

Learning+Skills Council
Tees Valley

Outline Strategic Plan 2002 - 2005

Consultation - Autumn 2001

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Our mission and vision

Our mission is to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training which puts learners first.

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

Our Key Objectives and targets for 2004

Key Objectives	Targets for 2004
1. Extend participation in education, learning and training	<p>80% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning (2000: 75%).</p> <hr/> <p>Set baseline and target for adults in next year's Plan.</p>
2. Increase engagement of employers in workforce development	<p>Develop measure of employer engagement in next year's Plan.</p>
3. Raise achievement of young people	<p>85% at level 2 by age 19 (2000: 75%).</p> <hr/> <p>55% at level 3 by age 19 (2000: 51%).</p>
4. Raise achievement of adults	<p>Raise literacy and numeracy skills of 750,000 adults.</p> <hr/> <p>% of adults at level 2: target to be set in next year's Plan.</p> <hr/> <p>52% of adults at level 3 (2000: 47%).</p>
5. Raise quality of education and training and user satisfaction	<p>Set baselines and targets in next year's Plan.</p>

CONTENTS

1. Foreword.
2. The Tees Valley Area.
3. Learning in the Tees Valley.
4. Key Objective One - Extend participation in education, learning and training.
5. Key Objective Two - Increase engagement of employers in workforce development.
6. Key Objective Three - Raise achievement of young people.
7. Key Objective Four - Raise achievement of adults.
8. Key Objective Five - Raise quality of education and training and user satisfaction.
9. Equality and Inclusion.
10. How to respond.

1. FOREWORD

This Outline Plan is a milestone in the development of the first Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley Strategic Plan. The plan is a key element of the current consultation exercise and will add to the consultation that the Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley has been involved in since it was formed in April 2001.

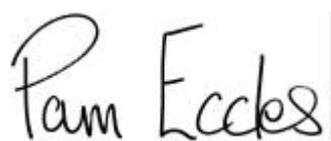
As the organisation has been developing, members of staff have worked with colleagues in the field of learning in the area to brief them on the remit of the Learning and Skills Council and to discuss priorities and concerns with them. Research has also been undertaken to look at the local picture in relation to the objectives.

This plan has been based on the consultation and feedback during the first 6 months, so the issues raised will reflect some of the thinking within the learning and employer communities.

This plan is intended to generate a response, and the results from this consultation will inform the production of the full Strategic Plan. The draft Strategic Plan is due to be ready at the end of this year, with circulation for final consultation in January and February 2002.

This Outline Plan is just one element of the current round of consultation activity. Other activity taking place includes face to face consultation with young people, meetings with providers of learning and work with employers. We are also drawing on excellent work that has been carried out by partners recently into the barriers to involvement in learning by certain groups in society.

I hope that you will find this Outline Plan interesting, and take this opportunity to help us to shape the future of learning in the Tees Valley.



Pam Eccles
Executive Director

2. THE TEES VALLEY AREA

The Tees Valley area includes the local authority districts of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar & Cleveland. The Tees Valley is part of the North East region of England, which also includes Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland. Each of these 3 areas also has a local Learning and Skills Council. The Tees Valley shares a border with County Durham and North Yorkshire.

The population of the Tees Valley is 651,800 (year 2000), however this is expected to fall to 641,100 by the year 2011.¹

There are in excess of 17,000 employers in the Tees Valley, employing almost 250,000 people. Less than 1% of employers in the Tees Valley employ more than 250 staff.

Levels of self employment in the Tees Valley remain below the national average and account for 8.5% of those in work locally, compared with around 11.2% nationally.

Compared to many areas in the United Kingdom, the Tees Valley is performing badly, whatever measure is used, be it levels of educational attainment, new business start ups, unemployment levels or health statistics. Research shows that there is strong link between participation in learning, and the prosperity of an area. The following statistics illustrate the size of the challenge before us all.²

- 42% of local authority wards in the Tees Valley are in the 10% most deprived in England. Three of the 10 most deprived wards in England are in Middlesbrough.
- 34 of the 50 local secondary schools performed below the national average for GCSE attainment in 2000.
- 18% of the population aged 16-60 has low literacy skills, compared with a national average of 15%.
- 13% of secondary school leavers were unable to settle in further education, training or employment within 6 months of leaving school compared to 7% nationally.
- Contraction of chemicals, iron and steel, heavy engineering, and shipbuilding sectors has resulted in approximately 82,000 redundancies over the past 20 years.
- Less than 2% of employees work in hi-tech industries.
- Unemployment in September 2001 was 5.8% - almost double the national average of 3.1%. Male unemployment rates in some wards approaches 30%.³

We know that increasing learning alone will not combat the significant problems described above, but increasing skills and learning was recently identified as one 5 key actions the Tees Valley should concentrate on to promote the development of the Tees Valley as a sub-region.

¹ The Tees Valley Labour Market Report. Tees Valley TEC. 2001

² Regeneration for the Tees Valley, GHK, July 2001

³ National statistics October 2001

3. LEARNING IN THE TEES VALLEY

The following provision is available in the Tees Valley from Key Stage 3 onwards:

- 56 LEA 11- 16 secondary schools
- 4 11-18 schools with sixth forms
- 1 City Technology School
- 6 Further education colleges
- 6 sixth form colleges
- 1 College of Art and Design
- 2 Universities
- 5 adult and community learning services
- Private training providers
- 2 Careers Services
- 1 Information advice and guidance partnership
- 5 Private schools
- Voluntary and community based learning providers
- 17,000 employers

3.1 KEY PARTNERS

The strategic plan which is produced as a result of this consultation will be a plan for learning in the area, not just for learning that is funded by the Learning and Skills Council. As indicated above, the partners in the learning arena in the Tees Valley are many and varied. Each has an important part to play. The success of the Learning and Skills Council will depend upon strong partnerships and effective linkages with a wide range of organisations.⁴

Each of these organisations has been given the opportunity to respond to this consultation and to help us to agree the shape of learning in the area in the future. We also rely on the commitment of these organisations to work alongside us to deliver the plan that we agree.

We have purposely not made reference to any specific partners within the document but are completely and absolutely committed to the principle that we cannot, and should not, work alone to achieve the objectives.

3.2 KEY OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

The key objectives and targets as set in the Learning and Skills Council Corporate Plan to 2004 are shown on page 2. The targets shown are the national targets to be achieved collectively across all Learning and Skills Council areas in England. Local targets will be set and we are in the process of agreeing baseline measures.

⁴ Learning and Skills Council Remit Letter. David Blunkett MP. November 2000

The approach that we intend to take in the Tees Valley is that, where possible, baselines and targets will be disaggregated to local authority levels. In some instances this may be broken down further to the ward level.

We intend to include proposed targets for consultation in our draft Strategic Plan that is due to be produced in January 2002.

Sections 4 - 8 look at each of the key objectives in turn, and pose some questions in relation to Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley's strategy to achieve the objectives.

4. KEY OBJECTIVES ONE - EXTEND PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION, LEARNING AND TRAINING

Levels of participation in learning in the Tees Valley vary considerably amongst different groups. Participation of the 16-18 year old group is estimated to be close to the national target of 80%. Participation amongst adults, however is a different picture with an estimated 40% of adults participating in learning in the Tees Valley in the last 12 months.⁵ This compares to a national average for participation of 48%. These figures in turn also mask significant variations between groups, based on factors such as where people live, type of employment (if employed), gender, age and educational achievement.

Two very distinct patterns of non-participation were evident in the 1999 Patterns of Participation report⁶. Wards with high non-participation are concentrated in the de-industrialised urban areas close to the River Tees itself and/or areas dominated by local authority housing. The second is that high rates of non-participation occur in more rural areas, not only in the old industrial settlements like Skinningrove, but also in more affluent places such as Sadberge, Guisborough and Middleton St George.

While non-participation occurs more frequently amongst the groups described above, there is room for increasing participation across the whole of the Tees Valley community. The decision for the Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley is whether the growth to achieve the target which will be set should come from all parts of the learning community, or whether specific effort should be focused on agreed target groups, or parts of the area.

Q1. Should we set an additional target which aims to extend participation for particular disadvantaged groups?

The use of participation alone as a measure presents other issues. There is a clear link between participation and achievement. However the achievement is not always at the same level as the participation. Indeed, it could be argued that raising participation at all costs and with few support mechanisms in place, actually leads to a lower rate of achievement. Key Objectives Three and Four look at achievement of young people and adults in more detail, but it is important to look at some of the issues here.

Participation of Young People

As participation among young people is at the national target level, what has contributed to this? Educational maintenance allowances have been introduced in Middlesbrough and Hartlepool and there is a view that this has led to a direct increase in participation in Post 16 education. There is also concern that this has been at the detriment of work based learning programmes. It is too early yet to make any definitive statement about the long-term impact on participants who have received an

⁵ Tees Valley Skills Audit. Prism Research June 1999

⁶ Widening Participation Final Report, Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Durham 1999

educational maintenance allowance. However if participation has increased, but achievement fallen (see Key Objective Three), then there are some important messages for future strategies.

Q2. What extra support could the Learning and Skills Council offer to help young people to remain in learning and achieve their learning goals?

A recent study conducted by NIACE⁷ identified that people who have not engaged in learning since leaving school see almost no likelihood of future participation.

Q3. Should the Learning and Skills Council prioritise support to target young people who have not learnt since they left school?

Q4. Should we work with key partners to create demand for learning and create the specific provision that they are interested in, at the time and location that suits them, regardless of cost?

Participation of Adults

The barriers to adult participation in learning are well documented and include cost, time, past experience, other commitments, lack of confidence, lack of basic skills and family/peer group pressure. While many of them are the same as those barriers faced by young people, within adults the barriers can seem even more of an obstacle. Considerable work has been undertaken by providers of learning, and the adult, community and voluntary sectors to try and overcome these barriers. The success has been mixed, and despite the large amount of work that has taken place, the levels of participation have not increased. A recent NIACE report⁸ indicated that net participation in learning had in fact fallen in the northern region.

The barriers to participation can be grouped into several common themes – the provision itself including location, timing, type of course, the learner's previous experience, ability and self-confidence, and practical barriers such as cost of learning, travel costs and caring commitments/other responsibilities.

Q5. Should the Learning and Skills Council be responsible for tackling issues relating to all of the potential barriers to learning, or concentrate on those aspects directly related to its funding, such as the provision itself?

Both the recent NIACE consultation event⁹ and the Tees Valley Skills Audit¹⁰ indicated that non-participation in learning is not linked to the supply or infrastructure of learning, but the lack of demand for learning. Creating the demand is therefore the challenge that faces us.

⁷ Winners and Losers, NIACE 2001

⁸ Winners and Losers, NIACE 2001

⁹ Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley and NIACE local members consultation, 6 October 2001

¹⁰ Tees Valley Skills Audit. Prism Research 1999

The 7 further education colleges in the Tees Valley recently completed the Learning Pathways project 2000/2001. The project was aimed at providing an appropriate learning opportunity for adults who were not ready to undertake a programme leading to an accredited qualification. A key element of the project was creating demand and getting people to participate. The project report indicates that methods used were successful, with some learners progressing onto accredited learning as a result and others indicating an intention to progress.

Q6. Should the creation of demand for learning be the key strategy for the Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley to extend participation in learning?

Another key barrier to participation has been identified as location of the learner and the location of the provision, and the ease of transport between the two. This could be one of the reasons behind the poor rates of participation in rural areas of the Tees Valley, as mentioned in the introduction to this section. The Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley is considering introducing entitlement to learners with respect to how far they should have to travel to access provision. This would be linked to the level and nature of the course, with a recommendation that basic skills provision is made available within say, one mile of the home of the person who needs the training. Higher level courses may require learners to travel further. This would be linked to the Learning and Skills Council taking a pro-active approach on issues of unnecessary and unhealthy competition between providers in order to achieve value for money and maximum benefit for the learner.

Q7. Is this approach feasible in tackling issues of access to learning related to travel, and should the Learning and Skills Council develop the model for further consultation?

5. KEY OBJECTIVE TWO - INCREASE ENGAGEMENT OF EMPLOYERS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The workforce is defined as people of working age and in employment or available for work.

The Learning and Skills Council has a statutory duty to encourage employers to participate in the provision of post-16 education and training and to contribute financially.¹¹ The importance of workforce development was recently supported by the study of the regeneration of the Tees Valley.¹² It identified that it is not the 'hard factors' (raw materials, land, cost of labour etc) that critically determine business and economic success, but increasingly the 'soft' factors (skills, learning, innovation and creativity etc). Strengthening these soft factors of production is vital for local businesses to compete successfully in national and global markets. This will in turn create a more successful local economy, able to provide and sustain good quality employment with training for people within the Tees Valley.

Some evidence shows that it is not inadequate provision, or poor training infrastructure that leads to skill shortages, but lack of demand from employers and the workforce.¹³ This is set alongside the fact that employers spend substantially more than the taxpayer on developing adult skills.¹⁴ This indicates a potential mismatch between investment in training and training needs. Soft information from employers and providers of learning also highlights that there is not always provision available that meets certain sector requirements.

Q8. Does your sector have the provision that it needs? If not, what is not provided?

Young people in the workplace

The Modern Apprenticeship programme is the key Learning and Skills Council funded programme aimed at helping employers to train their own staff for their own business needs. It has been a successful programme in the Tees Valley with more than 5,000 young people entering the programme every year.

Young people on the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship programme have to be employed, (with some exceptions). However this is not the case with the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship programme. As a result, only 60% of young people on this programme are employed, compared to almost 100% on the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship programme.¹⁵

¹¹ Learning and Skills Council Strategic Framework to 2004. Corporate Plan. 2001

¹² Regeneration for the Tees Valley. GHK. July 2001

¹³ Tees Valley Skills Audit. Prism Research 1999

¹⁴ Learning and Skills Council Strategic Framework to 2004. Corporate Plan. 2001

¹⁵ Tees Valley TEC, March 2001

A way of increasing employment opportunities for young people would be to increase the number of employers with Modern Apprentices on their staff.

Q9. Should a strand of the workforce development strategy be that all employers over certain size have at least one Modern Apprentice on their staff?

A recent report by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)¹⁶ highlighted some significant inequalities in the engagement of young women and young men with Modern Apprenticeships.

While the numbers entering the programme are almost equal, the numbers accessing particular occupational sectors differ greatly. The gender difference in take-up of Modern Apprenticeships by sector is significant because the sectors in which young women train pay less than the sectors where young men predominate. Increasing employed status in Modern Apprenticeships (as indicated above) is only likely to perpetuate the problem as research into recruitment to Modern Apprenticeships has shown that some employer practices are still discriminatory.¹⁷

Q10. What practical steps can the Learning and Skills Council take to tackle this gender inequality on the MA programme?

Higher level skills

There is a view that the Tees Valley has a poor record of retaining graduates in the area. One reason often quoted is the poor employment prospects for people with higher level qualifications. This, however, contradicts information from local employers who indicate that they regularly have to recruit from out of the area to get higher level skills.

Q11. Should the Learning and Skills Council develop a strategy that provides very clear progression routes from lower level qualifications into higher level qualifications, encompassing all potential routes?

Basic skills in the workplace

The other end of the skills spectrum are those people who are in employment, yet have basic literacy or numeracy needs (or both). Many of these people hold down a steady job and often the employer is unaware of the 'problem'. Evidence indicates that if individuals are taught to read, write and be numerate, then they can make a much greater contribution to their employment, and therefore help their employer to become more competitive. Conversely, some employers have indicated that while people are doing the job they are employed to do, it is of no concern to them if they cannot read,

¹⁶ Gender Issues in Modern Apprenticeships, EOC. August 2001

¹⁷ Modern Apprenticeships and Gender Stereotyping, QPIC, DfEE 1999

write or count. Reducing the number of adults with basic skills needs is a key objective of the Learning and Skills Council.

Q12. How can the Learning and Skills Council support and encourage employers to raise basic skills?

The role of the Learning and Skills Council in workforce development

Information from certain sectors indicates that with the ageing profile of the workforce, and lack of investment in training young people, significant skill gaps will arise in the next 5-10 years.

Q13. Is it the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council to be pro-active in identifying such issues and working with the sectors to prevent the problems occurring, or should the industries, and the relevant Sector Skills Councils be taking responsibility with the Learning and Skills Council responding as required?

Investors in People

This year is the 10th anniversary of the Investors in People standard. The standard is well established within the Tees Valley. Research indicates that more than half of Small and Medium size Enterprises (SMEs – less than 250 employees) who have achieved the standard believe that recognition increased productivity.

Q14. The Learning and Skills Council has an objective that all employers should embrace the principles of Investors in People. Do you agree?

Communication with employers

Effective communication with employers is an on-going difficulty for an organisation like the Learning and Skills Council. Do we communicate often enough, in the right format and at the right time? Smaller organisations may not have the resources to work through the communication and pick out the things that may help them.

Q15. How should the Learning and Skills Council communicate with employers, and how can we best understand their skills needs, and help to satisfy them?

6. KEY OBJECTIVE THREE - RAISE ACHIEVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Within the Tees Valley the participation rates of young people in post 16 learning are almost at the level of the national target. Despite this, achievement rates for this group are significantly below national levels. Thirteen percent of secondary school leavers in the Tees Valley did not settle in further education, training or employment 6 months after leaving school, compared to 7% nationally.¹⁸ Significant numbers of young people leave their Work Based Learning or Further Education Courses before they complete.

The key issues in achieving this objective would therefore appear to be a need to increase the number of young people staying on in learning at age 16 and securing better retention and achievement from those young people who do stay in learning.

The achievement of young people in any form of post 16 learning is determined by a number of factors, not least whether they complete the course. While not exhaustive, the following pages include some of the key influences, the issues they present, and some of the possible strategic responses for the Tees Valley.

Role of Learning and Skills Council pre-16

A key link to achievement at post 16 is the achievement at Key Stages 3 and Key Stage 4 (year 9 and year 11 of school respectively). The Tees Valley has amongst the lowest achievement rates at 16 within England. At previous consultation events, a range of partners have emphasised the link between pre 16 and post 16 learning and the role of the Learning and Skills Council in pre 16 learning has been raised¹⁹. The Learning and Skills Council's direct responsibility pre-16 is currently in respect of work experience and links between education and the world of work for 14 -19 year olds.

Q16. Taking into account the statutory responsibilities for education pre 16, how can the Learning and Skills Council support the development of 14-19 learning opportunities that will increase attainment at each level of young people's learning?

Current Government consultation²⁰ refers to the development of a 14-19 phase of learning, which would require increased collaboration on the part of all providers of 14 - 19 education and training in an area.

¹⁸ Tees Valley Baseline and Scenario Study. April 2001. GHK.

¹⁹ Consultation on Learning and Skills Council Corporate Plan 2001 – 2004, May 2001.

Consultation on the RDA Single Pot funding, July 2001.

²⁰ 16-19 organisation and inspection: a consultation document. DfES September 01

Achievement of targets at what cost?

Key Objective One raised the query about how to achieve the target – via widening participation or via any method. A similar question can be raised in relation to achievement. Some qualifications are easier to achieve than others, but may give less progression opportunities.

Q17. Should the Learning and Skills Council only fund provision that has clear progression routes?

Success rates

There are some examples of courses for young people which have low achievement of learning objectives.

Q18. Should the Learning and Skills Council continue to fund courses with low success rates? If yes, why?

Match between aspiration and labour market opportunities

The vision of the Learning and Skills Council talks of putting the learner at the heart of the system, but how should this be aligned with the needs of the local labour market? If the local labour market can only sustain 30 new motor mechanics a year, yet 1,000 school leavers want to train as motor mechanics, how much provision should be made available?

Q19. What influence should analysis of the local labour market play in decision making regarding provision?

Q20. How can we improve information for young people on labour market needs and post 16 opportunities?

Reducing drop out

The high rates of drop out (see above), and frequent transfer between courses and providers of learning is often key feature of young peoples learning. In the medium term, improvements in quality of provision, assessment of needs and student support, combined with good quality information advice and guidance, should lead to reduced drop out rates. However, systems need to be put in place to tackle this in the short term.

Q21. How can learning providers collaborate to reduce drop out rates and thereby increase attainment?

Choosing the right course

Students often decide not to complete their studies because the courses are not what they expected.²¹ Recent consultation with young people at careers conventions suggests that they often use a less than sophisticated selection process for their learning, often choosing the same course/provider as a friend, or the institution with the 'best' marketing campaign, rather than what may be the best for themselves.

An approach to marketing and promoting learning that has been explored and attempted before in the Tees Valley, is the collaborative approach that promotes learning first and foremost, with the individual institution promotions taking a back seat.

Q22. Is a collaborative approach to marketing post 16 learning desirable? And how can we achieve this in a cohesive manner that avoids competition?

²¹ Improving student performance, National Audit Office March 2001

7. KEY OBJECTIVE FOUR - RAISE ACHIEVEMENT OF ADULTS

It is not sufficient simply to get people to participate in learning. Strategies must also be in place to ensure that those people then remain in learning, and achieve a relevant learning outcome.

The strategies for raising achievement of adults will vary depending on a number of factors including the nature of the learning they are doing, whether they are learning in/through the workplace with the support of their employer, and whether they are new to learning. Each individual will also have needs with respect to their personal circumstances, past experiences and aims and aspirations.

Raising the achievement of adults, therefore, presents a very wide range of ways in which the Learning and Skills Council can make an impact. What is important is deciding how to intervene to obtain the greatest increase in the achievement of adults.

Q23. Should the Learning and Skills Council have a strategy that focuses on a couple of elements of adult achievement, rather than trying to tackle all aspects? If so, what elements could the Learning and Skills Council have greatest impact on?

Achievement rates

Q24. Some provision will have better achievement rates than others will. Should the Learning and Skills Council continue to fund courses with low achievement rates? Why?

Basic skills

“Skills for life”²² is the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. It calls on every relevant organisation, at national and local level, to contribute by working to a common set of objectives and within a clear national framework. The Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley is working with Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit and other partners locally to agree and deliver a strategy for improving levels of literacy and numeracy in the Tees Valley.

A number of organisations in the Tees Valley have achieved the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.

Q25. Do you agree that supporting and enabling deliverers to achieve the Basis Skills Agency Quality Mark is an appropriate measure to increase standards?

²² Skills for Life, DfEE 2001

Completion and achievement

Although participation is a key factor in achievement, an equally important factor is completion of the course. In 1998-99, 15% of students in Further Education nationally did not complete their courses; and of those courses completed, 26% of the learners failed to achieve their qualification aims.²³

Nationally the overall success rate - the proportion of qualification aims embarked upon that are successfully achieved – is 56% for 16-18 year olds and 51% for older students.²⁴ Variation in achievement rates between colleges is between 98% and 33%.

Some types of students find particular difficulty in achieving their qualification aims. These include those employed for long hours on part time work in parallel with their studies and students experiencing various kinds of deprivation.

The Improving Student Performance Report identifies best practice by which colleges, with the support of the Learning and Skills Council, can improve student performance. The best practice falls into the following categories: choosing the right course, induction and support, teaching and learning methods assessing performance.

Q26. The Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley supports the recommendations made in this report, but will give a high priority to the recommendation relating to focusing on students at risk of non-completion and non achievement, and will expect to see learning providers set specific targets in relation to this. Do you agree with this proposal or should the Learning and Skills Council focus its effort in this respect elsewhere?

Adult learners may be involved with up to 10 different providers during the lifecycle of their learning and may require high levels of information, advice and guidance throughout the process, not just at the start of their learning. The Learning and Skills Council will work with providers and information advice and guidance partnerships to secure appropriate levels of support and sound advice to adults, including destination data.

Q27. Do you think that learners should also have access to information about success rates of particular providers, and courses, before enrolling on them?

²³ Improving Student Performance. National Audit Office. March 2001

²⁴ Improving Student Performance. National Audit Office. March 2001

8. KEY OBJECTIVE FIVE - RAISE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND USER SATISFACTION

The Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley has a clear remit to ensure quality learning provision in the area. "The Council must have a clear focus on raising standards".²⁵ The LSC's approach to raising standards is principally driven by external Area and institution inspections carried out by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED). But other feedback is also important and we need to develop a clear strategy for gathering learner and non-learner views.

The position across the Tees Valley appears mixed. As an example of this, the recent Middlesbrough Area inspection found a number of strengths – a wide range of educational opportunities, increasing achievements at GCSE and progression into full time education and 58% of students following level 3 courses progressing into Higher Education. However there were a number of areas to be addressed such as a need to improve support for low achieving trainees, improve teaching and monitoring of key skills and equality of opportunity.

A key element of assessing the quality of training and education offered by providers is the national framework for reviewing the performance of providers.²⁶ Performance review is the comprehensive, regular, and formal assessment of the quality of training and education offered by providers. The review process is based on a range of information held about a provider. This information will usually have been supplied by the provider, or other key agency such as the inspectorates.

The process culminates in the local Learning and Skills Council making an assessment of the performance of the provider, and in recommendations on the actions that need to be taken in order to promote continuous improvement.

The June review of work based learning providers and colleges in the Tees Valley gave the following results. Of the 58 providers reviewed, the following grades were allocated:

Grade	Number	%
Excellent	0	0
Good	11	19
Satisfactory	33	57
Some concerns	13	22
Serious concerns	1	2

The Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley will work with its full range of providers to ensure quality provision.

²⁵ Learning and Skills Council Remit Letter, David Blunkett MP. November 2000

²⁶ The Council's National Framework for reviewing the performance of providers. A briefing document. Learning and Skills Council Quality and Standards Directorate. September 2001

Alongside inspection and provider review feedback we intend to develop structured sample surveys to measure the degree of satisfaction by learners, employers, providers and other interested parties.

Q28. If the Learning and Skills Council mission is to put learners first, what should the key indicator of satisfaction be for this group?

Centres of Vocational Excellence in Further Education²⁷

Centres of Vocational Excellence are centres of vocational excellence that will develop new, and enhance existing, excellent vocational provision which is focussed on meeting the skills needs of employers, nationally, sectorally, regionally and locally. They will seek to give a greater number of individuals from all backgrounds access to the high quality vocational training that they need to succeed in a modern economy.

The national target for the implementation of Centres of Vocational Excellence is that by 2003-2004, half of all general education colleges will have developed at least one Centre of Vocational Excellence. Within the Tees Valley there are 13 eligible colleges so by 2003-2004 we could have 7 or 8 Centres of Vocational Excellence in the area. Centres of Vocational Excellence will only be established with the support of the local Learning and Skills Council and will need to work closely with them. A centre's specialism will need to fit with the Learning and Skills Council priorities locally and nationally.

Q29. What specialisms are needed in the Tees Valley? Should every college in the Tees Valley have a clear specialism?

Q30. Should the Learning and Skills Council play a lead role to ensure that a strategically planned, well consulted, approach to Centres of Vocational Excellence is achieved in the Tees Valley, or should it just respond to requests for support from individual colleges as they occur?

The development of Centres of Vocational Excellence presents a clear opportunity for a range of providers to work together to deliver vocational excellence.

Q31. What other opportunities are there for providers of learning to collaborate?

Views of learners and non-learners

There is considerable work already taking place in this area, with a wide range of organisations gathering data about a range of issues in respect of their client groups. One of the issues that arises is ensuring that the best use is made of the information that is collected, and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

Q32. How can this be achieved?

²⁷ Centres of Vocational Excellence in Further Education: The Way Ahead. DfES July 2001

9. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

The Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley will promote equality of opportunity as an underpinning and coherent strategy across all of our activity, as a funder of learning, and as an organisation. The strategy will be to address equality of race, religion, gender and disability together with inclusion of those disadvantaged in our community by age, or special needs, or by factors concerning community isolation and pockets of deprivation.

The local objectives for Equality and Inclusion will underpin the achievement of each of the key objectives and the resulting strategic plan. Actions, targets and performance indicators in respect of Equality and Inclusion will be set for each of the objectives.

The framework for setting out actions and targets will be to:

Work towards the achievement of the Equal Opportunities Quality Foundation Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards and encourage all our Providers to attain the same.

Provide information on the reasons for barriers to participation and performance in learning and how our strategy will work to overcome these barriers

Give details of how any gaps identified in the participation/performance of particular groups will be addressed.

Detail how progress will be monitored and the impact of the strategy evaluated.

Consult with the local community and community groups to help evaluate the impact and changes needed in the strategy and plans for their continued involvement in its implementation.

Q33. Does this strategy make a clear statement of the Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley's role in securing Equal Opportunities and Inclusion?

Q34. Will the strategy address the needs of all people in Tees Valley - are any individuals or groups of individuals not covered within the strategy?

Q35. Are there particular priorities within the strategy which need to be addressed immediately and in which we could make an early impact?

10. HOW TO RESPOND

You can respond to this consultation in any of the following ways:

- 1) Complete the attached consultation response sheet and send/fax it to the Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley (address below).
- 2) Download the consultation response form from www.teesvalleylsc.co.uk. Complete it electronically and send your response via e-mail to Cheryl.Oatway@lsc.gov.uk.
- 3) Prepare a response in your own format and send/fax/e-mail it to Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley.

Deadline for responses is Friday 16 November 2001.

All correspondence should be addressed to:

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