies in key skills were perceived to be common. These concerns have helped confirm that we have correctly identified the key issues in the learning and skills assessment, and that these will inform future activity.

Broadening the 14-19 curriculum to include an enhanced vocational content may offer one way into improving employability. Indeed, the recently published Government 14-19 Green Paper proposes broadening the vocational offer and improving flexibility of delivery, seeing 14-19 education and training as a single phase. Locally the LSCKM welcomes Kent and Medway Local Education Authorities (LEAs') initiatives to broaden the curricular offer available to all school pupils from age 14. We are already working to reinforce their actions through partnership working to deliver increased flexibility in vocational learning for 14-16 year olds. There are also implications for the Connexions Service over advice and guidance to young people in making their subject choices, and for the breadth of offer made by further and higher education institutions to individuals.

A local dimension is the selective system of secondary education that applies across most of Kent and Medway's schools. This has significant implications for the LSCKM's objectives of improving participation and achievement at 16-19. The scope for further major improvements to the proportion of Grammar school pupils attaining the Government's national learning targets is limited; nearly all these pupils will have attained Level 2 by 16, most will stay on into the sixth form to achieve Level 3 by age 19, and many will proceed to higher education. (That said, there is of course still scope among the selective schools for further improvements in individual subject scores and, as noted above, in the wider employability skills sought by businesses.) The main scope for growth against the national targets for participation and achievement – and in raising aspirations – lies with High school pupils. Post-16 about two-thirds will not stay on into a sixth form but instead enter full-time employment, transfer to an Further Education (FE) college, or enter part-time jobs in combination with part-time education and training.

It is vital to improve the preparation for this transition among such pupils from age 14 onwards, alongside good quality advice and guidance. It will be important to influence pupils who might otherwise become unemployed and not take up the opportunities available to them. As well as the broad and relevant curriculum offer discussed above, improved collaboration is necessary, for example, between schools and employers, and greater sharing with schools of the vocational expertise of FE colleges and work-based training providers. Again, this will need to steer local actions designed to deliver our Strategic Plan.

The economic context

The Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Assessment describes the context more fully. The following is a summary of the top level issues.

Although in recent years Kent and Medway's economic performance has been relatively good in historical and national terms, it still lags significantly behind the rest of the South East. The major sources of employment are the distribution, hotel/restaurant and public administration sectors. Banking and finance, and manufacturing are also important, but in the second rank, followed by transport and communication, and construction. Forecasts indicate continuing net growth in employment to 2010. Currently this growth is focused upon business services and, most rapidly, construction.

A significant issue for Kent and Medway is that the greatest growth in employment in the South East is forecast to be in high skill occupations (Levels 4 and 5), yet these are the Levels where Kent and Medway is especially weak. The outlook for manufacturing, and in particular agriculture and the rural economy, is pessimistic with further contraction expected.

Kent and Medway has 17.1% of the employed workforce in the South East. In contrast, it has 28.2% of the South East total registered unemployed - despite falls in recent years. A higher proportion of employment is at low skill levels with lower earnings - some £40 per week below the average. The Kent and Medway employment rate is about the same as for the South East, but at a more intermediate skill level. The unemployment rate in Kent and Medway exhibits the same local variation that characterises the Kent and Medway economy. For example, West Kent has full employment, with skills shortages threatening the competitiveness and future growth of local businesses, while Thanet has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, with limited opportunities for high-skilled, high-paid work.

The equality context

Our Equal Opportunities Strategy illustrates some of the disparities that apply across gender, race, age and disability. Examples are:

> Race

- ethnic minorities are 25% more likely to be unemployed within the county despite the fact that 52% of the ethnic minority population, compared with 39.5% of the white population, have qualifications at Level 3; and
- on advanced Modern Apprenticeships, ethnic minorities are severely under-represented, particularly in craft sectors.

> Gender

- the proportion of women in Kent and Medway who work is broadly in line with the national position. The disparity in earnings is likewise in step with the national picture, with women earning significantly less - over £100 per week. A major factor nationally and locally is that a much higher proportion of women work part-time. The most significant factor cited locally for this is a shortage of affordable childcare.
- men are less likely to take advantage of opportunities in adult education (constituting only 29%), although in many forms of workplace learning, it is women who are under-represented; and
- data from Advanced Modern Apprenticeships and further education show stereotyping in subject and occupation choice with males dominating engineering, construction and motor vehicle trades and females dominating business administration, childcare and hairdressing.

> Age

- older workers are less likely to receive on or off the job training; and
- nationally, people over the age of 50 represent 30% of people of working age but only 20% of the working population and under 10% of people in training.

> Disability

- people with disabilities are severely under-represented on Advanced Modern Apprenticeships – only 4% compared with an estimated disabled population of approximately 13%; and
- people who are not disabled are twice as likely to receive on and off the job training compared with those with a disability.

Raising skills

With this great variety across Kent and Medway, it is not straightforward to accurately quantify the demand for learning from employers or from the current and potential workforce. However, it is helpful to draw on the following framework used by Skills Insight³ to analyse the skills needs of employers:

- > vocational skills - occupational or technical skills needed to work and progress within an occupation or occupational group;

³Skills Insight is a not-for-profit body co-ordinating economic and skills research across the South East.

- > generic skills - transferable skills required across a large number of different occupations; and
- > personal attributes - the characteristics employers say they most often look for when recruiting or promoting staff.

The balance between these three needs will vary substantially from job to job, but research indicates that the factor with most impact on employability - the individual's ability to gain and maintain employment - is that of generic skills. For the person with good qualifications and vocational skills, it may make the difference between suitable and unsuitable employment, with implications for career progression and standards of living. For the person with low skill levels, it can make the difference between having a job or being unemployed.

The potential implications for people in or entering the Kent and Medway workforce, with lower levels of employability than elsewhere in the South East, are serious. On current trends, our rate of improvement in participation and achievement for post-16 education and training must accelerate significantly to catch up with the rest of the South East.

If not tackled, poor employability will constrain local people's ability to compete for jobs, reinforcing patterns of "haves and have-nots" regionally and locally. It is also clear from economic analysis that Kent and Medway will need leading edge skills in bio-sciences, ICT, advanced engineering, management and other disciplines to sustain and drive development. Our separate Learning and Skills Assessment gives more detail.

Implications for our learning strategy

Our analysis of the demand for learning, and hence our learning strategy, needs to be informed by an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the current situation and institutional arrangements.

In our favour nationally:

- > education is, with health, the Government's priority. Increased levels of funding are available to the LSC for post-16 learning, growing from £5.5 billion in 2001-02 to over £6.5 billion by 2003-04;
- > the LSCKM will be able to develop a coherent approach, particularly through funding, across the diverse routes by which people participate in post-16 learning; and
- > as a major national body, the LSCKM will have considerable influence in championing improvements to post-16 education and training performance.

Locally, our strengths include:

- > an outstanding location as the Gateway to Europe, with proximity to London and an attractive quality of life;
- > two Learning Partnerships and other well-developed alliances/fora with local authorities, businesses, community organisations/education, training providers, that will help us work effectively with a wide range of partners;
- > education and training provision that in some areas offers wide choice to learners, including some that ranks amongst the best in the country;
- > two of the most well-developed adult education services in the country, including the largest in England, with high levels of demand for their provision, complementing the adult work of our FE colleges;

- > a leading position nationally in terms of employers recognised as liP (although this still falls short of what is required to achieve the step change in training and skills we are seeking);
- > a well-developed research base which has allowed us to identify rapidly a number of key local issues; and
- > local higher education institutions keen to develop links and progression routes with LSC-funded providers and businesses.

Weaknesses include:

- > choice for learners in some areas which is too limited, restricting their opportunities to progress and discouraging participation;
- > quality that is variable and sometimes very poor, which affects participation and attainment;
- > far too many learners across the different types of provision fail to complete their programmes and achieve the qualifications they sought;
- > despite a few positive examples, collaboration between providers in the interests of learners has generally been poor;
- > inherited funding arrangements which, whilst undergoing welcome reform to improve transparency, consistency and flexibility, are not yet where we need them to be for new providers who offer innovative approaches; and
- > learning that is proving insufficiently attractive. While national comparisons tend to show Kent and Medway as average, those with the rest of the South East put us behind in several respects. Levels of post-16 participation are relatively low, with the consequence that our workforce⁴ is the least qualified and skilled in the South East, particularly at Levels 3 and 4. This has reinforced a cycle of non-participation and lower earnings.

Current participation in post-16 education and training in Kent and Medway underlines the scale of the challenge. The increasingly good foundation built by our schools is not being converted sufficiently into further progression and achievement to Level 3 and beyond. In 2000, by age 19 over three-quarters of young people in Kent and Medway were reaching Level 2, just below the South East average. But by then more than 11% of that age group in the South East had attained Level 3, compared with Kent and Medway.

In 2000, for adults there was a similar picture: in the South East 47% had achieved a Level 3 or higher qualification, compared with 42% in Kent and 37% in Medway. As many as one fifth of those aged between 16 and 65 in Kent and Medway may have low or weak basic skills.

⁴People aged 16 and over not in full-time education, who are in employment or who are unemployed and looking for work.

> 4. Our learning strategy

Strategic aim and partnership delivery

Raising our performance to national and regional levels, and then above them, cannot be achieved within the timeframe of this three-year Strategic Plan. That is not selling Kent and Medway short: it is recognising the reality of our starting point. For example, improvement at 16-19 depends in turn upon progress in school before age 16.

Our role is to fund education and training provision and seek improvement in its delivery. We depend upon schools, colleges, private training providers, adult education services, the University for Industry (Ufi) and others to help stimulate and respond to demand by delivering high quality education and training. Although we do not fund higher education (HE), we need to raise aspirations, build improved progression routes and help learners to reach the standards required to enter it. Partnerships with a wide range of providers and other stakeholders is therefore essential, and must be intrinsic to the LSCKM's way of working.

Recognising this, at the outset of its local consultation the LSCKM proposed that it should set itself an overarching aim. This was that, working with its partners, by 2010 young people and adults in Kent and Medway will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in England.

This aim is highly ambitious. It will require improvement not just in line with the change needed to achieve the national LSC's vision for England. It implies that education and training performance in Kent and Medway must become closely comparable with that of the rest of the South East. By most indicators, current Kent and Medway performance is not only some way behind the rest of the South East; in certain areas it is just at or even below average national performance.

To achieve this aim will require a step change in current levels of participation and achievement in learning by the people of Kent and Medway, and in the performance of our post-16 education and training providers. It will also demand a significant shift in the behaviour of Kent and Medway employers.

We consulted extensively across our four sub-areas with statutory authorities, schools, further and higher education institutions, employers, work based learning providers, and voluntary and community organisations. The outcome was a clear endorsement of our priorities and identification of core business actions to deliver these.

Making a Difference

We already fund the education and training of over 92,000 people each year, which will grow by at least a further 15,000 from April 2002, when the LSC assumes responsibility for funding post-16 education in schools. Much of this activity is set to continue. Over three-quarters of young people reaching statutory school leaving age in Kent and Medway choose to stay in some kind of full-time education (although an unacceptably high proportion fail to complete it and attain a good qualification).

If we are to deliver the required step change in participation and achievement in education and training, we need to develop a first class product. Quality improvement is central to this and will underpin all our work. High quality education and training will ensure that the offer to learners is attractive, fulfilling employer and individual needs, and encouraging greater participation and progression up to and beyond Level 3.

The new Common Inspection Framework will enable us to adopt a consistent approach to quality improvement across all types of provision. Equally, we will raise quality through close partnership working. For example, recognising the importance of schools to delivery of our 16-19 provision in Kent and Medway, we will continue to work closely with our Kent and Medway LEAs to drive up standards in schools. In addition, we will realise our potential to receive regular inspection material from existing sources, such as Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and LEA reporting, to commission extra activity on particular areas of focus and to support rigorous self-assessment, thus ensuring a flow of information to and from 16+ providers. We will support providers to prepare and implement quality development plans, using the Standards Fund and monitoring customer feedback through a quality strategy led by a director of quality.

The following priorities reflect our assessment of the impact our activities can make locally at key points in Kent and Medway's post-16 education and training processes. While they apply across Kent and Medway, we have identified those geographic areas where particular efforts will be required.

Local priorities

- (i) Our first local priority is to raise participation in all forms of post-16 education across Kent and Medway.

The argument for widening participation in all forms of post-16 education was debated and won before the LSC was created, and has support across the political spectrum. Now the LSC has to make it a reality, building upon progress to date. From April 2002 we have been responsible for all publicly funded post-16 education in Kent and Medway, other than higher education. We have over £170 million to spend each year on an enormously wide range of different types of learning. We want to demonstrate to the national LSC and to Government that this current level of investment is fully justified, is delivering results and warrants further increase.

That investment will not happen unless participation in education increases significantly and swiftly in Kent and Medway at all levels. Nor can we deliver progression to higher levels if people are not participating in the first place. This must include young people, adults and those from minority groups that have not traditionally participated in post-16 education and training. Participation should not be achieved at the expense of quality of provision or standards - indeed, high quality should be used as a selling point. Widening participation at all levels is the foundation for everything else that we want to achieve and is a strong predictor of continued and sustained commitment to learning.

Actions needing development during the timeframe of this plan, arising from consultation, include:

- > improving collaboration pre-16 – the Government's initiative to improve flexibility for this age group is a useful start;

- > focusing on the 14-16 age group to make clear to all young people their entitlement to guaranteed learning post-16;
- > delivering a major improvement in the provision of information and advice to young people and adults;
- > improving transition arrangements from school to all forms of post-16 learning. This should include a review of whether current work experience arrangements add sufficient value to the transition process;
- > strengthening links between providers in engaging adult learners and encouraging progression;
- > developing outreach provision which encourages participation from disadvantaged groups in deprived areas; and
- > providing more tasters that will encourage progression – the success of the Bite Size initiative demonstrated the appetite for this approach across Kent and Medway.

We expect the Connexions Service to make a major contribution to raising participation, once it goes live in Kent and Medway in September 2002. LSCKM is already working closely with Connexions in its development stages, both at board level and in joint working. This includes participating in its Management Information Group and sharing data to support Connexions' early interventions with those at risk of drop-out, or indeed as soon as possible with those who have already dropped-out. We expect to develop more focused actions now that the new Connexions chief executive is in post.

- (ii) Our second priority is to raise the basic literacy and numeracy skills of people over 16, particularly in the Thames Gateway and East Kent Triangle.

The first rung on the ladder to higher levels of education and training is to have basic literacy and numeracy skills. Our primary and secondary schools have made enormous strides to ensure that the vast majority of school leavers have basic numeracy and literacy. However, there still remains a significant minority, concentrated in high schools or outside the formal education system entirely, who are entering the workforce with poor, or no, basic skills. In order to achieve our challenging target of raising basic skill levels, we will need to build up new capacity to bring learning to the learners.

For adults, there is the long term legacy of the now nearly vanished parts of the Kent and Medway industrial economy, that required only low level skills. We estimate that some 200,000 adults experience difficulty with basic numeracy and/or literacy. At the level of our four areas, the concentration of those with poor basic skills is in the Thames Gateway and East Kent Triangle. This stands out as a key challenge where we should seek to make a difference at the local level, fundamental to improving employability, tackling social exclusion and strengthening equality of opportunity. Basic skills' deficiencies restrict opportunities for employment and participation in many forms of learning activity.

While the principal challenge lies with adults, we have framed our priority in terms of post-16 as we do not wish to overlook the small, but disadvantaged, group of school leavers lacking basic skills.

This Strategic Plan links in with our Adult Literacy and Numeracy Delivery Plan 2001-2004. The Literacy and Numeracy Delivery Plan identifies the following three main aims:

1. to increase basic skills access and attract more people to learning, especially to those in disadvantaged and/or remote areas of the county;
2. to promote and communicate basic skills learning opportunities to all those who might benefit from them in Kent and Medway; and
3. to build a training and education quality network by developing a partnership consortium for basic skills providers, deliverers and other interested parties.

The target for new leavers achieving a qualification in basic skills for Kent and Medway is 25,542 by 2004. A Basic Skills Consortium has been established to coordinate action to deliver these three main aims.

(iii) Our third priority is to raise the basic ICT skills of the workforce in Kent and Medway.

We take the view that, in the modern economy, acquiring basic literacy and numeracy is too narrow a view of basic skills. One of the revolutions in our schools during the last decade has been the wide-scale introduction of computers, and nearly all school leavers will have acquired adequate familiarity. Although basic ICT skills have almost become a pre-requisite for employability, one third of working age people in Kent and Medway have weak or no ICT skills and are more likely to be unemployed or on lower incomes.

It is also a key issue for employers. Businesses, small and large, that use computers tend to be more profitable, and a realisation of this has led to growing demands from employers for improved ICT skills in the workforce. Yet nearly half of all managers surveyed in Kent and Medway reported their ICT ability to be low or non-existent.

Finally, basic ICT skills allow people to take advantage of the increasing opportunities to learn flexibly and cost effectively on-line through their employers, the University for Industry, or other e-learning providers: a facility of considerable potential value in a large, geographically dispersed area such as ours.

Although computer usage is higher in the Thames Gateway than in our other areas, it remains below parts of the South East. Kent and Medway has a major labour market shortage of ICT skills. We need to build up the basic ICT capabilities of our workforce to assist local business competitiveness. We, therefore, see a general need for improvement across Kent and Medway, both for employed and unemployed.

Actions needing development during the timeframe of this plan, arising from consultation, include:

- > improving the supply of high quality teachers, materials and knowledge of good practice;
- > developing a better map of provision and progression routes, whilst identifying and closing the gaps; and

➤ involving small and medium-sized enterprises in basic ICT activities, not least to fill the gap left by the withdrawal of Individual Learning Accounts.

(iv) Our fourth local priority is to raise Level 3 achievement of young people, particularly in the Thames Gateway and East Kent Triangle.

Our fifth local priority is to raise Level 3 achievement of adults, particularly in the Thames Gateway and Channel Corridor.

In looking where the Kent and Medway LSC can make a difference to the later stages of education, we recognise the achievement of schools in taking half our young people through to Level 2 by age 16. Following on from that, one of the quiet educational revolutions in Kent and Medway has been the increase in staying-on rates to full-time education from under 50% to over 75% since 1988.

There is then further achievement at 16-19 that is taking some three-quarters of our young people to Level 2 by age 19, followed by the work of our colleges and other providers with adults. Level 2 is the stepping stone to Level 3 and beyond, and there remains scope for improving it further. However, the main contribution to Level 2 attainment is from schools prior to statutory leaving age, which is largely outside our remit, and we already have work in hand to raise further Level 2 outcomes at 16-19.

Where we believe we can make the biggest difference is at Level 3. This brings with it major gains for employers in productivity. For individuals it brings significant advantage for progression in employment and earnings, and opens the door to Higher Education which in turn brings further benefits. It also accounts for the largest share of LSC funds. From April 2002 our budget increased by about 50%, mostly in support of Level 3 delivery in schools, in addition to the resources already devoted to Level 3 in colleges, work-based learning and other providers. In Kent and Medway it is also where there is real scope for significant improvement.

Schools dominate 16-19 provision in Kent and Medway, unlike most parts of the country. School GCE A level performance is average by national standards, and below that of the rest of the South East. Although the average conceals considerable variation from school to school, and improvement is underway, it is not evident that the gap will be narrowed quickly enough. Indeed, a particular concern of Medway LEA is that the rate of improvement in average A level performance has been lagging for several years.

The delivery of non-school education and training at 16-19, mainly the province of FE colleges and work-based training providers, is keeping pace at Level 2. But again at Level 3 we fall behind, both for young people and adults. In the South East, over 11% more reach Level 3 than in Kent and Medway. The same pattern is replicated for adults generally in Kent and Medway. The combined effect of weak Level 3 achievement is a lower rate of progression to Level 4, and a lower proportion of adults with Higher Education qualifications.

At Level 3 there are marked variations between our four areas. By every indicator West Kent does well, not just locally but also compared with the best in the region and nationally. By most indicators, Thames Gateway has most to catch up and offers the best opportunity to make a difference. The distinction between our other two areas is less clear cut. At 16-19, the stronger challenge lies in the East Kent Triangle, particularly in Thanet. Although we recognise that there are significant pockets elsewhere across Kent and Medway, Thanet is where deprivation, unemployment and weak achievement is more intensely focused than in any other locality.

Indeed, the challenge to improve employability and aspiration in Thanet is amongst the greatest across the whole of the South East. However, for adults, where our current information about qualification levels is weakest, our initial assessment is that the principal challenge outside the Thames Gateway appears to lie in the Channel Corridor.

Actions we will deliver during the timeframe of this plan, arising from consultation, include:

> For 16-19

- improving retention at age 17 across all provision, through specific projects and concerted action to raise quality, including the appointment of a director of quality;
- increasing attainment at Level 2 through a targeted initiative to increase the supply of young people able to progress to Level 3;
- putting the LSC's weight behind the partnership approach. The Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway will be a partner with the Kent LEA for the kitemarking initiative that it has developed for schools, and will use the failure to gain kitemarking as a trigger for possible intervention. It will also investigate with Medway LEA what it can do to support its entitlement initiative for schools and its plans for a PSA target on progression to HE; and
- developing a better map of existing partnership arrangements across all forms of provision and with employers, and seeking to strengthen them in the interests of learners.

> And for adults

- bringing employers together, possibly by sector, to pool resources for training and reduce the fear of poaching staff in whom employers have invested;
- coordinating and promoting partnership provision to raise aspirations and facilitate progression beyond Level 3, including to Higher Education; and
- for both young people and adults, we will be working to strengthen the Modern Apprenticeship route and take forward the recommendations of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. This will include executing the joint Department for Education and Skills (DfES)/LSC implementation plan that is currently under development. Actions will also need to take account of what may emerge from the Government's consultation on its recent 14-19 Green Paper, including implications for the 14-16 phase, which needs to better prepare pupils for the Modern Apprenticeship route.

- (v) Our sixth priority is to increase the involvement of employers, unions and others in developing the skills required by the future workforce and raising the number of employers with liP recognition.

The LSC for Kent and Medway, the two local authorities, and learners themselves, make up four of the five largest investors in education and training in our area. The fifth - and the biggest spender on adults - is employers themselves. If we ignore their existing major contribution to improving skills and employability and fail to engage with them in workforce development, then we have no chance of achieving the step change that we want. That is why, in addition to the area focus events in 2001, we have consulted separately with local businesses and employers through a sector skills focus workshop.

We have identified a range of priorities within different business sectors, which support our Workforce Development Plan⁵. A challenge for us is that we will need to take account of varying demand for skills across our four sub-areas; for example, specific to West Kent is the issue of skills in demand from local businesses and a lack of appropriately trained staff to meet those demands. Core business actions here include:

- > in the hospitality sector, developing catering, sales, marketing, customer service and language skills;
- > in construction, meeting demand for more craft workers for planned house-building and infrastructure;
- > in health and social care, meeting rapidly growing demand for workers with care skills;
- > in life sciences, meeting demand for high level skills through improved links to our HE institutions as centres of excellence and innovation;
- > in high technology engineering, improving ICT networking, marketing and operational/strategic manufacturing skills;
- > in ICT supply, developing networking and marketing skills of ICT specialists; and
- > in transport and distribution, delivering skills in heavy goods vehicle (HGV), modern warehousing and internet logistics.

An underlying need across most business sectors is the need to develop management skills.

A particular challenge for us is to strengthen the interaction between demand and supply. In so doing, we will need to work closely with our FE colleges, our major suppliers of education and training to skill young people entering the job market, as well as upskilling for those already in work.

⁵Published in draft in June 2001 and currently under review in the light of consultation and the Council's local priorities.

We need to support our FE colleges in developing effective working relationships with employers and ensure that they are flexible, responsive and sharply focused on meeting their skills needs. Part of the answer will be to jointly build up capacity to deliver high quality training. Our providers will have a key part to play in shaping and encouraging participation in coherent progression routes (encompassing the full breadth of vocational and academic qualifications), taking learners through school and FE, into HE and ultimately into employment. The new Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) initiative will be key to meeting this objective. The centres will develop excellent provision to meet the skill needs of employers nationally, sectorally, regionally and locally, giving more individuals access to the high quality vocational training they will need to succeed in a modern economy. Our HE institutions will be pivotal in this, especially in providing progression routes for learners to the highest skill levels possible.

The investment by businesses in the training and development of their employees pays dividends. Systematic engagement in training and developing their workforce raises productivity and competitiveness. A consistent finding since the establishment of liP is that organisations achieving that standard show substantially higher rates of return on capital, pre-tax profits, turnover and profit per employee, at marginal cost in terms of increased pay. If we wish to have a more qualified and highly skilled workforce, then an increase in employers' investment in education and training is vital. This needs to be combined with a strengthened partnership with Trade Unions and in particular their learning representatives. We recognise that liP is one indicator of, and not a substitute for, employer investment and that we will need to have an additional and more inclusive measure. Nationally, work is underway to develop one. Until that is available liP will serve us as the strongest indicator of an employer's commitment to build the skills of its workforce and we have set local targets for liP recognition.

With the increasing emphasis on the value of vocational training we recognise that there are opportunities to improve connections along the skills supply chain. This starts with the course/career selection process in schools, through FE/HE provision and into employment. The FE role will be central to implementing change and extracting more added value from their employer contacts. We have already held exploratory meetings with SEEDA, colleges and relevant Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and will be fostering productive partnerships with the SSCs that also have a strong remit to engage with employers.

We will develop partnership working with Jobcentre Plus, Business Link and others in order to identify and act on skills shortages.

Underpinning these activities will be a strategy to engage with all employers. It will be delivered to individual business sectors, thus avoiding duplication and maximising effectiveness.

The objective is to ensure that:

- young people can make better informed career choices as a result of employers improving the articulation of their needs; and
- the FE colleges offer appropriate provision to improve the employability and potential productivity of these people as they enter the workforce for the first time.

Some respondents considered that the Council should also set a local priority for adult Level 2 work. The Council has considered this point carefully, and determined that it wished to keep the total number of local priorities at six, to keep its focus on key goals of particular relevance to Kent and Medway. This is not intended to underplay the importance of such work, not least in that it provides the foundation for further progression. In the Kent and Medway context, consultation confirmed very clearly our assessment of the need for higher level skills for adults, and that we should seek to raise aspirations to the highest level possible. We will deliver Level 2 targets, but as a part of an overriding strategy to meet Kent and Medway's need for increased Level 3 achievement.

Regional priorities

Six common areas have emerged from South East local LSC consultations on draft strategic plans and the development of SEEDA's regional plan. These will be taken forward as key regional priorities. We will work closely with other South East local LSCs and regional partners to progress them, ensuring a cohesive and synergetic approach to the planning and delivery of provision.

In taking forward these priorities, South East local LSCs are committed to ensuring that equality and diversity will underpin every aspect of our collective work, equally that e-learning will form a key component in developing solutions that are responsive to learner and employer needs:

- 1 Research and Development
 - > develop a coherent, partnership approach to research encompassing LSC sub-regional and regional partnerships exploiting both top-down and bottom-up approaches; and
 - > develop a consistent regional approach to definitions and measurements including common additional targets.
- 2 Marketing of learning and skills to individual learners and employers
 - > develop a regional marketing strategy, aimed at both learners and employers, that is agreed and shared by key regional partners including Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), Connexions and SEEDA; and
 - > set-up a regional group of key partners to develop the strategy, agree roles and take forward the implementation.
- 3 Basic Skills
 - > develop a regional strategy for the delivery of basic skills, working closely with key regional partners; and
 - > capture and apply local area best practice across the region.
- 4 Retention and achievement of young people
 - > develop an entitlement for all young people aged 14-19 in the South East.

5 Adult development for the workforce

- > develop joint regional approaches to workforce development exploiting the added value that partnership working will bring; and
- > take forward a South East Workforce Development Project that will identify the key trigger points for engaging with employers.

6 Provider capacity

- > develop provider excellence through working closely with regional partners in the development of specialist provision, including CoVEs, specialist schools and new technology institutes; and
- > raise provider quality through coordinated regional action and sharing of best practice.

> 5. Delivering the learning strategy

Our proposals for action contain three interlocking elements:

- > understanding the demand for learning - how we will deepen this in respect of both learners and employers, to ensure that our work is accurately targeted to address changing needs;
- > stimulating the demand for learning - how we will bring more people into learning and support their progression; and
- > meeting the demand for learning - how we will support the development of education and training which meets both employers' and learners' needs, whether employed or outside the workforce; how we will make clear what we expect from our providers, including what needs to be done to tackle the weaknesses we have identified.

Understanding the demand for learning

To this end we will invest significantly in research and analysis, reflecting both national and local priorities, and avoiding duplication of what is planned or underway within the LSC nationally or our partner organisations. We need to assemble a comprehensive set of data on the characteristics of our client groups and their learning and skills needs, to inform the delivery and further development of our strategy, baselines and targets for the next three years.

Our initial local research and customer communication priorities are summarised as follows:

Young people

- > provide a comprehensive picture of the characteristics of and Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) on young people (learners and non-learners);
- > provide a comprehensive picture of participation and achievement by young people;
- > map education and training provision for young people, identifying new skills priorities and developments in provision;
- > over time, analyse the skills needs of young people and employers of young people; and
- > encourage and analyse direct feedback and complaints from learners themselves and their representative organisations, and use it to help identify weaknesses and support improvement.

Adults

- > provide a comprehensive picture of the characteristics and LMI information on adults (learners and non-learners);
- > provide a comprehensive picture of the participation in learning and achievement by adults;
- > map education and training provision for adults, identifying new skills priorities by employers and developments in provision;
- > over time, analyse the skills needs of employed and unemployed adults;
- > report on the characteristics of non-learners; and
- > encourage and analyse direct feedback and complaints from learners themselves and their representative organisations, and use it to help identify weaknesses and support improvement.

Workforce

- > provide a comprehensive picture on the dynamics of the workforce in Kent and Medway based on LMI (including flows into and out of employment, migration to and from Kent and Medway, looking at age, skills, sectors, etc.);
- > identify priority sectors and their workforce requirements within Kent and Medway;
- > provide sector specific information on growth, future skills requirements, and training needs; and
- > exploit fora for direct communication with employers so that we understand better employers' learning and skills needs, and can feedback information and signpost services.

Quality and supply of provision

- > evaluate the impact of the LSC's special projects and activities;
- > analyse and review the outcomes of OFSTED/Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) reports;
- > analyse the quality, range and level of provision in relation to our Workforce Development Plan; and
- > conduct Learner Surveys and other evaluations of our main programme activities.

Knowledge management

- > establish a comprehensive knowledge of national and local sources of data and evaluation research relevant to our work;
- > develop our profiles of Kent and Medway's four economic areas;
- > run workshops to identify internal and external research needs;
- > work with the South East LSCs, SEEDA and other regional organisations through Skills Insight, to establish best practice research protocols to enable sharing and aggregation;
- > capitalise on new technology and our membership of Skills Insight in establishing research partnerships for sharing knowledge, widening dissemination, preventing duplication and running collaborative projects;
- > investigate new methods of collecting, presenting and promoting research/analysis that improve clarity, understanding, dissemination and retrieval; and
- > support the publication of the annual statement of learning and skills needs and priorities for developing local provision, through various research including the annual production of the Learning and Skills Assessment.

Consultation provided a wide range of new contacts and sources of information which we are following up, and which we are seeking to integrate into our research programme.

Stimulating the demand for learning

Individuals

If we are to meet our targets of more people learning and continuing to learn, we must take measures to incentivise and support new, current and returning learners at every stage of their learning career. The needs of the learner should be the driver, although we aim to do much more to help learners become better informed about employer skills needs and career opportunities than at present. Sub-area level milestones for achieving our targets are being developed as part of our Business Plan for 2002-03.

- > our key to achieving this will be to work through Connexions, Adult Guidance Services, direct and joint advertising and outreach to make sure that individuals have the best possible chance to find learning most suited to their personal aims. Our Learning Partnerships, in their capacity as 'the voice of the learner', will be a vital source of information about learner needs. Our research, together with feedback from learners, will be available to future learners so that they have a clear picture of the pros and cons of alternative learning routes. We will work with partner organisations and strategic partnerships to align our plans with others, promoting learning and skills, and reflecting local priorities;
- > we need to break down barriers to continuation at 16-19, linking schools, colleges and work-based learning providers through new collaborative initiatives, and supporting existing initiatives;
- > we will develop ways of supporting adult learners in their attempts to access learning;
- > we will take action to bring more people into learning, especially from groups that are currently under-represented. We will improve participation by age, gender, disability⁶, ethnicity, and geographical area. We will develop closer liaison with Kent and Medway organisations that work with asylum seekers and refugees;
- > the Trade Unions are playing an increasingly active and positive role in developing the skills of the workforce through the use of learning representatives and Learndirect. We will strengthen our links with the South East Trades Union Congress (TUC) and relevant local unions to promote wider participation in learning, particularly to help increase the level of basic and ICT skills among employees;
- > in local areas we will work with local authorities to prioritise learning and skills within local regeneration policies and reflect local priorities in our plans;
- > we will develop ways of recognising and rewarding learners and demonstrating the power of learning in helping people and organisations to achieve their ambitions. We want continuing lifelong learning amongst the whole population, with continuing progression to higher levels of achievement; and
- > we should equip many more people to progress to higher education and raise awareness that this is not the preserve of the few. We also need to encourage investment in learning by employers to higher levels, likewise raising awareness of the real benefits that this brings to business.

Employers

We need to develop and enhance measures which secure employers' and employees' commitment to action on skills and learning. We want more employers to train their staff, and for training to be more frequent. This brings benefits for their businesses and investors, their people and the economy.

- > only a systematic engagement with employers will identify and meet skill gaps and produce the step change in learning that Kent and Medway requires. We have to understand employers, provide quality advice and support and be easy to work with. We want to build long-term relationships with local employers to help them understand fully their needs for employable people;

⁶A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect upon a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (Disability Discrimination Act 1995).

- > through research and dialogue we will segment, map and understand employers' needs, recognising the distinctiveness of the public and private sectors. Working with them we will plan and deliver effective action to meet skills needs and develop Kent and Medway's workforce, both within individual organisations and in the area as a whole;
- > we must not forget the voice of employees themselves. As already noted, developing a relationship with Trade Unions and their workplace representatives will also be important, particularly to tackle basic skills;
- > although we will engage with employers primarily through our four areas, we will as necessary also work in priority sectors including high tech engineering, ICT, life sciences, healthcare, construction, transport and hospitality, as well as cross-sector working to define and deliver generic and basic skills;
- > we will be establishing direct links with Kent and Medway's larger employers, including inward investors, working in partnership with Kent and Medway local authorities and Locate in Kent. We aim to work closely with them to maximise their impact on learning through their purchasing power and encouragement to their workforces;
- > we will make indirect links with smaller employers through the Small Business Service and its sector groups, trade groups, Sector Skills Councils and other representative organisations; and
- > we will seek to extend employer engagement in the organisations that we fund, for example, the Kent and Medway Business Alliance, by seeking the inclusion of appropriate targets in their business plans.

Providers have to be responsive to employer needs and employers themselves have to improve the ways they articulate their needs. We intend to bring providers, employers and employees together in a constructive dialogue. But we must be more than a talking shop: we need to develop measures that will secure employers' and employees' commitment to action on skills and learning and we will work with them to meet those needs. For example, and of particular relevance to small and medium-sized employers seeking liP status, we will champion the use of Laurel Online⁷. This will enable them to achieve recognition more quickly than by using traditional routes, with greater flexibility.

Meeting the demand for learning

Our ambition is for Kent and Medway to be known nationally as having excellent post 16 provision. Our strategy depends on our having close long-term relationships with providers and partners, encouraging collaborative approaches to remove obstacles to participation and achievement for learners. We will work with them to tackle current and future weaknesses, whether identified by Inspection or from our own review processes. This will include ensuring that there is equal access to high quality education and training across our area, with high completion and achievement rates. Bringing 'learning to the learners' will be especially important for individuals living in rural areas, who might otherwise be disadvantaged by, for example, transportation difficulties. Our overriding challenge to all providers is to improve quality and collaboration in the interests of learners.

⁷Laurel Online is an interactive internet-based tool that allows organisations to work to the liP standard at their own pace. It also includes an online diagnostic process to enable organisations to assess how far they are away from the standard.

In order to achieve this we will develop a team of account managers who will function as the main link between providers and the Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway. Account managers will offer advice and support to providers in order to spread good practice and ensure continuous improvement. In addition they will obtain regular feedback from learners and employers.

In assisting providers and account managers in addressing quality issues and spreading good practice, we will develop and publish detailed information on key performance and quality indicators within Kent and Medway, including comparisons of retention and achievement by sector.

We will work with providers to ensure that effective use is made of Standards Funds to enhance quality improvements and spread good practice between providers.

We also need to develop new sources of funding to support our ambitions and plan to make full use of opportunities offered by non-LSC funding sources. An early opportunity to increase the scale and impact of LSC funding in areas of activity which will contribute to most of our priorities is offered by the European Social Fund (ESF).

The LSC has been accepted as a Co-Financing organisation which means that it can plan strategically to bid for funds under ESF Objective 3⁸ using LSC budgets as match funding, thereby enabling us to sub-contract with providers and remove much of their administrative burden in applying for European funds.

We are aware of the need to ensure that smaller organisations and those not in receipt of ongoing LSC funds are not disadvantaged by the introduction of Co-Financing. We aim to build our links with small and voluntary sector organisations that are active in the field of learning. With the help of the Medway and Kent Learning Partnerships, we will encourage them to enter into productive partnerships and outreach arrangements with our core learning providers. To assist this, we will be developing and supporting a programme of 'capacity building'. This will enable small and voluntary organisations who are in touch with learners and non-learners to participate more fully and effectively in opportunities for funding. We issued a joint ESF and Local Initiative Funding prospectus in Spring 2002 that invites bids to help support the delivery of our strategy.

That said, we could not achieve our objectives without the full support and co-operation of the larger providers we fund. Further education and work-based learning (WBL) providers will be invited to indicate in their strategic plans the ways in which they will be supporting the objectives set out in this Strategic Plan. We will also be examining the improvement strategies adopted by schools and Kent and Medway LEAs relevant to our objectives.

Some key issues that need to be addressed by each education/training sector are set out below. Where relevant, these are informed by our Equal Opportunities Strategy, and this aspect of our Plan will be reviewed in the light of actions from consultation on it.

⁸Objective 3 covers five priority areas ranging from active labour market policies and equal opportunities to lifelong learning, adaptability and entrepreneurship.

Further education colleges

- > raising participation by young people aged 16-18 years;
- > increasing the demand for learning by adults, especially amongst those who have not previously been engaged in learning;
- > increasing retention and achievement levels;
- > encouraging progression from Level 2 to Level 3, and then to Level 4;
- > increasing in particular the achievement of qualifications at Level 3 and above;
- > increasing the proportion of young people and adults with ICT skills;
- > improving external inspection grades;
- > obtaining and acting on structured feedback from learners and employers;
- > identifying young people and adults with poor basic skills and increasing the proportion who have acquired basic skills;
- > responding to employer needs in the local area with regard to the type of education and training, mode and flexibility of delivery; and
- > developing specialisms towards the standards required for CoVEs.

Local education authorities' adult and community learning

- > increasing the demand for learning by adults, especially amongst males and those who have not previously been engaged in learning;
- > increasing progression rates to higher levels of further education and training, particularly from Level 2 to Level 3;
- > increasing retention and achievement levels;
- > increasing the proportion of adults with ICT skills;
- > preparing for external inspection and gaining good grades;
- > obtaining and acting on structured feedback from learners and employers;
- > identifying adults with poor basic skills and increasing the proportion who acquire these skills; and
- > responding to community and employer needs in the local area with regard to the type of education and training, mode and flexibility of delivery.

Work-based learning providers

- > raising participation by young people aged 16-19 years;
- > increasing retention and achievement levels;
- > increasing the achievement of qualifications at National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Levels 2, 3 and above;
- > increasing the proportion of young people and adults with ICT skills;
- > improving external inspection grades;
- > obtaining and acting on structured feedback from learners and employers;
- > identifying young people with poor basic skills and increasing the proportion who have acquired basic skills;
- > responding to employer needs in the local area with regard to the type of education and training, mode and flexibility of delivery; and
- > increasing the proportion of young people with disabilities and from ethnic minorities participating in learning.

Schools

- raising participation by young people aged 16-19 years;
- increasing retention and achievement levels;
- encouraging progression from Level 2 to Level 3;
- increasing the achievement of qualifications at Level 3 by young people aged 16-19;
- increasing the proportion of young people with ICT skills;
- improving external inspection grades;
- obtaining and acting on structured feedback from learners and employers; and
- identifying young people with poor basic skills and increasing the proportion who acquire these skills.

Voluntary and community groups

- increasing the demand for learning by adults, especially amongst those not previously engaged in learning;
- increasing participation in learning;
- increasing progression rates to other forms of further education and training;
- identifying young people and adults with poor basic skills and increasing the proportion who acquire them; and
- responding to local community needs to access learning flexibly.

Health and safety for learners

There is a need to ensure that provider systems comply with contractual requirements. The LSCKM will ensure this is the case by requiring the provider to complete a self-assessment based on seven key standards:

- health and safety management;
- safety policy and risk assessment;
- premises and equipment;
- staff competencies;
- learner training;
- accident investigation and reporting; and
- vetting and monitoring.

Health and safety advisers will agree with providers a development plan that addresses weaknesses and identifies strengths. Based on each individual plan, providers will be risk-banded according to national criteria and a schedule drawn up to ensure that the required rigor of monitoring is implemented.

We will monitor this using a two-stage process:

- health and safety managers/advisers will be the main catalyst and source for conducting self-assessment reviews and formal reviews of subsequent development plans. They will also monitor a percentage of learners in situ at workplace locations. They will also be able to signpost providers to the most appropriate information source. They will ensure that providers 'buy into' the process of internal audit/review based on HSG65 and promote the concept of the 'safe worker'; and

- as part of their role as front line contacts for providers of training, our account managers will act as 'eyes and ears' for health and safety advisers, alerting them to any concerns noted in their visits.

Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD)

We are being proactive in building relationships with support and guidance organisations such as the Careers Service, Social Services and local education authorities when processing applications for LLDD funding. A recent development has been the production of a practical guide for those organisations making an application for funding to aid the speed of funding decisions.

Now proving successful is our insistence that Social Services attend all of the LLDD placement meetings. To ensure that Social Services are aware of the procedures we are now giving presentations at their area offices and again this has proved very useful for frontline staff.

Our key activities in this area include:

- we request and read end of term reviews from specialist colleges to verify that progress is being made by the learner against their agreed learning objectives. We also track where learners go on completion of their programmes;
- our LLDD placement officer sits on the local Connexions special needs sub-group for developing and recommending protocols between agencies working with LLDD;
- we continue to hold placement meetings with Social Services and the Careers Service which represents clients' needs and interests; and
- we represent LSCKM at the South East LLDD Network Meeting to ensure consistency of approach and to contribute to the National Review of specialist colleges. Other actions have included contributing to Kent education authority's review of provision for LLDD students.

E-learning

We are aware that we must do more than respond to current demand in traditional ways. We will need to develop much better intelligence to anticipate the future requirements of individuals and employers, and plan ahead accordingly. We will build strong links with those at the leading edge of new developments to help us look ahead.

If we are to develop leading edge skills that drive economic growth, established methods of learning are unlikely to prove adequate for the task. We need to develop new approaches to learning, to enhance the range of flexibility of our offer and better meet the needs of individuals and employers. E-learning (or online learning) is expected to become significant over the next few years. The aim of the e-learning approach is to enable access to learning anytime, anywhere and at any pace. E-learning is delivered via the internet and on media, such as CD-ROM and DVD-ROM. In the next few years it is likely to be available on interactive digital television and 3rd generation mobile phones.

Within Kent and Medway it is recognised that e-learning is an approach which can help us to increase participation in learning by adults and business. To do this we will assess the current situation and develop an e-learning strategy that will enable the best utilisation of resources in the following areas:

- developing the infrastructure, such as access to networks and hardware;

- > developing content to produce e-learning materials which address the learning needs of Kent and Medway; and
- > developing the capability of people to be both users and facilitators of e-learning.

Work underway to enable this includes:

- > a steering group to champion e-learning and identify appropriate strategic projects;
- > acting as a full funding partner of the HE-based Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) which supports Joint Academic Network (JANET) and the Kentish Metropolitan Area Network (MAN);
- > setting up and funding a Kent and Medway Information and Learning Technology (ILT) Partnership Group to share best practice from HE, FE, schools, trainers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
- > working with local schools to develop an e-learning foundation to enhance access to technology-based learning for young people (one of six projects supported by the national e-learning Foundation);
- > funding local Learndirect provision (the major national initiative to enable individuals and businesses to participate in e-learning); and
- > supporting the increased availability of computers within FE through the ILT national LSC funding.

> Description of terms (A-Z)

AVCE

See GNVQ.

Basic skills

The Basic Skills Agency (the government national agency for basic skills in England and Wales) defines basic skills as:

"the ability to read, write, and speak in English (or Welsh), and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general ".

These abilities are largely understood in terms of literacy and numeracy skills.

Basic skills improvement is one of the government's top priorities, which it aims to achieve through a number of programmes, including:

- > quality marks (providing frameworks for improvement in schools and post-16 programmes);
- > family programmes;
- > partnership programmes (working with national voluntary organisations);
- > community-based learning for adults;
- > workplace programmes;
- > lifelong learning partnerships;
- > ICT (working with the University for Industry);
- > Bite Size courses;
- > work with the Employment Service;
- > work with the Prison Service; and
- > work with other European countries.

Curriculum 2000

Introduced in September 2000, Curriculum 2000 (C2K) is a major educational reform that followed the recommendations included in the 1996 Dearing report Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds (1996) and the subsequent consultation Qualifying for Success. The key requirements of Qualifying for Success were to make post-16 study broader and more flexible and to encourage young people to study more subjects. The key reforms were:

- > restructuring of the GCE A Levels into the new GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level and revised GCE Advanced (A) level qualifications. The AS qualification is usually studied in the first year of post-16 study. The GCE A level can then be gained through the achievement of further A2 level study, usually undertaken in the second year;
- > revision of the GNVQ at foundation and intermediate levels, including a revised unit structure and the uncoupling of key skills. See also GNVQ and Key Skills;
- > replacing the GNVQ at Advanced level with a new Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) consisting of six units (single award) or twelve (double award);

- > revising the specification and assessment requirements of key skills. Key skills are no longer a compulsory requirement of GNVQs. Nonetheless, they are taken by students studying for a range of qualifications, including AS, GNVQ, Advanced VCE, GCSEs, BTEC qualifications and NVQs. See also Key Skills; and
- > the development of vocational GCSEs, to be introduced into the qualifications framework in the future.

Since its launch, C2K has attracted some criticism and concern. The Secretary of State responded to these by commissioning the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to conduct investigations; it did this in two phases, publishing its findings in June and December 2001. Whilst some changes to points of detail are proposed, the fundamental elements remain the same.

GNVQ

General National Vocational Qualification. This is a vocationally-related qualification, more applied than the NVQ, and includes vocational A levels. GNVQs were designed to be taught in schools and colleges to provide a broad education in terms of applying knowledge and understanding to the world of work; recent reforms to the national qualifications framework aim to ensure that GNVQs also underpin the strictly vocational NVQ qualifications

GNVQs may be taken at foundation or intermediate level. The Foundation GNVQ is the most basic level and equivalent to a national Level 1 qualification); the Intermediate GNVQ is equivalent to a national level 2 qualification).

Advanced GNVQs were renamed Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCEs) and launched as Vocational A levels in September 2000. They are equivalent to a national Level 3 qualification. Students may take a single award (six units, equivalent to one GCE A level) or a double award (12 units, equivalent to two GCE A levels). Some subjects are also available as three-unit awards (equivalent in size to a GCE AS qualification).

See also Qualification Levels.

ICT

Information and Communications Technology. Basic computer and keyboard skills are now essential to a great proportion of low skill jobs, and as such are considered to be one of the 'basic skills', alongside those of numeracy and literacy. Equally, ICT is recognised as one way to encourage and enable people to improve their numeracy and literacy skills.

See also Basic Skills.

liP

Investors in People. This is the national standard that sets a level of good practice for training and development of people to achieve business goals. The standard was developed during 1990 by the National Training Task Force, in partnership with leading national business, personnel, professional and employee organisations.

The standard provides a national framework for improving business performance and competitiveness, through a planned approach to setting and communicating business objectives and developing people to meet these objectives. The result is that what people can do, and are motivated to do, matches what the organisation needs them to do.

The Investors in People standard is based on four key principles:

- > commitment to invest in people to achieve business goals;
- > how skills, individuals and teams are to be developed to achieve these goals;
- > action to develop and use necessary skills in a well-defined and continuing programme directly tied to business objectives; and
- > evaluating outcomes of training and development for individuals' progress towards goals, the value achieved and future needs.

These four key principles are embodied in a cyclical process, broken down into twelve indicators, against which organisations wishing to be recognised as an 'Investor in People' are assessed.

Being recognised as an 'Investor in People' involves a number of steps:

- 1 Understanding the standard and its strategic implications for the organisation;
- 2 Undertaking a review against the standard to identify any gaps in current practice;
- 3 Making the commitment to meet the standard and communicating that commitment to all members of staff;
- 4 Planning and taking action, to bring about change;
- 5 Bringing together the evidence for assessment against the standard;
- 6 Achievement or recognition as an 'Investor in People'; and
- 7 Working to keep the culture of continuous improvement alive.

Key skills

Key skills (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) are described as those generic skills that individuals need in order to be effective members of a flexible, adaptable and competitive workforce and for lifelong learning. (In Scotland these are known as 'core skills'.) There are six key skills:

- > communication;
- > application of number;
- > information technology;
- > working with others;
- > improving own learning and performance; and
- > problem solving.

Each key skill is described in a unit to make it clear what the learner needs to know to be able to meet the standard required. The key skills units can be used to gain a separate qualification, as part of other qualifications and/or to help the learner to record his or her skills in a progress file. There are five levels of key skills. At levels 1-4, there is a unit in each of the six key skills. At level 5, there is a single unit called Personal skills development that requires the application of skills in communication, working with others and problem solving in order to improve learning and performance in ways that are key to managing at professional level.

The key skills qualification comprises the first three key skills units (communication, application of number and information technology). Certificates are awarded for each key skill achieved, showing the level reached. For the full key skills qualification, the learner receives a certificate which shows the level achieved for each of the three key skills covered.

National qualifications levels

The national framework for qualifications covers achievement in the main qualification pathways at several 'national' levels:

- > Entry level;
- > Level 1 (Foundation Level);
- > Level 2 (Intermediate Level);
- > Level 3 (Advanced Level);
- > Level 4 (Higher Level); and
- > Level 5 (Higher Level – above first degree).

The summary table below aligns different pathways with the national qualification levels.

National level of qualification	General		Vocationally related (applied)	Occupational (purely vocational)
5	Higher Level Qualifications (those qualifications at or above NVQ Level 4 or HE equivalent, including HNDs, first degrees and postgraduate)			Level 5 NVQ
4				Level 4 NVQ
3 Advanced Level	A Level	Free-standing mathematics units Level 3	Vocational A Level (AVCE)	Level 3 NVQ
2 Intermediate Level	GCSE Grade A* - C	Free-standing mathematics units Level 2	Intermediate GNVQ	Level 2 NVQ
1 Foundation Level	GCSE Grade D – G	Free-standing mathematics units Level 1	Foundation GNVQ	Level 1 NVQ
Entry Level	Certificate of (educational) achievement			

See also Curriculum 2000, NVQ and GNVQ.

NVQ

National Vocational Qualification. This is a vocational or occupational qualification, which means it provides the skills needed to do an occupation, trade or profession. NVQs are designed to be taken alongside work-based learning and are largely achieved through apprenticeships, training schemes and employment.

There are five NVQ levels, ranging from Level 1 NVQ (the most basic level, equivalent to a national level 1 qualification) through to Level 5 NVQ (the highest level, equating to a national level 5 qualification). See also National Qualification Levels.

> Profiles of council members (A-Z by surname)

There is currently a full complement of council members. Allan Chisholm is Chair and Simon Norton is Executive Director.

Judith Armitt

Judith has been in post as Chief Executive of Medway Council since September 1997. Previously, she worked for the London Borough of Lewisham and the Greater London Council.

Medway has a workforce of approximately 7,000 and a budget of over £320 million per year. The Council is working towards achieving urban renaissance of the city centre, where there are a number of waterfront regeneration schemes, as well as improving the local rural economy. Medway is recognised as a beacon council for its work on community safety.

Malcolm Bell

Malcolm has worked in FE for nearly 30 years and has been Principal of North West Kent College since 1995. He has been Chief Examiner for A level accounting for 10 years and is co-author of a text book "Techniques in Accounting".

Barry Camfield

Barry Camfield is currently a member of the South East England Development Agency, and represents SEEDA on the Kent & Medway LSC. He is a member of SEEDA's Learning and Workforce Board Committee, and Chairman of its Workforce Development Group.

Barry was a Works Convenor in manufacturing and T&G Branch Chairman before commencing employment as a full time Trade Union Official with the Transport and General Workers' Union in 1975.

Between 1975 and 1999, Barry held a number of posts within the South East and East Anglia Region of the T&G. These included spells as Negotiating Officer in East London, as Regional Education Officer, as Regional Organiser and then finally as the region's Senior Official, Regional Secretary.

Heavily involved in the work of the TUC, Barry was for many years an Executive Member of the TUC in the South and East (SERTUC) and its Vice President. He was Chairman of SERTUC's Economic Committee. He is currently a member of the TUC General Council.

Since 2000, Barry has been T&G Assistant General Secretary. His responsibilities include agency labour, inter union relations and membership organisation and development.

Paul Carter

Paul runs his own property, construction and retail businesses, is Cabinet Member of Kent County Council with responsibility for education standards, and a Governor of Oldborough Manor School, Leigh City Technology College, Dartford and West Kent College, Tonbridge.

Allan Chisholm

After a period with W.S. Atkins, an international consultancy, Allan joined the Scottish Council (Development and Industry). In 1973 he set up Bredero's UK operations. Bredero undertook award winning regeneration projects throughout the UK and in 1986 was floated on the London Stock Exchange.

Allan joined Lend Lease Europe in 1994 to set up their European project company, which successfully undertook Bluewater, Kent, Europe's largest retail and leisure project.

He was Chairman of Lend Lease Europe until December 2001 and is now a consultant with the group. He is also a Non-Executive Member of the Partnership Board of Donaldson, International Property Agents.

Other activities include chairing Bluewater Learning Shop and the Education and Skills Group for the North Kent Area Investment Framework.

Sue Glanville

Sue Glanville was appointed as Head Teacher of Invicta Grammar School in 1993. Sue graduated from London University in 1974 and has been a teacher of Mathematics in several Kent schools. She is married to a Chartered Surveyor based in Ashford and her daughter is a Project Manager for the Court Service of England and Wales.

In addition to her role as Head Teacher, Sue Glanville is a member of the National Secondary Sector Committee of National Association of Head Teachers. Sue is a Director of Kent & Medway Education Business Alliance and Chairs the committee of Central Costs Task Force, a group which monitors the funding retained by Kent LEA from schools' budgets.

Chris Hearn

Chris joined the Council in 2002 as a Business Representative. He works for Barclays Bank PLC as a Relationship Director in the Education Team based in the City of London. He joined this team towards the end of 2001 having worked for the previous 10 years with owner managed businesses in Docklands and East London.

Chris is keen to use the experience he has gained working with small and medium sized firms to help ensure that the work of the Council is effective and is of relevance to the business community.

Married for 25 years he has lived with his family in Kent for 16 years. Chris has three children who are just out, in or about to enter higher/further education. He enjoys sport and in particular rugby union and football. To keep as fit as time will allow he cycles and walks and is a 'social' golfer.

Nick Henwood

Following work with VSO in Sierra Leone, Nick enjoyed a teaching career in Kenya and Nottingham. He then moved into his administrative career, working in Stockport, Birmingham and Kent. From 1994-97, he was Chief Education Officer in Somerset and 1997-2001 he was Strategic Director for the Education and Libraries Directorate with Kent County Council. During 1998-99 he was a member of a government review of Adult Basic Skills, chaired by Sir Claus Moser. He is an adviser to the Local Government Association.

Vernon Hull

Vernon has been working in post-16 education for nearly thirty years. He has lectured in further education and ran a local authority adult education centre. He is currently the District Secretary (Regional Director) of the South East District of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). The WEA is Britain's major voluntary adult education organisation.

Vernon has also been active in politics. He was a local councillor for seventeen years. This included seven as Deputy Leader of Rochester Upon Medway Council and three years as Deputy Leader of Medway Council (the unitary authority established in 1998).

Vernon is the Chair of the Kent Learning Partnership. He has been a Governor of Mid-Kent College since 1995. He is also a Board Member of the Kent Thameside Groundwork Trust, an Assistant Warden of the Rochester Bridge Trust and a Member of the Kent and Medway Economic Board.

Derek Hunter

Derek has worked for the GMB for 25 years, as National Secretary in the Food & Leisure Section, and Regional Secretary of GMB's Southern Region, covering South East and South West England, and membership in Brussels.

Derek is particularly interested in European affairs, environmental matters, ethical trading policies, equal opportunities, health and safety, pensions' legislation and training programmes. The development of industrial relations in the United Kingdom is an area of special interest. He appears regularly on radio and television, and also in the press. He speaks at a variety of seminars and conferences in the UK and abroad.

Angela Jenkins

Angela Jenkins has worked in adult, further and higher education for more than twenty years and is currently employed as Outreach Coordinator for the University of Kent, based at Bridgewardens' College in Chatham.

As a disabled person herself and the Convener of the Community Learning Forum of the Medway Learning Partnership, Angela believes in the importance of helping disadvantaged groups to gain access to higher education. She is a trustee of the Council for Voluntary Services.

Carolyn Mason

Carolyn Mason lives in Sidcup and works in Dartford as Learning and Development Manager for GlaxoSmithKline.

She is a former teacher and now closely involved with the development of vocational qualifications through her Membership of the Sector Skills Council for the Chemical Industry.

Carolyn is a member of the Institute of Personnel and Development.

Anne-Marie Nelson CBE

Anne-Marie is the former Chairman of the High Security Psychiatric Services Commissioning Board and of the Special Hospitals Service Authority. She has held a broad range of posts within the NHS, including Chairman of Maidstone Health Authority and West Kent Health Authority. She is currently a Non-Executive Director of Community Health South London NHS Trust.

She is Chairman of the Kent Economic Forum and of Fairplay South East, a DfEE sponsored organisation which promotes the contribution of girls and women to employment, training and public life. She serves on a number of boards in the fields of training and education, including the University of Greenwich, and is a Director of a building society. She is on the Partnership Committee of the healthcare SSC, Healthworks UK and has been a Borough Councillor and an Executive Member of Relate.

Anne-Marie is an Associate Fellow of Newnham College, Cambridge and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA).

Simon Norton

Prior to taking up his post as Executive Director, Simon worked in a range of management and policy jobs in the employment and employee relations field. He has worked as an Area Manager of Jobcentres in London, in consultancy on the management of change, in finance and on policy advice to Ministers on employment and industrial relations issues. He was Head of the Employment Service's Division responsible for marketing, developing its relationships with employers, improving customer service and introducing new business processes through call centres and the internet and was closely involved in developing the Government's flagship New Deal programme. He has first and postgraduate degrees from the University of Kent, is a Fellow of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and of the Royal Society of Arts.

Michael Wright

A Governor of Sandwich Technology School, Michael has been Principal of Canterbury Christ Church University College since 1997.

Michael has membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the Institute of Management, and the RSA.

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