

Dissemination of Good Practice
in Engineering and Construction 2000 - 2003
Funded through the Quality and Standards
Directorate of the Learning and Skills Council

Good Practice Report: Engineering and Construction

Summary

This report describes the activities and outcomes of Phase 3 of the Good Practice Dissemination Project, run jointly by the British Association of Construction Heads (BACH) and the National Forum for Engineering in Colleges (NFEC). The project was funded by the Quality and Standards Directorate of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

The project brought together colleges, private providers and schools (in the context of the 14-19 curriculum), with the express purpose of raising standards by the dissemination of good practice in the engineering and construction sectors of education and training. It provided support using Technology Support Networks (TSN), Critical Friends, seminars and a website.

The report also lists issues that need addressing in the future.

This report is of interest to: college principals; all those who attended a project event (engineering and construction teachers, heads of departments and so on); project steering group members; Learning and Skills Council Executive Directors and National Directors; staff of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Standards Unit; other key stakeholders and partners, such as members and staff of the Association of Colleges (AoC), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALi) and Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted); and professional bodies of the engineering and construction industry, including the Construction Industry Training Board and the Engineering Council.

January 2004

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Executive Summary

January 2004

Subject

This report describes the activities and outcomes of Phase 3 of the Good Practice Dissemination Project run jointly by the British Association of Construction Heads (BACH) and the National Forum for Engineering in Colleges (NFEC). Dissemination of good practice is one of the themes of the Government's Further Education (FE) strategy, *Success for All*.

This project has brought together colleges, private providers and schools (in the context of the 14-19 curriculum) with the express purpose of raising standards by sharing good practice in the engineering and construction sectors of education and training. Its aims were to tailor the provision of support to individual providers' needs and help people to participate in activities in their own place of work. It was funded by the Quality and Standards Directorate of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and operated within the LSC's remit in England.

Phase 3 of the project used Technology Support Networks (TSNs) and teams of Critical Friends to provide support to 24 LSC-funded providers between 2002 and 2003. It produced seminars on best practice in collaboration on the 14-19 curriculum and also maintained a website as a communication tool, as an information resource and as a means of disseminating learning and assessment support materials.

Technology Support Networks provided support for front-line teachers and trainers in specific curriculum areas within engineering and construction. Benefits derived from TSN activity included improved levels of staff morale, confidence in delivery requirements, knowledge of technical issues, and information awareness through sharing their experience of good practice. TSNs also provided intelligence which, when collated nationally, helped identify some major delivery problems.

Critical Friends involved teams of vocational education and management specialists visiting centres, by invitation, to review current provision and offer advice, recommendations and action plans. Focusing on previously agreed areas of concern, teams were able to deal honestly and openly with colleagues at all levels within an organisation, without the pressures inherent in formal inspections. The teams visited FE colleges and other LSC-funded work based learning providers.

The 14-19 seminars raised awareness, across all sectors, of the requirements and resources for collaboration in the delivery of the 14-19 curriculum. They made use of case studies of good practice, bringing together schools, colleges and training providers. Besides curriculum and teaching matters, seminars discussed numerous legal and administrative queries centred on the new area of children of compulsory school age being taught and supervised outside of the maintained school environment.

The project website continued to be maintained throughout this third phase, and will stay on air until the end of 2003. It was used primarily as a communication and marketing tool within this phase, but continued to make available (following a peer-review process) teaching and assessment resources largely contributed during the earlier phases.

The key issue at the end of this undoubtedly successful project is the unfinished business, which needs to be addressed in the context of new national policies.

The TSNs need to be organised, generate their business, and circulate the outcomes. Providers need to take ownership of the issues addressed by TSNs so that involvement is part of the providers' plans. TSNs should have direct links to the regional organisations of BACH and NFEC to collate problems and provide a communication channel with heads of departments.

The 24 centres visited by Critical Friends need follow-up contact and the large number of applicant centres that could not be accommodated within the project need to have their requirements addressed. There should also be an analysis of the visits undertaken, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the first year's approach.

The initial work on 14-19 curriculum cooperation indicated how much providers could learn about the opportunities and implications of working across different education and training sectors. Advice is also required on the legal and social issues involved, particularly on dealing with the 14-16 age group.

However, the primary engine of project support, the LSC Standards Fund, has been significantly revised in response to *Success for All* and will no longer be available to support the project nationally. Providers will need to make their case in their development plans and then apply to local LSCs. The challenge is how further to develop the sharing of good practice, within the LSC's quality improvement framework, and thus fully ensure *Success for All*.

Intended recipients

College principals; all those who attended a project event (engineering and construction teachers, heads of departments and so on); project steering group members; Learning and Skills Council Executive Directors and National Directors; staff of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Standards Unit; Sector Skills Councils (SSC); other key stakeholders and partners, such as members and staff of the Association of Colleges, the Adult Learning Inspectorate and Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted); and professional bodies of the engineering and construction industry, including the Construction Industry Training Board and the Engineering Council.

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Foreword

I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank the British Association of Construction Heads (BACH) and the National Forum for Engineering in Colleges (NFEC) for managing our Standards Fund project, to disseminate good practice in engineering and construction, so successfully over the last three years.

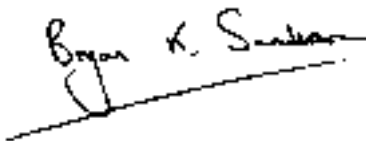
Our recent evaluation of the project, carried out by ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd (ECOTEC), is very positive. More than 95% of providers who responded to the ECOTEC survey said they had made or would be making changes in their provision as a result of participation. Particularly pleasing is the conclusion that 'More than 90% of respondents to the e-mail survey reported that the project had had a positive impact on learners'. This is essential if we are to succeed in our aim of raising participation and achievement and make *Success for All* a reality.

Much has been done but much remains to be done. The project has generated an excellent momentum for change. With the end of the current stream of Standards Fund support, this momentum must now be maintained by all involved including providers, local LSCs and other key stakeholders. Engaging employers more directly in learning is another priority if we are to deliver learning that meets the needs of learners, employers and their communities.

Construction is, of course, one of the four curriculum areas identified as an initial priority for *Success for All*. Our good practice project shows how committed providers and staff in the construction and engineering sectors are to improving teaching and learning and to sharing the best practice that exists. This bodes well for the success of *Success for All*.

I thank the BACH and NFEC team for their hard work and commitment over three years and in particular for the way in which they have sought year-on-year to evaluate and improve the programme. My thanks go also to all the providers and individual members of staff that have taken part in the exchange of good practice.

Keep up the good work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan K. Sanderson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Bryan K. Sanderson
Chairman, October 2003

Background, Introduction and Review

Background

- 1 *Success for All* is the aim of all involved in further education and work based learning. For some, it has been more rhetoric than reality. It is quite hard for learners to be successful if their colleges or training companies are themselves not very successful. This was the case in the construction and engineering sectors three to four years ago. The evidence was there for all to see in the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) Inspectorate's Curriculum Area Reports.
- 2 This report shows how that culture of under-performance has begun to change for the better. Not because someone else has brought the big stick to bear but because those most closely involved have seen how best to help themselves and others, using the support of the FEFC and (later) the LSC Standards Fund. Three years of successful project work have now come to an end, but during that time there has been a real change in culture from destructively competitive to mutually supportive.
- 3 The best (grades 1 and 2) providers have shared insights into their success with those whose inspection grades (3, 4 or 5) show that they really do have something to learn. Real improvements are now being seen and recognised. This report tells the story of *Success for All* those who have taken part. But when and how did it all begin?

Introduction to the Report

- 4 This report begins with the perception of the former FEFC managers and inspectors that quality did not correlate either with size of college or with funding per learner. Less well-resourced colleges could and did get better results than some larger ones that had more funds per learner. They simply applied good practice in all that they did. At the same time, the inspectors were able to identify pockets of really good work, which was worth highlighting and sharing, in otherwise poorly performing colleges. Could the Standards Fund be used to promote this dissemination of good practice nationally?
- 5 The next question was how best to do this. Invitations to tender were published. The bid chosen was a self-help proposal submitted jointly

by two organisations, the BACH and the NFEC, which represented those in the real areas of concern. The key to success lay in the fact that the successful were helping their peers, and that those who self-evidently were good at their job were supporting the not so good. They were not being pressured by outsiders but were being helped by their friends.

- 6 During what turned out to be FEFC's final year in being, the FEFC funded Phase 1 of the activity. This opened doors to collaboration, providing masterclass seminars, in neutral venues, where those who were very evidently successful illustrated their ways of doing things. Taking this openness further, successful colleges opened their doors to others to show, in specialist areas of teaching, how it was done in practice. To make all of the outcomes available to anyone interested, the feedback and key materials were published on a project website. Phase 1 was completed on time, on target and within budget, just in time for the major structural changes caused by the Learning and Skills Act 2000.
- 7 Evaluation of Phase 1 showed a need to maintain the initiative but to redirect it in two specific ways. Firstly, managers had identified five generic issues that were challenging most LSC-funded providers; these were addressed by management-level seminars. Secondly, many specialist teachers had become isolated, demoralised and stagnant in their teaching. Networks of like-minded teachers were established to enable them to share ideas, to see that they were not alone, and to get on with revitalising their work. Both activities continued to be underpinned by the website, which both marketed events and published good practice materials donated by the better-performing colleges.
- 8 As the second year progressed, some recurring problems were identified. The most intransigent was that of the weakest colleges working inefficiently, on their own and with poor resources. They were the very ones which had neither the perception to see that help was both needed and freely available nor (even if they had seen it) the ability to organise themselves to get key people to participate in the project and its events. What could be done to overcome this problem?

- 9 The answer was to gather a team of really good facilitators who could go discreetly, and on mutually agreed terms, to any LSC-funded provider that was in need of help. Staff would then not need to leave the college or find funds for locums and travel. By this time, the LSC catchment had become wider than that of the former FEFC sector, so the project's services were also to be made available to LSC-funded private training providers. Schools were involved towards the end of the project as new policies required closer cooperation between schools and FE, and it also became an area of good practice to address.
- 10 Therefore in April 2002, the third and final phase of this work began. Its key initiatives were Critical Friends and 14-19 Collaboration. The opportunity was taken to restructure the Support Networks better to meet the teachers' needs, and to continue maintenance of the website. This report focuses on this third phase of the work. (Phase 1 and 2 reports have already been published and are still available on the website.) It does report on a very successful operation, both in terms of actual achievement and (unfortunately) of identifying unmet demand. As an example of the latter, over 70 providers, both college and work based learning, applied for the 24 places resourced on the Critical Friends initiative (and yet more telephone enquirers were turned away).
- 14 Another contractor, ECOTEC Ltd, was commissioned in autumn 2002 by the LSC to evaluate the full range of the dissemination of good practice work. The timescale potentially limited their review of Phase 3 of this project, as the final report was due by 31 March 2003. ECOTEC's attention was drawn to the work already done by Performance by Design and access was facilitated to the Critical Friends and 14-19 activities of Phase 3. The LSC reported the following ECOTEC finding to the end-of-project conference.

Overall, the ConsEng project has been welcomed by providers. Levels of participation in ConsEng activities were high, both from presenters of good practice and beneficiaries of that good practice. Indeed, the providers who responded to the ECOTEC e-mail survey, or who were interviewed, offered an overwhelmingly positive view of the project and wished it to continue.

- 15 However valuable the in-depth investigations by Performance by Design and ECOTEC are, the real impression is most strongly made by those in positions of direct responsibility who are prepared to face their peers and the public in an open conference. Some quotes from speakers at the end-of project conference were:
- David Law, Principal of Chelmsford College: 'incredibly good value for money' and the 'single most powerful work in engineering and construction for a decade'; and
 - Mike Fisher, secondee to the DfES Standards Unit: 'this project needs to be rolled out to the other areas of teaching and learning'...'an excellent vehicle for change ... that will benefit our learners and the industries they serve'.

End-of-Project Review and Conference

- 11 This report ends with unfinished business. As the final project conference on 31 March 2003 made clear, national policy changes have divided the Standards Fund in numerous different directions. Whilst some of that funding will be accessible via local LSCs on the basis of provider development plans, this is the end of the road for this national project in its current form. The end-of-project conference report is included in Annex D.
- 12 The project has twice been independently evaluated, firstly towards the end of Phase 2, and later through a wider LSC review of Standards Fund initiatives.
- 13 The report of the external review of Phases 1 and 2 of this project, by contractor Performance by Design, was published as Annex G to the Phase 2 Final Report in July 2002. This comprehensive review of the whole approach to dissemination of good practice provides many pointers for related initiatives taken, for example, by the new DfES Standards Unit.
- 16 If you are interested in what was achieved, please read on. It is an interesting story of how people have worked together towards *Success for All* in education and training provision for engineering and construction.

The Phase 3 Project Aims, Objectives and Targets

Aims

- 17 The aims of the Phase 3 project were to:
- nurture and enhance the change in culture for those who deliver post-16 learning in construction and engineering, consolidating and enhancing the positive gains made in Phases 1 and 2 from 2000 to 2002;
 - assist with the development of potential Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in the sectors, so that centres of excellence would be more widely available and as a consequence, through their own dissemination and networking, have a multiplying effect on the sharing of good practice generally;
 - make the opportunities for the development of good practice more widely available to the full range of LSC-funded providers, whether from traditional FE, the independent training companies or other LSC-funded post-16 providers; and
 - tailor the provision to individual providers' needs and circumstances by transferring the focus of assistance to the providers' own bases and, in doing so, help to meet the needs of those who have difficulty participating in activities away from their place of work.

Objectives

- 18 Those general aims were to be achieved through four instruments of provision.
- In-Centre Support (also known as Critical Friends). Make recommendations to improve teaching, learning, organisation and management in individual centres, on issues mutually agreed between the centres and appropriate teams of Critical Friends, following structured pre-visits.
 - Technology Support Networks. Extend the work and achievements of TSNs to increase their relevance to, and participation from, a greater range of providers, based on evaluation evidence from Phase 2.
 - Website Development and Maintenance. Extend the range of materials and links to other sites and sources, especially those of the Technology Pathfinder Group of CoVE, and facilitate

marketing, delivery and feedback during Phase 3 through increased use of the site.

- Sharing of Good Practice in Collaboration in the context of the 14-19 curriculum. Promote close collaboration between colleges, schools and other learning providers in the technology field, in pursuance of good practice and appropriate learning styles for 14-19 education and the introduction of a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in technology.

Targets

- 19 Under each of the four activity headings in the objectives, the tender proposal contained specific targets for participation and activity. These were agreed and included in the project contract. Some minor amendments were made during the course of Phase 3, in agreement with the LSC client, to make best use of resources and availability. As an example, the availability of a GCSE in engineering increased interest in the 14-19 events for that sector and a further event was authorised. On the other hand, the requests for Critical Friends so exceeded the original target (72 for 24 places) that it was realistic only to try to achieve the original targets from available funds.
- 20 The nature, scope and content of the dissemination provision from the original and agreed tender document sets out the detailed targets under each heading. These are included at Annex A.

The Implementation Plan

- 21 The implementation plan phased the activities across the project year, with early emphasis on preparation, recruitment and training for the resource-intensive Critical Friends activity. The Critical Friends visits started in May 2002 and continued until the final days of the project.
- 22 The support for the TSNs was concentrated in the early part of the year, both to get the reorganisation in hand as quickly as possible and to give the new networks the maximum time to settle down and become self-sustaining during the year. Formal support was scheduled to cease by the end of 2002, although the presence of the website has continued to aid communication and scheduling.

- 23 The website activity moved in two different directions. The nature of the Critical Friends activity, with its emphasis on 'in confidence' support, meant that less feedback and fewer new materials would go onto the site. On the other hand, the time lag involved, both in individuals getting familiar with use of the site and its resources, and with the need to peer-review and input material gleaned from Phase 2 activities, meant that there was a steady stream of maintenance work scheduled throughout the year. It was expected that the high level of hits would be maintained.
- 24 The 14-19 activity was dependent upon emerging policies of government, the resolution of practical issues for non-school providers (for example qualified teacher status, child protection issues, matters of attendance and discipline), and the emergence of related issues for discussion. The keys to the latter would be the take-up of new specialist GCSEs (such as that in engineering) and schools opting to be specialist in construction or engineering. Moreover, the project team had to develop new contacts and databases in the schools' area. These seminars were, therefore, scheduled for the spring 2003 term.
- 25 The Phase 3 schedule of activities from the original and agreed tender document sets out the expected scheduling of each step under each heading. These are included at Annex B.

Project Management and Oversight

- 26 The BACH and NFEC consortium appointed a project manager to manage the project implementation. The manager dealt with the LSC client on a day-to-day basis, established and ran the project office, maintained the website, designed and arranged events, engaged and supported appropriate consultant and administrative staff, and managed the project finances. Invoicing the client, disbursement of project funds and maintenance of the purchase ledger were carried out through the NFEC administrative office.
- 27 Implementation of the project has been overseen by a project steering group consisting of the Executive Boards of BACH and NFEC, assisted by representatives of National Training Organisations (NTO) and the profession, and by a steering group secretary. The steering group has met regularly from the proposal stage, and will continue to meet until the client accepts the project's final

report and the project finances are closed down. The steering group has recognised that its primary role has been the accountability for public funds entrusted to the project, but it has also provided an advisory function to the project manager and the team. The LSC client has also been represented on the project steering group.

Summary of Activity

- 28 In summary, the following activities were to be implemented by the project team in Phase 3.
- Involve a total of 24 centres in a Critical Friends exercise. Each exercise comprised: a single person pre-visit to assess and agree the issues to be addressed and outcomes to be achieved; team selection and briefing; the visit itself by a team of three; immediate feedback followed up by a formal report; and evaluation. Both senior management and practitioners were fully involved.
 - Establish a total of 72 network groups across a wider range of more sub-specialist construction and engineering disciplines, to be supported during the summer and autumn terms of 2002, and to achieve a participation of 16 teachers per group by the end of that period.
 - Maintain the website as a viable means of promoting project events, sharing good materials, providing feedback and facilitating mutual assistance.
 - Provide six in-hotel seminars, three each for engineering and construction, in the North, the Midlands and the South, to widen participation and share good practice in 14-19 collaboration across colleges, schools, and training providers.

Project Outcomes and Achievements

Overview

- 29 All of the project targets were achieved on time and within budget. Where targets could be exceeded at negligible or easily offset cost, they were often exceeded. This applied to participation in the arranged TSN meetings. The project's contribution was to the initiation and organisation of the meetings in the first place, and in subsequently assisting those in the lead to take responsibility for sustainability. Thus, the participation target for this objective was eventually exceeded by more than 70%. Much of the website cost was fixed and utilisation depended upon the enthusiasm of those in the sector. By this phase, it was expected that the dissemination of good materials would be carried out by CoVEs as one of their fundamental duties. Hit rates have been maintained and the site used as the primary information medium for the project.
- 30 The 14-19 Collaboration events were differentially supported, both geographically and by major discipline. In general, the engineering-related events did better because those in schools were currently challenged or enthused by the GCSE in engineering. Demand for these events was exceeded to the extent that a full additional event was run in Harrogate. The absence of a new qualification for schools in construction was the reason given for a more modest participation. In the end, only one event failed to achieve its target numbers, and this was more than offset by above target participation elsewhere. These events attracted a wide range of providers, many of whom expressed disappointment at not being party to the earlier phases of the project. It had to be explained that initially, when the FEFC funded the project, it was aimed only at English FE colleges as a result of the FEFC's remit. More recently, access has been progressively extended to all LSC-funded providers.
- 31 The Critical Friends initiative (as the originally titled 'In Service Support for Potential CoVEs' became universally known) attracted early and widespread support. Had the project been enabled to run over into the next financial year, it could have provided a service to at least 50 more centres (colleges, private providers or schools) and probably more as a message had to be put out to

stop people and centres applying. Initial selection was first come, first served, at least to the stage of initial discussion and sometimes pre-visit. The intention was to reward, as far as possible, enthusiasm and commitment. Unfortunately, some adjustments had to be made once mutual expectations were understood and the availability of key Critical Friend personnel was matched to requirements and to days suitable to the centre.

- 32 Following this brief overview, a fuller report will follow on each area. A quantitative synopsis of the participation in Phase 3, as a performance against agreed targets, is provided at Annex C.

Technology Support Networks

- 33 'Teacher Support Networks', so-called, were originally the result of the Phase 1 in-college events aimed at specific trade areas of work. Contacts were made, problems shared and ideas exchanged, but the links were not cemented. A need was identified for a series of networks where the exchanges could continue. Of course, it seemed a good idea to everyone but someone had to take the initiative. In Phase 2, the project injected the resources necessary to identify the potential leaders, set up meeting venues and agendas, market the networks and produce notes. A total of 54 networks were established and the overall participation target was met. However, feedback indicated that networks would be even more popular if there was more flexibility in the groupings, for example more single-trade groups in some fields but national or regional groupings in others that involved only a few specialist centres nationally. The altered structure for Phase 3 met these needs and also sought to attract a wider participation across those delivering technology education and training, other than those who would immediately recognise themselves as teachers. Hence, the name was changed from 'Teacher Support Networks' to 'Technology Support Networks'.

- 34 The new networks soon started to thrive and positive feedback was apparent. Good-sized groups attracted external speakers from Awarding Bodies, NTOs, local LSCs and others. Those attending found that these organisations were not faceless, but employed people who would try to address practical problems. As this news spread, more participated in the meetings. The facilitators provided by the project were able to note commonality of issues and bring these to the attention of BACH and/or NFEC, regionally or nationally. Some of these issues were very specific, such as the difficulty for bricklayers in training in complying with the assessment strategy of the Slinging and Signalling Unit that was a core requirement of their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in craft at Level 2. The extreme difficulty experienced by young candidates in obtaining workplace evidence for the achievement of this unit had led to systematic non-completion and failure in Modern Apprenticeship frameworks. The project helped to resolve this nationally with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). More generally, the near loss of the City & Guilds 2000 Series qualifications, before an adequate replacement was to hand, was a major national issue identified in the TSNs and was eventually resolved through the NFEC after approaches to ministers.
- 35 The involvement of chalk-face staff in these issues and campaigns, and the eventual achievement of results, increased their overall awareness of vocational education and training and gave them confidence that they were not alone with their problems. Others shared them and together they could adduce the evidence necessary for resolution. This was a staff development activity in itself. As network membership widened, industrial work based assessors found that they had issues that could be resolved. Working together, all could avoid unnecessary duplication of effort in the production of teaching, assessment and recording materials, particularly when new or amended qualifications needed to be introduced quickly. The TSNs have developed such materials for mechanical engineering in the Midlands and for wood occupations in the North. They have also developed materials for a new national certificate in Motor Vehicle Technology and one for Construction Technicians. Some TSNs have developed their own websites.
- 36 Thus the project's immediate benefit is seen in terms of an enthused and proactive workforce, more willing to use initiative and address problems. It enables small centres of activity to learn from the experience of a wider group of peers and reduces suspicion of those who work in different employment settings. Real practical problems, which had the potential to impact on retention and achievement, have been identified, addressed and resolved. Feedback from one college said that 'the inspection grade had been improved by one level as a direct result of increased support, collaboration and information given at TSN meetings'.
- 37 The question now is 'What of the future?' Clearly, if the benefits are truly evident to the participants, they will ensure that they are sustained. However, there will always be some hazards as personalities and managers change. There will be times when the turn to host the meeting falls to a provider where the people concerned do not have the budgetary control to book a room, send out papers and order sandwiches, without a major bureaucratic exercise.
- 38 The features required for continued success include:
- ownership of the issues addressed by TSNs by provider middle and senior management, so that involvement in TSNs is part of the college or provider plan;
 - active support and encouragement of relevant trade groupings by SSCs, especially, but not exclusively, for the topics covered by national centres;
 - active support and encouragement of local teacher and trainer self-development from local LSCs, and nationally from the DfES Standards Unit;
 - direct links from the TSNs to the regional organisations of BACH and NFEC, as a means of distilling disparate problems into a coherent national set of issues, as a channel for communication with heads of departments, and as a possible source of support infrastructure; and
 - strong regional structures within BACH and NFEC to maintain links with colleges and other learning providers in the regional areas, both as foster parents to, and as channels of communication for, the TSNs.

- 39 The key point about these Networks is that they consist of front-line teachers, trainers and assessors. By the very nature of their work, they have less scope than many for leaving their place of work and organising extramural activities. It is in their employers' interest that managers and funding bodies see that TSNs are serviced to the level of sustainability and so enable teaching, training and learning to be at the heart of all they do.

Website Development and Maintenance

- 40 The website has been a key tool of the Dissemination Project since its inception. The contractual arrangements with the service provider will ensure that the site remains up for some months to come. During the year of Phase 3, it has primarily been used as a communication tool for the project itself, advertising events and availability of resources. Owing to the inevitable lag in the system, it has also had many new materials and feedback added from the events generated by Phase 2. The resource library now contains over 500 items and the site attracts over 50,000 hits monthly, despite the fact that some Phase 3 activities, such as Critical Friends, do not lend themselves to public feedback. That service was provided in confidence.
- 41 As the Technology Pathfinder CoVE network expands to embrace the newly appointed CoVEs in engineering and construction, the very nature of their remit should ensure that they take over some of the role of disseminating teaching and learning materials in their field of excellence. A key aspect of any published materials is their provenance. There is little point in putting material on a dissemination of good practice website if it is accompanied by a warning that it comes entirely without any warranty of being good practice. Moreover, its presentation and style must, itself, be a model of good practice. In Phase 2, this was achieved through a formal criterion-referenced peer-review process, managed by a respected current practitioner. There was no formal provision for the continuation of this in Phase 3 or beyond.
- 42 At the end-of-project conference, this matter was discussed in the context of it being one of the future roles of the DfES Standards Unit. However, it was said that whilst construction would feature as a priority area in the first year, engineering would not do so for several years. Secondly, it was said that it would take time to develop a

methodology for the approval of material to go onto a DfES-sponsored site. The project manager offered to make the criteria and process used within the project, for approval of material for project website publication, available to the DfES representative. A final point that was elicited in discussion was that during the Critical Friends visits, the team members frequently witnessed the eyes of host providers' staff light up when the team members took them to the answer to their question, already there for the taking on the website!

- 43 The features required for continued success include:
- financial support from the industrial sectors concerned to keep the site up and running with a service provider, perhaps the minimum role for SSCs; and
 - support for peer review and editing of supplied materials, whether on a dedicated site as at present, on an NFEC and/or BACH site, on some arrangement to be developed by the DfES Standards Unit, or elsewhere (perhaps through the promised BBC Digital Curriculum service).

Critical Friends (In-Centre Support for Colleges and Other Learning and Skills Council-funded Providers)

- 44 The Critical Friends initiative was the most innovative part of the Phase 3 Project. It was the most focused and resource-intensive part of the whole three-year programme. The size of the task seemed daunting initially – to provide personalised, practical and supportive help to 24 LSC-funded providers within a year, inclusive of the time required to develop the product, recruit and train the team, undertake both pre- and team visits, and provide reports and feedback. It was particularly important to convey the nature of the scheme; to convince people that it was not a mock inspection, not a hit squad sent in by management to do its work, not a set of consultants who would 'borrow your watch to tell you the time'. If the local staff, both at senior management and at working level, treated the Critical Friends visitors as inquisitors, then everyone's time would be wasted. Even more of a waste would be to listen to all that was said and done, and then fail to take action.

- 45 Of the 24 centres visited, 18 were colleges and 6 were work based learning training providers. Whilst this may seem to be an unfair distribution, it simply reflected the rate at which applications were received. However, the colleges were very familiar with BACH and NFEC in their own fields and had good communications with them. Initial communication with other LSC-funded providers (other than a few that closely follow NFEC or BACH events) was as good as that within the LSC and local LSC systems and in the latter's contribution in terms of making the project known to their local providers. The engineering and construction split is less obvious, as many providers work in both fields. In terms of the balance of needs established in the pre-discussions and pre-visits, and the consequent make-up of the teams, the balance was fairly even.
- 46 The Critical Friends were drawn from experienced teachers and managers in the field, who also had recent experience of inspection on behalf of either the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and/or the Ofsted. In all cases, they were acting only as consultants to this project. They were chosen because their judgements would be informed by the knowledge and experience gained in other roles. Critical Friends appointed to non-college providers included at least one team member with experience of the commercial training world. In the normal rules of public propriety, team members would not be involved in inspection work in any institution in which they had acted as Critical Friend, nor would they divulge information gleaned in the process. It had been established at the outset of the project that the LSC would respect this need for confidentiality, if the project were to achieve its aims.
- 47 The findings, conclusions and recommendations from each visit were embodied in a formal written report and each visit was independently followed up by the project manager, for the purposes of internal verification. The feedback has, in every case, been exceptionally good. The visit to Chelmsford College on 21 to 24 October 2002 was described publicly by the principal as 'incredibly good value for money' and the 'single most powerful work in engineering and construction for a decade'. ECOTEC reported that 'All of the eight providers who received a Critical Friends visit and participated in a qualitative interview spoke enthusiastically about Critical Friends and recommended its continuation.'
- 48 The Critical Friends coordinator worked closely with the project manager in arranging visits and teams based on the needs of pre-visit agreements. On completion of the visits, team leaders prepared reports that were internally moderated. A pattern of issues was identified that was repeated across most of the centres visited, irrespective of discipline area or type of provider. These showed marginal or less than satisfactory performance in:
- retention and achievement;
 - combining work based and college learning;
 - progress monitoring and internal verification;
 - integration, delivery and assessment of key skills;
 - management information systems;
 - work based assessment;
 - issues raised in inspections and self-assessment reports;
 - effectiveness of links with employers;
 - communication systems; and
 - opportunities for learner progression.
- 49 In this first year of the initiative, the approach to centres was structured in a common format, broadly to comply with the proposal and subsequent contract. This enabled a disciplined approach to be taken, which kept expenditure in line with resource, with a standard team size and length of visit, and a structured approach to feedback and moderated reporting. This facilitated good project management and evaluation of what might well have been a pilot for a more developed model. However, the team did learn to deal with the constraints of this model, even during the pre-visit. As an individual visit progressed, the process often unearthed underlying issues that had not been discussed at the pre-visit stage. As the teams assembled and shared experiences, they became even more adept at customising the approach within the overall project constraints.

- 50 One problem with the process was its finite length of commitment, at least as far as official support was concerned. There was no provision, within the one-year project contract, for follow-up visits or communication to reinforce commitment, review implementation, or to consider adjustment to approaches based on experience. This would have been impossible for all but the earliest centres visited; several did not have their visit until the closing weeks of the project year. On the other hand, such was the enthusiasm and comradeship generated in the process that a fair amount of informal networking, staff and learner exchange, mentoring and so on, has persisted between individuals within the Critical Friends team (and their home institution) and the visited centre. This reflects the difference between a Critical Friend type of relationship, with its benefits, and that with an inspector.
- 51 An inevitable question now is 'Where do we go from here?' We cannot say 'we've started so we'll finish' because, without some infrastructure in place, the developed expertise will spread to the four winds, the lessons learned from the final year's work will not be evaluated, the totally unmet demand from those centres that applied but were disappointed will not begin to be addressed, and the follow-up care and support needed to consolidate the initial gains will not be forthcoming.
- 52 The first answer is that providers must maintain links with their national organisations, whether BACH for construction or NFEC for engineering. These bodies have the basic infrastructure of databases and regional organisation to keep in touch with individuals in the project teams, the centres themselves and the major players in the LSC system. Providers already have some of the former Standards Fund channelled directly to them, whilst more will be potentially available from the Local Intervention and Development Fund (LIDF) at the discretion of local LSCs. In future, providers will have to plan to acquire this service, identifying the need in their college plan and making the case locally. The weakness of this method is that the reason why some providers are most in need of Critical Friends is that they have not got the foresight, the leadership, the management systems, or the involvement of people at the chalk face, to begin to go through this process. Indeed, it was one of the reasons why Critical Friends emerged as a priority approach in Phase 3.
- 53 These are some of the features required for continued success.
- An analysis of the 24 Critical Friends visits undertaken between 1 May 2002 and 28 March 2003, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the first year's approach. This should also classify the differences in issues identified and approaches taken, be they between the construction and engineering disciplines, between colleges or training providers, or between large national centres and small, rural, multi-role providers.
 - Follow-up contacts (and possibly visits) with the 24 centres involved between 1 May and 28 March, to evaluate and consolidate the implementation of agreed recommendations, and to review in the light of initial experience.
 - Provision of an initial and follow-up Critical Friends service to the 50 applicants for Critical Friends whose requests could not be met during Phase 3, and indeed to those other centres that were advised not to bother applying when the list was closed.
 - Maintenance of a form of project website to maintain the communication link, and a basic project management core infrastructure to provide a central point for brokering links between providers requesting the service, the possible sources of funding and the potential team of Critical Friends.
 - Coordination of a straightforward process for access to a Critical Friends service using support from the LIDF. A regional system based on the nine regional development agencies would be a step forward, but ideally it should be national. Whatever the arrangement, the Critical Friends service needs to become a first choice option for those looking to improve their engineering or construction provision, or both.
 - Strong regional structures within BACH and NFEC, to maintain links with colleges and other learning providers in the regional areas, as channels of communication for a continuing devolved Critical Friends service.

14-19 Collaboration

- 54 Although schools and colleges have worked together for many years, it has been limited to areas where a particular combination of personalities and local education authority (LEA) policies has been effective, and significant employers have had a catalytic effect. However, as participation in General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Part 1 and CITB Curriculum Centres illustrated, it was a limited and specialist interest. Recently, the Key Stage 4 (KS4) National Curriculum has been freed up sufficiently to provide more opportunity for flexibility. The DfES policy document 14-19: Opportunities for All was published during this phase of the project, although heralded by others. The 14-19 element was a late starter in the project proposal and approved by the LSC as a late development of the programme. As a result of this, and the need subsequently to develop a new set of contacts and ways of working, the delivery phase in the project was planned for the spring term of 2003.
- 55 There were two parallel themes in the 14-19 events. The first was to draw upon the experience of those who had been active in the field over several years; to look at case studies outlining their experiences, both in terms of pedagogy and in administrative and legal matters. The second was to recognise that there were now new features in the educational system, not least specialist schools and a GCSE in engineering. Unfortunately, there was not yet a GCSE in construction. However, there was much for construction people to learn from the experiences in related fields and the intermediate GNVQ was still available at the same level. The Awarding Bodies were helpful in contributing up-to-date information.
- 56 There was much concern among those in FE, work based training providers and employers about the legal and social issues surrounding the education of children of compulsory school age. For example, would teachers be required to have qualified teacher status as normally required in maintained schools? Would children in colleges or workplaces be deemed to be on an educational visit and so be subject to LEA rules about escorts? Which members of staff would need to undergo Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and what would happen if the checks were not completed? Were such checks required if the children were under the supervision of their own school staff? Who would be responsible for discipline and safety? Would risk assessments on workshops and laboratories come to different conclusions with regard to compulsory school-age pupils, compared with 16-18s and adults?
- 57 The programmes were essentially the same in each of the six planned events, although the case studies were, as far as possible, matched to location and discipline. The events were planned in pairs, one each for construction and engineering, in the North, the Midlands and the South. Owing to excess demand, a fourth engineering event was added later in Harrogate. Over 350 delegates attended the events, almost evenly divided between schools and post-16 providers, the latter including both colleges and work based providers.
- 58 The events were not simply focused on the Key Stage 4 element and GCSE. They were intended to reach out into the wider market of Modern Apprenticeship: the student apprenticeship model; the use of other vocationally-related qualifications in schools; and joint working where some teaching was in school, with complementary activities in the workshops or laboratories of a post-16 provider. In some cases this gave access to industrial standard processes and equipment. However, it was not all a one-way street. Some specialist schools were better equipped than some colleges, and the schools had had earlier access to a free Computer-Aided Design (CAD) package or Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM) software, through the Design and Technology Association (DATA), than had the colleges. There was also the tension about how pupil success contributed to the various achievement expectations of both colleges and schools, not least to the Level 2 Achievement targets.

- 59 One point arising from the events was that almost every successful 14-16 collaborative project had been initiated and maintained through some exceptional funding measure. There had been support from work (either a large employer or NTO), an Education Action Zone, or a European Social Fund (ESF) scheme. Most funding levels were thus greater than could be sustained across the whole population. The capitation for school pupils rarely enabled schools to reimburse colleges for the true cost of providing access and teaching. A scheme which enabled access to a range of provision in different locations and at different times, in mixed groups, as illustrated by Sue Hawthorne of Warwickshire LEA at the end-of-project conference, must inherently be more costly than working in one place. But she also noted the benefits in breadth, achievement, motivation, inclusiveness and networking, and in the removal of perceived barriers to access and progression. All of these activities, championed by enthusiasts, raised the question of sustainability in the medium and longer term.
- 60 In summary, this was a very limited awareness-level exercise involving about 400 people across the country. It illustrated what could be done and in particular showed the benefit of badging Level 2 qualifications as GCSE. There was a clear differential in applications to engineering and construction events, which the feedback showed was predominantly due to the non-availability of a construction GCSE until 2004/05. The key issue was funding for sustainability.
- 61 These are some of the features required for continued success.
- Clear advice on, and understanding of, both the legal and social issues, particularly of dealing with children aged 14-16, and knowledge of appropriate teaching and learning styles. This does not necessarily mean replicating school in FE.
 - Clarification of how pupil or learner success is attributed to both providers in the partnership, in terms of retention and achievement, and league tables.
 - A GCSE-badged qualification in all appropriate specialist areas at Level 2.
 - A sustainable funding model, which reflects the genuine additional cost of the complication of collaborative working to achieve real educational aims.

Conclusion

- 62 The BACH and NFEC Dissemination of Good Practice national project has now come to an end, and by any rational measure it must be judged to have been highly successful. Indeed, it has been so judged in two independent evaluations. It originated from a project specification generated by the FEFC under its Standards Fund and the two professional organisations joined forces to tender a bid. The bid was successful and the first year (Phase 1) of the project got under way between 2000 and 2001. Indeed, much of the activity was concentrated in the latter part of the year, owing to the usual difficulties of getting the detail of contracts signed and funds committed before expenditure could begin. However, it was clear from the start that the concept was right. Inevitably, the implementation could be improved, year by year. This has happened now for three consecutive years.
- 63 It was a unique opportunity when the FEFC Senior Inspector and Director of Standards were able to review the strengths and weakness of the sectors concerned and jointly decide to do something practical about the proportionally fewer grade 1 and 2 colleges in engineering and construction. Despite overall grades being lower than desirable, there were some excellent colleges with grade 1 and 2 ratings, which subsequently went on to be CoVEs. It was especially useful to be able to get beneath the surface of the general ratings and recognise the pockets of good practice in an otherwise less good college. By identifying these sources, not only could others be helped to emulate them but the good could themselves be made better. The proposal from the two professional associations NFEC and BACH was judged, in an open FEFC tendering exercise, to be the one which best met the selection criteria and provided the best option for the award of the contract. A strength of the proposal was the fact that NFEC and BACH had the confidence of their members and the lines of communication necessary to make an early impact in the most relevant areas.

- 64 As the project moved through its three yearly phases, its activities became more focused, finally pinpointing specific institutions that, themselves, recognised the need for help. Phase 3 has not only met its target in terms of numbers, it has also widened its appeal to the broader community served by the LSC remit, taking good practice to colleges, employers and work based training organisations, and involving schools in the context of the 14-19 curriculum. Its success was confirmed by two independent evaluations and by public statements from satisfied customers at an end-of-project conference.
- 65 As a result of *Success for All* and other developments such as Trust in FE, more of the funding for quality improvement is now being made available directly to providers through resources such as the LIDF. There will be fewer nationally organised quality improvement initiatives and, since the establishment of the LSC, the in-house link between the inspection and curriculum expertise and quality improvement funding managers has been lost. The challenge that remains is how to address the issues and difficulties arising from this new environment. Can the slowly emerging SSCs be a major coordinating influence on the post-16 education and training sector and its key players? Perhaps the regional development agencies (RDAs) can bridge the gap? Without the communication tool of the website and the dedicated expertise and resource of a central project team, it is difficult to see how this particular *Success for All* can be sustained and perhaps replicated in other sectors. But the challenge must somehow be met!
- 66 In reviewing achievements and outcomes for the purpose of compiling this report, we have identified a number of key requirements, in respect of each of the key areas of project activity, for retention of the gains made through this work and to enable the sectors to go on to reach newer and higher ground. In order to facilitate establishing an agenda for completing the unfinished business on the route towards *Success for All*, we have listed these points together in Annex E.

Annex A: Tender for Phase 3 – Nature, Scope and Content of the Dissemination Provision

Table 1: Phase 3 – Nature, Scope and Content of the Dissemination Provision.

Activity	Audience and Aims	Outcomes, Participation and Timing
<p>In-Centre Support for potential CoVEs</p>	<p>Small teams of Critical Friends will go to college and non-college providers and spend three days reviewing the delivery of learning in construction and/or engineering.</p> <p>A pre-visit will be made in each case to agree the nature and scope of the activity with the provider managers.</p> <p>Recommendations will be prepared and fed back to the managers of the provision, and a development session for the delivery staff will be prepared and implemented on the fourth day.</p> <p>The exercise will be completed by the preparation of a report with recommendations for the provider.</p>	<p>The teams would consist of representatives of the Pathfinders and potential CoVEs, and would also include associate ALI and Ofsted inspectors, in their role as practitioners in the delivery of learning.</p> <p>Twenty-four providers would be involved in this activity in the period to March 2003. Applications would be invited from centres and initial discussions would be used to ensure that visits were made only to those with identified needs.</p> <p>The providers visited early would feature strongly in the proposed independent review of the effectiveness of the project – follow-up questions would be used to assess the added value resulting from these in-centre support events.</p>
<p>Technology Support Networks</p>	<p>Extend the work and achievements of Phase 2, to enable more specialist and more comprehensive mutual-support groups to be established.</p> <p>This will allow curriculum-level development and delivery support to be effectively targeted, as well as continuing support in respect of the more generic issues such as key skills, flexibility of delivery and work based learning and assessment.</p> <p>The target audience will be extended to cover all providers of learning in construction and engineering, including those who deliver technology in the schools.</p>	<p>The nature and scope of the Network groups would be revised, and the number increased, to deal with specialist needs and to provide networking opportunities for work based trainers and assessors, and school technology teachers.</p> <p>A review would be carried out to establish whether geographical divisions along RDA boundaries would continue to be the most appropriate model for the more inclusive and extended requirements.</p> <p>Network group meetings would, where possible, focus on CoVEs and in so doing enable collaborative achievement of common goals.</p> <p>The target participation in this mutual-support activity would be an average of 16 per group by the autumn of 2002 – a total of perhaps 1200 teachers, trainers and assessors.</p>

<p>Website development and maintenance</p>	<p>Extend and update the website facilities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fully reflect the aims and objectives of Phase 3 of the project; • include details of, and links to, a range of other useful sites and organisations; • maintain up-to-date information on planned activities and feedback from events that have occurred; • where possible, further develop and maintain the exemplar support materials library, by collaboration with the Technology Pathfinder Group and other potential CoVEs; and • new materials exemplars will be added – largely from donations by Pathfinders and potential CoVEs. 	<p>The role of the website will become largely that of an information channel in respect of project activities and events. It will make available date, time and venue details and provide feedback from the event discussions. This will be a continuation of part of its current function.</p> <p>The Resource Materials library will be retained and new materials from the Pathfinders and potential CoVEs, and those developed through the Learning and Assessment Support Networks, will be processed and published only as opportunity and resources allow.</p> <p>BACH, NFEC, CITB and the Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (now Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance) are committed to maintaining the website facility for as long as it is necessary. Links will be established with other appropriate organisations, including Trailblazer SSCs and the Association of Learning Providers.</p> <p>Visitation to the site by the target audience will increase as the project develops, involving an increasing proportion of the construction and engineering provision in England.</p> <p>This involvement of the target audience will continue to be promoted through use of the e-mail 'push news' facility that was included in the website in Phase 2.</p>
<p>School and provider collaboration</p>	<p>There is a need for dissemination of good practice in school-college and school-other provider collaboration, because of the emergence of the 14-19 curriculum.</p> <p>Discussion of the delivery requirements of the emerging GCSEs in vocational subjects, and other KS4-level qualifications appropriate as precursors to post-16 learning in construction and engineering, would be used as a vehicle to promote closer collaboration between schools, colleges and non-college learning providers, to help ensure an effective implementation of the 14-19 curriculum.</p>	<p>A series of in-hotel events would be run, should funding permit, in the North, the Midlands and the South, each with a target participation of 50.</p> <p>A balance of school, college and non-college provider participation would be maintained. Presentations would be from the City Technology Colleges and colleges that have received good recent reports in respect of delivery of GNVQs and advanced vocational certificates of education.</p> <p>Total target participation for these events would be 300.</p>

Annex B: Tender for Phase 3 – Schedule of Activities

Table 2: Phase 3 – Schedule of Activities

Activity	Apr 02	May 02	Jun 02	Jul 02	Aug 02	Sep 02	Oct 02	Nov 02	Dec 02	Jan 03	Feb 03	Mar 03
Market the project opportunities to practitioners at all levels in all providers												
Recruit Critical Friends teams and organise and deliver training												
Develop, organise and deliver Critical Friends in-centre events												
Review Support Networks structure and distribution												
Develop and support the revised Technology Support Networks												
Enhance the website and maintain it as an effective information channel												
Develop, organise and deliver 14-19 curriculum events												
Monitor and evaluate performance (website, questionnaires, follow-up calls)												
Prepare and submit reports as required to the LSC and the joint steering group												

Annex C: Participation Performance in Phase 3

Introduction

- 1 This annex provides more detail of the performance of Phase 3 of the project as a measure against the expected levels of participation agreed with the LSC, itemised in the contract for the work and outlined in Annex A of this report.

Critical Friends

- 2 Funding was available to allow teams of three Critical Friends to visit a total of 24 centres, covering both colleges and other LSC-funded providers. Centres were invited to apply and over 70 paper applications were received. Another twelve made telephone applications but were advised that they were very unlikely to benefit because of the resource limitation.
- 3 Twenty-four Critical Friends visits were successfully carried out. Feedback on the perceived effectiveness of the Critical Friends operation was collected through centre and team questionnaires, and follow-up telephone calls to the centres. College and other providers were involved and both were equally impressed with the provision.
- 4 Written feedback from the centres showed that the Critical Friends initiative was exceedingly well received and very effective, and that recommendations for quality improvement were being acted upon. All visited centres would have valued further follow-up support. In the words of the principal of one centre visited, spoken publicly at the end-of-project conference, the Dissemination Project was 'the single most powerful work in construction and engineering in a decade'.

Technology Support Networks

- 5 The nature and scope of the Network groups were revised in Phase 3, and the number increased to deal with specialist needs and also to provide networking opportunities for work based trainers and assessors. Funding was available to enable support to be provided for the Networks until the end of December 2002.

- 6 A target of 72 groups with a regional distribution across England was agreed with the LSC, and this translated into 1,152 (that is, 72 x 16) participants by the autumn term of 2002.
- 7 The more specialist group approach was clearly valued as participation levels significantly increased in Phase 3. The agreed target was exceeded in each of the two terms and final participation figures showed that over 90% above target was achieved in the autumn term of 2002. Compared to the final participation in Phase 2, the more specialist Phase 3 approach produced a participation increase over Phase 2 of more than 247%.

14-19 Collaboration Events

- 8 A series of six in-hotel events were to be run in the spring of 2003, in the North, the Midlands and the South, each with a target participation of 50. A balance of school, college and non-college provider participation was to be maintained. Programmes consisted largely of case studies of existing good practice in collaborative delivery of 14-plus learning, but inputs were also provided by NTOs and Awarding Bodies on vocational GCSE developments and the support materials that were or would be available.
- 9 The programmes were developed as construction-specific and engineering-specific examples of collaborative delivery and opportunities provided for each in York, Coventry and Reading. The events were marketed to the target audiences and quickly recruited more than the target number of 300 participants, although there was some asymmetry in the response.
- 10 All engineering events quickly developed waiting lists and the target number for these was increased to 60 per event. The new places were quickly filled and a further event was organised for Harrogate, which also quickly filled to capacity. All three regions were left with unsatisfied engineering demand.
- 11 Construction events recruited more slowly but the original target of 50 per event was eventually exceeded.

- 12 Feedback from the events was very positive and it was clear that the existence of the GCSE in engineering and the availability of free support materials developed by the Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (EMTA, now the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (SEMTA) had done much to aid recruitment to the engineering events.
- 13 Despite these issues, recruitment to the 14-19 collaborative delivery events exceeded the overall target by a considerable margin. The total of 478 applications represented an achievement of 59% above the original target. Participation also showed that there had been a good balance of school, college and other LSC-funded provider representatives taking part.

Project Website

- 14 There was no agreed performance target figure for the project website in Phase 3. Its role was to provide information on planned events and feedback from events that had taken place, and to maintain the library of learning and assessment support materials that had been developed in Phases 1 and 2. Further materials would be added – some that remained in the pipeline at the conclusion of Phase 2, and others as and when they became available.
- 15 The site also provided details of the Phase 3 aims and objectives, a description of the methodologies being used, contact details of the project team and the project office, a message board, and a facility for individuals to provide comment on issues, events and activities. A Useful Links page was introduced that provided access to a wide range of information and support materials on other sites.
- 16 Despite there being no specified target performance figure, the level of visits to the site was reviewed on a monthly basis. Traffic climbed steadily over the course of the project and was greatest (over 65,000 hits in the month) in November 2002 when TSNs were still being supported and 14-19 events' details being made available. Two thirds of this activity was accessing the Resource Materials library and Useful Links. As a comparison, the number of hits in March 2003 was just under 45,000 – almost exclusively accessing Resource Materials and Useful Links.
- 17 The level of interest was maintained in April 2003 and the site clearly continues to be valued as a gateway to learning and assessment materials.

Annex D: End-of-Project Conference Report

End-of-Project Conference, Holiday Inn, Coventry, 31 March 2003

Introduction

- 1 On Monday 31 March 2003, more than 70 delegates attended a conference at the Holiday Inn, Coventry, aimed at summarising the outcomes of Phase 3 of the LSC-funded Good Practice Dissemination Project, run jointly by the BACH and the NFEC. The delegates included managers from schools, colleges and training providers, as well as representatives from bodies such as the newly formed DfES Standards Unit, the LSC, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), SSCs, LEAs, Awarding Bodies and Education–Business Partnerships. Unfortunately, the local LSCs, despite their intended significant role in this process under the reformed arrangements, did not respond to their invitations to participate.
- 2 The conference was introduced, chaired and concluded by Alan Gray, an education consultant who had been involved with the Dissemination Project in many roles since the outset. The programme gave delegates a client’s-eye view of the key aspects of this third phase, as well as an opportunity to explore options for the future. New arrangements will see the demise of a central Standards Fund within the LSC, the formation of a Standards Unit within the DfES, and radically restructured industrial support through SSCs. The final session both highlighted concerns for the future and also made suggestions on how best to meet continuing needs in the new era.

The Conference Presentations

- 3 Keith Marshall, the recently appointed Chief Executive of the Summit Skills SSC, opened the programme with an illustration of what the key expectations of the SSCs were and how these differed from those of the former NTOs. Having reviewed the structures and relationships inherent in Summit Skills, Keith stressed the need for working in partnership across all levels and activities. All SSCs had limited resources with which to achieve their goals. They must therefore make best use of what is already available, and ‘take projects like this, which have been shown to

work well, and use them for the future, to spread that work right across the sector’.

- 4 Val Carroll is Head of Applied Technology at Tameside College, an outstanding establishment in every respect – a Beacon, a CoVE, grade 1 Inspection result, grade A financial management and so on. She was convinced that this achievement would not have been possible without the caring and sharing ethos, and practical collaboration and mutual learning, made possible by full participation in the project. This view was shared by David Law, Principal of Chelmsford College, seeking to move his college from being a satisfactory provider to one which was truly a centre of excellence. He described with enthusiasm how his team had benefitted from the Critical Friends aspect of this project. Arguing that this work was ‘incredibly good value for money’ and the ‘single most powerful work in engineering and construction for a decade’, the irony was that it was an ‘end-of-project’ event.
- 5 Addressing the 14-19 Collaboration aspect of the project, Sue Hawthorne, of Warwickshire LEA (National LEA 14-19 Network), described the vast range of collaborative schemes facilitated by her LEA and supported by schools, colleges, work based trainers, major employers and SMEs. She valued the engineering GCSE as a catalyst for many improvements and noted how the project had developed ‘breadth, achievement, motivation, inclusion and networking’ and contributed to the sustainability of the many initiatives.
- 6 The Government’s FE strategy (for England) is set out in the four themes of *Success for All*. Mike Fisher, a secondee to the new DfES Standards Unit from FE and Inspection, described how responsibility for the themes was divided between the LSC and the Standards Unit. Theme 2 had a specific undertaking to share and identify best practice in teaching and learning. The speaker’s view was that it was pointless to seek new solutions when identified and supported successful approaches existed, as in this project. However, though construction was a first-year priority, engineering did not feature in 2003 or 2004. The collaborative sharing methodology was in danger of demise, although ‘this project needs to be rolled out to the other areas of teaching and learning’. He concluded that the project had been ‘an excellent vehicle for change ... that will benefit our learners and the industries they serve’.

Discussion and Conclusion

- 7 An opportunity was provided for small group discussion. The facilitators tried to tease out the impact that the project had made on delegates as individuals and on their institutions. Phase 3 had sought to reach, through Critical Friends visits, those providers who had found it difficult to participate in the earlier phases. It also made only a start on the new 14-19 agenda. Consequently, several had become involved or aware only in the final weeks or months. Such had been the excess demand for Critical Friends (72 applications for 24 funded visits) that several delegates were from those disappointed and still seeking help. They were keen to hear good news about the future, but it was not easy to provide.
- 8 The final plenary question-and-answer session elicited several key points.
 - The LSC Standards Fund was no more; it was now up to providers to make their case in college development plans and then to apply to local LSCs.
 - To avoid multiple approaches to 47 local LSCs, BACH and NFEC might benefit from making a case to the nine RDAs, which oversee local LSCs.
 - There was potential for the project website material to be adopted by the DfES Standards Fund; BACH and NFEC had a developed peer-review process.
 - There was now no clear machinery for reviewing inspection outcomes and for making strategic national decisions to improve a whole sector's provision. Most SSCs would not be resourced to do so for some time.
- 9 Thanks were expressed to the conference presenters, the project manager and team, and all participants on the day and in the project as a whole.

Annex E: Actions Required to Maintain Momentum of the Four Main Project Activities

- 1 Section 3 of the report comprises an overview of the project's outcomes and achievements, and four subsections, each dealing with one of the main project activities. In each case there is considerable unfinished business, which must now be addressed in the context of new national policies. The requirements for the continued success of each of those sections of work were listed in context.
- 2 To ensure that these requirements remain easily accessible to form the basis for future action plans, they are listed separately below in summarised form. This should be seen as the agenda for completing the unfinished business on the route towards *Success for All*.

Technology Support Networks

- 3 Ownership of the issues addressed by TSNs by provider middle and senior management, so that involvement in TSNs is part of the college or provider plan.
- 4 Active support and encouragement of relevant trade groupings by SSCs, especially, but not exclusively, for the topics covered by national centres.
- 5 Active support and encouragement of local teacher and trainer self-development from local LSCs and nationally from the DfES Standards Unit.
- 6 Direct links from the TSNs to the regional organisations of BACH and NFEC, as a means of distilling disparate problems into a coherent national set of issues, as a channel for communication with heads of departments, and as a possible source of support infrastructure.
- 7 Strong regional structures within BACH and NFEC to maintain links with colleges and other learning providers in the regional areas, both as foster parents to, and as channels of communication for, the TSNs.

Website Development and Maintenance

- 8 Financial support from the industrial sectors concerned to keep the site up and running with a service provider, perhaps the minimum role for SSCs.

- 9 Support for peer review and editing of supplied materials, whether on a dedicated site as at present, on an NFEC and/or BACH site, on some arrangement to be developed by the DfES Standards Unit, or elsewhere (perhaps through the promised BBC Digital Curriculum service).

Critical Friends (In-Centre Support for Colleges and Other Learning and Skills Council-Funded Providers)

- 10 An analysis of the 24 Critical Friends visits undertaken between 1 May 2002 and 28 March 2003, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the first year's approach. This should also classify the differences in issues identified and approaches taken, be they between the construction and engineering disciplines, between colleges or training providers, or between large national centres and small, rural multi-role providers.
- 11 Follow-up contacts (and possibly visits) with the 24 centres involved between 1 May and 28 March, to evaluate and consolidate the implementation of agreed recommendations, and to review in the light of initial experience.
- 12 Provision of an initial and follow-up Critical Friends service to the 50 or more applicants for Critical Friends whose requests could not be met during Phase 3, and indeed to those other centres that were advised not to bother applying when the list was closed.
- 13 Maintenance of a form of project website to maintain the communication link, and a basic project management core infrastructure to provide a central point for brokering links between providers requesting the service, the possible sources of funding and the potential team of Critical Friends.
- 14 Coordination of a straightforward process for access to a Critical Friends service using support from the Local Intervention and Development Fund. A regional system based on the nine RDAs would be a step forward, but ideally it should be national. Whatever the arrangement, the Critical Friends service needs to become a first choice option for those looking to improve their engineering or construction provision, or both.
- 15 Strong regional structures within BACH and NFEC to maintain links with colleges and other learning providers in the regional areas as channels of communication for a continuing devolved Critical Friends service.

14-19 Collaboration

- 16 Clear advice on, and understanding of, both the legal and social issues, particularly of dealing with children aged 14-16, and knowledge of appropriate teaching and learning styles. This does not necessarily mean replicating school in FE.
- 17 Clarification of how pupil or learner success is attributed to both providers in the partnership, in terms of retention and achievement, and league tables.
- 18 A GCSE-badged qualification in all appropriate specialist areas at Level 2.
- 19 A sustainable funding model, which reflects the genuine additional cost of the complication of collaborative working to achieve real educational aims.

Annex F: Phase 3 Steering Group Membership

Bob Clarke	NFEC Consultant; Dissemination Project Manager
David Cormican	President of BACH; Adult Learning Inspectorate
Colin Dobson	Immediate Past Chair of BACH; Steering Group Chair; Edexcel Foundation
Alan Gray	NFEC Vice Chair; Havering/Barking/Ford Pathfinder CoVE
Tom Gibney	CITB
Jim Houston	Chair of BACH; Aylesbury College
Mary Kelly	LSC Quality Improvement Manager
Bob Millington	NFEC Hon. Secretary; City College, Coventry
John Morris	NFEC Hon. Treasurer; Stafford College
Mike Morris	Chair of NFEC; Steering Group Vice Chair; St Helens College
Steve Pressey	EMTA
Peter Swindlehurst	NFEC Consultant; Steering Group Secretary
Jeff Townend	BACH Hon. Secretary; Barnsley College
Clive Weston	BACH Vice Chair; Accrington and Rossendale College
Ruth Wright	Engineering Council UK

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