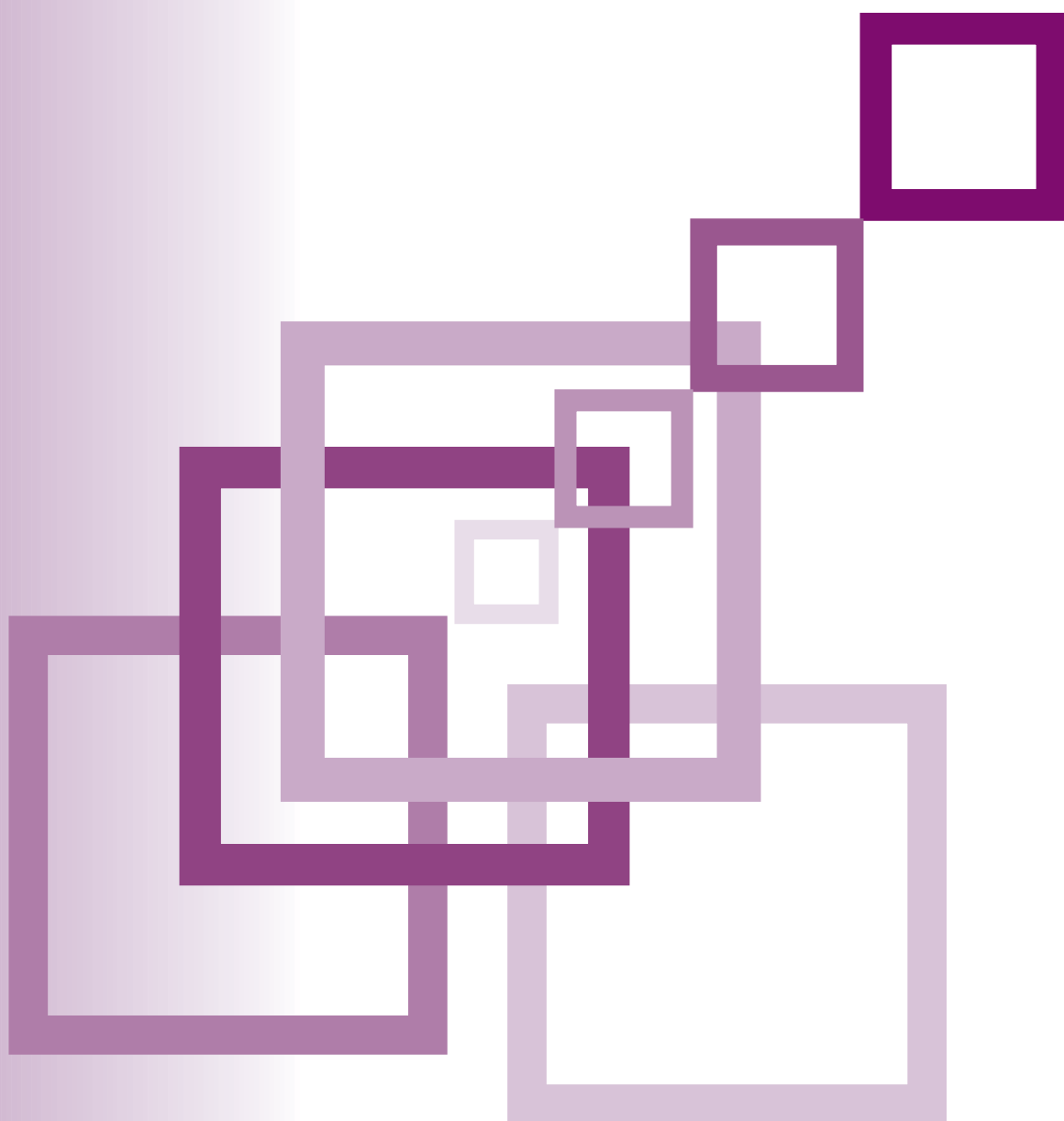


Information, Advice and Guidance for Adults

The National Policy Framework and Action Plan



FOREWORD BY IVAN LEWIS



Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services have a pivotal role to play in delivering the Skills Strategy. They promote the benefits of learning, help individuals to address and overcome the barriers to learning, and support them in making realistic and well informed choices. IAG will play a key part in Government policy to offer individuals an entitlement to learning to secure a first full level 2 qualification. It is a key feature of the Employer Training Pilots, which we are continuing to develop. The National Employment Panel review on aligning skills training and labour market support activities, is identifying IAG as an important area for joint working between the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus. We are committed to high standards of delivery in all public services. We believe that users of IAG services are entitled to a high standard of delivery wherever and however they access IAG services. The Government wants all providers of publicly funded IAG services to adults to demonstrate their commitment to high standards of delivery, by achieving accreditation against the **matrix** Standard.

It is vital to our future prosperity that everyone should have access to information which is up-to-date, easy to understand and which addresses the wide range of questions and concerns people have about engaging in learning and skills development. Some people will need advice to help them overcome their barriers to learning. The Government cannot achieve this alone. Some adults get careers advice through their employers. There are many private career consultancy firms providing guidance commercially, and we welcome the work of the private sector to make available IAG services for those people who can afford to pay for them. The Government's efforts and investment of public funds should focus on those who need the most help, and who are least able to pay for it. We believe that IAG services are central to achieving our goal of supporting people to achieve the qualifications necessary for basic employability, and for progression to further learning.

This document contains a National Policy Framework for IAG services, which defines at a national level the information and advice services which adults should be entitled to expect and the standards to which those services should be delivered. We have also included an Action Plan which sets out how we will deliver consistent, high quality and accessible IAG services for adults.

Our task does not end there. By 2010 we want IAG to be an integral and valued part of adult learning. That will require an ongoing programme of reform to raise quality and effectiveness. We will be working with key stakeholders such as the LSC and Ufi/**learn**direct to make this a reality.

I am grateful to all those who have worked so hard to raise the profile and standard of IAG services over the last few years, and who have contributed to shaping the future of IAG services for adults.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivan Lewis'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'I' and a long, sweeping underline.

Ivan Lewis
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills and Vocational Education

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Government's Skills Strategy *21st Century Skills – Realising Our Potential* commits the DfES, working with the LSC and Ufi/**learndirect**, to define the range and quality of IAG services which adults should be entitled to expect. There is clear evidence that access to IAG increases the likelihood that individuals will enter learning, and that they will achieve a qualification from their study. That is why we are introducing, through this document, a statement of the quality and range of service that should be available in all areas for adults aged 20 and over to access comprehensive and up-to-date information about learning and work available free of charge. For adults without a level 2 qualification, we are also introducing a new priority to provide free, high quality advice which will support the introduction of the Level 2 Learning Entitlement. These are the core IAG services which will be available as a minimum throughout England. The LSC will consider whether to offer additional, or enhanced IAG services beyond the core IAG services.
2. Regional Skills Partnerships will also review whether their region is getting the IAG services it needs. Regional Skills Partnerships bring together a number of key partners and stakeholders including Regional Development Agencies, Small Business Service, local Learning and Skills Councils, Jobcentre Plus and the Sector Skills Development Agency. Their role is to link the assessment of economic strategy and the skills, business support and labour market services needed to raise productivity. While the minimum entitlement to core IAG services will be the same nationally, there can and should be regional variation beyond that to meet regional priorities.
3. The National Policy Framework and Action Plan are aimed at stakeholders, partner organisations and individuals with an interest in the delivery of IAG services for adults. Part 1 – the National Policy Framework, sets out a core information and advice service (subsequently referred to as the core IAG services) which should be available to all adults aged 20 and over. It sets out a clear and consistent level and standard of services which should be available in all areas. Part 2 – the Action Plan, sets out the actions to achieve the Government's programme of reform for IAG. The table at Annex 2 summarises the key delivery milestones.
4. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible nationally for securing IAG services for adults outside Higher Education. That covers both the services provided by colleges and training providers as "embedded" parts of their service to students, and also the separate IAG partnerships in each area. The LSC will deliver the core IAG services through an integrated IAG service. The integrated IAG service will provide users with a clear point of access to IAG. It will bring together the work of the **learndirect** national advice service

with the work of the local IAG partnerships. It will provide a range of high quality information and advice services available to all, but with a clear priority to focus on engaging and progressing in learning those people without a full level 2 qualification. The LSC will draw on good practice from the Employer Training Pilots in developing links between the integrated IAG service and employers. As part of the Employer Training Pilots, which are being extended from 12 to 18 LSC areas, the integrated IAG service will have a key role in raising employer and employee awareness of IAG and in supporting delivery of IAG in the workplace.

5. The LSC will co-ordinate IAG services embedded within colleges and other learning provision, with other forms of IAG such as those delivered by local IAG Partnerships. The co-ordination of these services is an essential part of securing a good local service, and the LSC will use its contracting, planning and funding powers to secure that co-ordination. The aim is to ensure seamless IAG support for the individual from pre-entry into learning through to completion and progression into further learning. The LSC will chair local strategic partnerships to ensure a more strategic approach to the planning and funding of adult IAG services. The local strategic partnerships will draw on the findings of Strategic Area Reviews, and will include representatives from Connexions and Jobcentre Plus.
6. This National Policy Framework also takes account of the emerging findings of the review by the National Employment Panel on how to secure better alignment between skills training and labour market support activities. One of the areas for improvement identified in that review is co-ordination between Jobcentre Plus and the integrated IAG service, so that benefit claimants who need information and advice are referred effectively to the services that can help them. The review is considering the scope to improve collaboration between LSC and Jobcentre Plus in securing that effective joint support for benefit claimants.

PART 1 - NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

7. Members of the Reform of IAG Project Board, which includes representatives from DfES, DWP, Jobcentre Plus, Ufl and LSC, have reached agreement that the policy set out in this framework:
 - meets the Skills Strategy White Paper commitment; and
 - provides a satisfactory range of core IAG services which service users have a right to expect.
8. The proposals have been developed following extensive consultation with the guidance sector and with IAG practitioners.
9. In defining the core IAG service in a meaningful way for practitioners and the public, the following considerations have been taken into account:

Principles

The core IAG services have been developed on the Principles of Coherent IAG Service Delivery adopted by the National IAG Board which were endorsed at the IAG road-shows earlier this year (attached at Annex 1). In addition to these, providers have a responsibility to collect and act upon customer feedback, ensure that service users are aware of feedback mechanisms, and that any feedback they give will be welcomed and acted upon in seeking to improve services. Providers must also ensure effective application of data protection regulations.

Access

The core IAG services will provide access to information and advice for all adults aged 20 and over, with no upper age limit.

Delivery Infrastructure

There is currently a lack of consistency in the range of IAG services being delivered, depending on the geographical area. The core IAG services will build on existing good practice. However, we recognise that significant development work will be needed in some areas to bring them up to the required level. We recognise a need for differences in the balance between supported face-to-face and self-help services within the core IAG services available in some areas. For example, in rural or isolated areas there is likely to be more of a reliance on self-help and/or helpline information and therefore a greater need to develop users' ability to access self-help.

Quality

The service user is entitled to expect that the IAG services they access will be quality assured through the **matrix** Standard and/or other appropriate quality frameworks. Government wants all DfES and LSC funded IAG providers accredited against the **matrix** Standard. IAG providers funded by the DfES or the LSC IAG Programme Fund are required to achieve accreditation by March 2004. We will actively encourage all other learning providers funded by the LSC to achieve accreditation against **matrix** by March 2005. The LSC Performance Review process should guarantee a consistent and high level of service to users. We will also work with the Adult Learning Inspectorate to review the quality of services as they are delivered to service users, as a basis for identifying and encouraging good practice.

Competence of Staff

As part of the “no wrong door” policy all frontline staff should be competent to identify the service users’ needs and to refer them to alternative practitioners or provision when necessary. Staff delivering the core IAG services must be competent to do so, in line with the **matrix** Standard.

Capacity

Findings from a recent capacity and competence review of IAG provision indicate that IAG Partnerships have achieved good coverage overall. However, there are concerns about levels of delivery to certain priority groups, particularly people with disabilities and refugee/asylum seekers and in some rural areas. Some Partnership providers also feel they have additional capacity to deliver but that this may be dependent on resources and availability of competent staff. We do not feel that the introduction of the core IAG services will require significant additional resource as the services included are already being delivered in the majority of areas. However, where there are concerns these will need to be addressed by the LSC to ensure they meet the minimum requirement.

Access to Core IAG Services

10. Service users should be entitled to access the core IAG services through a combination of:

- 24 hour access to website to submit email requests;
- 24 hour access to answer-phone service to leave a request;
- freephone access to the integrated IAG service through a National Entry Point, available 8am – 10pm 7 days a week;
- centres for information available a minimum 5 days a week;
- appointments for advice available outside normal working hours wherever possible e.g. to meet the needs of shift workers; and
- outreach provision.

11. We also propose the following minimum response times to user requests:

- 24 hour response to requests for information. The response could take the form of a text message, phone call, email or face-to-face;
- where clients require signposting to alternative or further sources of IAG, this should be done within 24 hours of the original enquiry;
- if information has to be sought elsewhere the user should be advised of this within 3 working days; and
- appointments for advice should be available within 5 working days of the date of receipt of the original request.

Information

12. “Information”, within the context of the IAG programme, means the provision of information on learning and work, without any discussion about the relative merits of the options through:
- printed materials such as leaflets;
 - audio-visual materials such as videos;
 - computer software on CD-ROM or via the internet; and
 - verbal information to the client on a face-to-face basis or through local or national help-line services such as **learndirect** and Worktrain.

Core Information Services

13. The core information services should consist of:
- A. Information about access to opportunities. This should include information on:
- learning and work opportunities, including opportunities in Further Education, Higher Education, Adult and Community Learning, **learndirect**, other local learning providers; work placements; national and local job vacancies; voluntary opportunities; opportunities in self employment;
 - learner incentives and entitlements (including the new Level 2 Entitlement proposed in the Skills Strategy and the new Adult Learner Grant, as they are rolled out nationally), including sources of financial support;
 - local and regional work taster, work shadow and work experience possibilities;
 - where to find local vacancy information including through Worktrain and Jobcentre Plus;
 - self access database information (for example Occupations, Worktrain, **learndirect**) on jobs, training, qualifications;
 - qualifications and equivalence in UK of qualifications gained overseas; and
 - disability and employment issues – including where to get further support.

B. Supporting information on:

- national and local labour market information and intelligence. This should be in a format which is accessible to the user and provides the most up-to-date and accurate information on the labour market at national, regional and local level including local employer information and trends; and
- career, occupational, sector profiles.

C. Enabling information on:

- how to apply for a job (letters, internet, cold calling, phone calls), including filling in applications, CV completion, interview techniques and typical sector specific interview questions;
- aptitude profiles; and
- learning and career planning or management tools.

D. Signposting information on:

- what is and what is not available from the local LSC funded skills and training programmes;
- the Children's Information Service, Surestart and how to access them;
- local, regional and national transport availability;
- benefits issues;
- how to access free services for learning and work including **learndirect** and, where appropriate, Jobcentre Plus;
- the Disability Discrimination Act and other relevant legislation; and
- availability of specialist support for clients around learning support, basic skills, disability.

Advice

14. The provision of advice requires more interaction with the service user, usually on a one-to-one basis. It may require explanation of some of the information provided, how to access and use information, and a recognition of when more in-depth services may be required by the user.

Core Advice Services

15. Core advice services should include the following, as appropriate for the individual:
 - interpreting any information and taking into account personal circumstances;
 - an individualised service tailored to users' needs;
 - personalised information including possible referral to in-depth services;
 - helping users to use decision making tools;
 - helping service users to link their personal interests and/or skills to their desired job/career requirements;
 - identifying basic skills needs and referring those clients to sources of help in gaining basic skills in literacy, language and numeracy;
 - meaningful interpretation of Labour Market Information and Intelligence;
 - advice on the financial and other support available to adult learners, such as Level 2 Entitlement and the Adult Learning Grant as they are introduced nationally;
 - basic advice around services available during redundancy including how to access them, whom to contact, and where to go;
 - advice on job search methods (CV, interview skills, applications for support or referral to enhanced services);
 - considering possible progression paths, personalising options;
 - knowing what is and is not available and/or possible and discussing alternatives.

ANNEX 1

THE NATIONAL IAG BOARD

Information, advice and guidance services should promote the value of learning and be accessible to people, to provide them with the help they need to enter and progress in learning and work.

Principles of Coherent IAG Service Delivery

Accessible and Visible – IAG services should be recognised and trusted by clients, have convenient entry points from which clients may be signposted or referred to the services they need, and be open at times and in places which suit clients' needs;

Professional and Knowledgeable – IAG frontline staff should have the skills and knowledge to identify quickly and effectively the client's needs. They should have the skills and knowledge either to address the client's needs or to signpost or to refer them to suitable alternative provision;

Effective Connections – Links between IAG services should be clear from the client's perspective. Where necessary, clients should be supported in their transition between services;

Availability, Quality and Delivery – IAG Services should be targeted at the needs of clients, and be informed by social and economic priorities at local, regional and national levels;

Diversity – The range of IAG services should reflect the diversity of clients' needs;

Impartial – IAG services should support clients to make informed decisions about learning and work based on the client's needs and circumstances;

Responsive – IAG services should reflect clients' present and future needs;

Friendly and Welcoming – IAG services should encourage clients to engage successfully with the service;

Enabling – IAG services should encourage and support clients to become lifelong learners by enabling them to access and use information to plan their careers, supporting clients to explore the implications for both learning and work in their future career plans;

Awareness – Adults should be aware of the IAG services that are relevant to them, and have well informed expectations of those services.

PART 2 - ACTION PLAN

What is the “reform of IAG for adults”?

16. In *21st Century Skills – Realising Our Potential* the Government underlined the key role of high quality information and advice services in achieving the Skills Strategy, including the target to increase substantially the number of adults achieving their first full level 2 qualification. It outlined the following actions to improve the quality, consistency and visibility of IAG services to adults:
- Integration of the **learndirect** national advice service with the work of the local IAG services, to support cross referral of clients to get the best advice. All funding for the **learndirect** national advice service and local IAG services to be channelled through the LSC, supporting consistent planning and monitoring of services nationally and locally;
 - A clear definition of the range of services which adults should be entitled to expect, and the standards to which those services should be delivered. This will be supported by a clear national brand, national marketing and local LSC marketing so that users know what is available where they live;
 - All LSC funded IAG providers to be accredited against the **matrix** Standard through which we will measure their quality and encourage improvements; and
 - Improved availability of on-line labour market information, and training for IAG practitioners in helping clients to use labour market information to make decisions about learning and work.

How will we deliver the “reform of IAG for adults”?

17. We will develop an integrated IAG service for adults which will bring together the **learndirect** national advice service with the local IAG Partnerships. The LSC will ensure close links between the integrated IAG service and IAG services embedded within learning providers, through more active use of its functions in contracting, planning, funding and monitoring services, in order to ensure that services are fully coherent. The integrated IAG service will be visible and accessible to clients, and will deliver high quality services consistently across England.
18. The DfES, DWP, LSC, Ufi/**learndirect** and Jobcentre Plus will work closely together to implement the reform programme.

How will we communicate the reform to service users, practitioners and co-ordinators?

19. Taking the National Policy Framework as its starting point, the LSC will develop and publish an IAG statement of service for users. This will explain the IAG services available to users, and the standards to which they will be delivered. The LSC will also develop a strategy for communicating the reform agenda to IAG practitioners and co-ordinators.

When will the reform take place?

20. The LSC will publish the IAG statement of service for users and have an integrated IAG service in place by 1 August 2004.

How will we evaluate the impact of the “reform of IAG for adults”?

21. We will develop a strategy to evaluate the impact of the reform of IAG for adults. We will seek a collaborative approach so that impact indicators and data collection requirements give us a reliable and robust basis for assessing the quality of services, while imposing minimum bureaucracy on providers. The approach needs to be coherent with arrangements for the Connexions Service and Jobcentre Plus. We will develop key performance indicators to address the impact of the reform of IAG on:

- public awareness of IAG services, particularly amongst the target group;
- availability of the range of IAG services to meet service users’ needs;
- quality of IAG services to meet service users’ needs, and particularly the satisfaction of users with the service they get;
- competence of front line staff to deliver IAG services;
- customer awareness of learning and work opportunities;
- impact of services in supporting entry into learning, completion of learning and progression from learning; and
- employers’ perceptions of publicly funded IAG.

We will also work with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) to review the quality of services as delivered, so that we can identify and learn from best practice in supporting continuing improvement of services.

What will be the key elements of the reform?

22. ● ***A national entry point*** to the integrated IAG service, provided by **learndirect**, allowing users to access on-line and telephone information and advice. The national entry point will direct users to the most appropriate part of the service to meet their needs.
- ***“No wrong door” access*** to the integrated IAG service. Service users will be able to find out about the full range of on line, telephone and face-to-face services available to them, irrespective of their initial point of contact. The LSC will ensure that frontline advisers in all parts of the service have the skills and information to identify the user’s needs, and to refer them in a consistent and appropriate way. There will be national agreements between the integrated IAG service, the Connexions Service and Jobcentre Plus to ensure effective client referral between these services.
- ***An overarching IAG identifier to link together the key deliverers of IAG services for adults***. The identifier will be displayed by IAG Partnerships, **learndirect**, Jobcentre Plus and Worktrain. It will be supported by a strategy to raise user awareness and visibility of IAG services.
- ***Coherent service planning arrangements*** to focus on delivering a co-ordinated range of services to clients. The LSC will have lead responsibility for planning the integrated IAG service, but will work with Ufi/**learndirect** as a strategic partner to co-ordinate the national and local elements of the service. In each local area, LSC will chair strategic partnerships to advise on local priorities and to ensure a co-ordinated approach between the services offered by the integrated IAG service, Jobcentre Plus and the Connexions service for young people. In doing so, the strategic partnerships should take account of the findings from Strategic Area Reviews and the priorities of Regional Skills Partnerships, and promote coherence between those services and the “embedded” services offered through colleges and training providers.
- ***Consistency in the range and quality of information and advice services available***. The integrated IAG service will provide information and advice to meet the requirements of the National Policy Framework, including information about learning and work opportunities, information about financial and other support for learning, labour market information and career planning information/self-help materials. Advice services will be available, giving particular priority to those people without a first full level 2 qualification, to enable them to interpret the information, taking into account their personal circumstances.

- **Competence and qualifications frameworks** for IAG practitioners. These will build on the findings of the review of qualifications and competences conducted for the DfES by the Guidance Council, and the review of occupational standards for IAG being conducted by the Employment National Training Organisation. This will also include the development of a strategy for the continuous professional development of IAG practitioners and managers.
- **A National Resource Service** to support innovative approaches to the delivery of IAG services. The service will be managed by the LSC and will be responsible for developing resource materials to support consistent and high quality IAG service delivery.
- A commitment for all **LSC funded IAG providers to be accredited against the matrix Standard**. This will include those providers funded by the LSC's IAG programme fund. However, the Government wants all LSC funded IAG provision to be accredited against **matrix** including IAG services embedded within learning provision. We will actively encourage their achievement of accreditation against the **matrix** Standard by March 2005.

In addition to **matrix**, the LSC will continue to quality assure the provision of IAG services through the performance review process and ALI through the Common Inspection Framework for Further Education colleges, Adult & Community Learning and Work Based Learning providers.

- **A requirement to collect evidence of the impact of IAG** on participation and progression into learning and work, and to evaluate evidence of the impact of IAG on retention particularly for people without a level 2 qualification. Through the National IAG Board, we aim to have a collaborative approach to assessing the impact and value of IAG and are exploring with partners the potential for a single survey instrument.
- Working with the Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus and LSC we will enhance the role of Worktrain as a medium for the dissemination of on-line **Labour Market Information** for advisers, with a direct link between Worktrain and the integrated IAG service. We will develop a guide and training resources for IAG advisers in the effective access and use of labour market information to help clients make well informed decisions.

ANNEX 2 Delivery Milestones

Milestone	by when
Publication of IAG National Policy Framework	End December 2003
Coherent service planning arrangements	End December 2003
National Identifier for IAG – inc. IAG partnerships, learnirect , Jobcentre Plus and Worktrain	End February 2004
National Brand for LSC funded local elements of integrated IAG service	End March 2004
Strategy to measure impact of integrated IAG service	End March 2004
Communications strategy for IAG practitioners and co-ordinators	End March 2004
Accreditation against matrix achieved by IAG providers funded by the LSC's IAG programme fund	End March 2004
First review of IAG policy to take account of progressive implementation of Skills Strategy commitments (particularly development of the Level 2 Entitlement, Adult Learning Grant, development of Employer Training Pilots and Learning Communities) and the conclusions of the National Employment Panel review.	End March 2004
Strategy to raise user awareness and visibility of the integrated IAG service	End April 2004
LMI guide and training for IAG advisers	End April 2004
Publication of IAG Statement of Service for service users	End July 2004
National Resource Service	End July 2004

Develop and implement competence and qualifications frameworks (inc. CPD strategy)	End July 2004
National Entry Point for integrated IAG service	1 August 2004
No Wrong Door access for integrated IAG service	1 August 2004
Availability of consistent range of information/ advice as outlined in National Policy Framework	1 August 2004
Integrated IAG service launched	1 August 2004
LSC funded learning providers encouraged to achieve accreditation against the matrix Standard	End March 2005
Second review of IAG policy to take account of further implementation of Skills Strategy and National Employment Panel review	End March 2005

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