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Strategic Area Reviews *The story so far*

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Learning+Skills Council

Impact starting to show

Just over a year ago, every local Learning and Skills Council began reviewing all education and training for people aged 16+ (other than higher education). The aim of these Strategic Area Reviews (StARs) is to look at current provision in every area and decide how best to build on strengths, make improvements and fill in the gaps to make it coherent and relevant for today's employers and local communities.



▶ Rob Wye, Director of Chief Executive's Division, LSC National Office.

The reviews are central to *Success for All*, the Government's flagship programme to modernise the learning and skills sector. *Success for All* is putting an extra £1.2 billion into education and training so that it meets the needs of learners, employers and communities. This way, our local communities can become more inclusive and our businesses and economy can compete effectively in the global marketplace. *Success for All* will build the infrastructure required to deliver the Government's Skills Strategy.

Delivering coherence, relevance and excellence in education and training are the key aims of Strategic Area Reviews.

The 47 local LSCs are consulting the experts – schools and colleges, providers of work-based and community learning, students and learners, employers and local communities. A recent DfES survey of post-16 education arrangements

shows that 80 per cent of providers support the process and this enthusiasm is paying early dividends. "We're already starting to see a real impact", says Rob Wye, Programme Director at the LSC for *Success for All*. "Organisations are working together and students, employers and communities are starting to see the improvements in quality and choice that they deserve."

This year, local LSCs and their partners will consider how best to make the necessary changes. This stage is likely to be the most challenging and its success depends upon the support of stakeholders and partners. Jane Williams, Director, Standards Unit at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) says: "The review is the beginning of something and not the end. Improvements and changes will need to be made following the review and the fruits of this work will be felt in the years ahead, providing the skills and expertise our economy needs."

This document brings together stories from across the country and celebrates the positive collaboration that is already happening.

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North Yorkshire puts partners centre stage

LSC North Yorkshire is working with a broad range of partners, including City of York Council, which has been closely involved from the word go. Patrick Scott at the Council says: "For us, it's not just about big structural issues, it's also about the kind of curriculum that we want to make available for young people in the city, and our wish to make progress on that as rapidly as possible. So far we haven't been disappointed."



► *Young people's views need to be heard.*

Closing skills gaps in the North West

The five local LSCs in the North West have joined forces to examine whether businesses are getting the skilled recruits they need. The review will examine the skills needed by vital regional industries, including construction, chemicals, energy, sport, biotechnology and port activities to see whether local education and training courses are providing them.

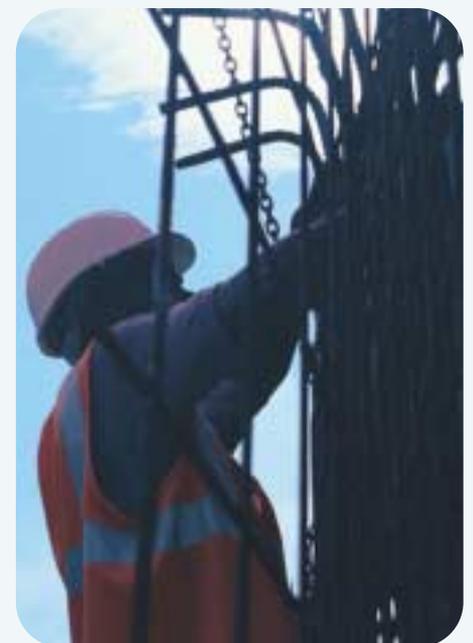
LSC Greater Merseyside launched its review with a 'Breakfast of Champions' briefing for over 120 people from relevant organisations, including schools, colleges and organisations such as Connexions. Kirsty Evans, Senior Strategy Research and Planning Manager at LSC Greater Merseyside says: "These studies will help us tackle key regional and local skills issues when we draw up the strategic options under our review."

All aboard at Bournemouth

For LSC Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, their first major conference about the review process was crucial to getting everyone on board. It was attended by over 100 councillors, business people, teachers and others. Connexions, the support service for young people, has been involved from the start.

Andrew Williams, its Chief Executive in the area, says: "Connexions has a very keen interest in improving opportunities for all 14-19 year olds. We see the review as the key – a one-off chance to get all the providers and partners together to agree how we can all make this improvement."

► (L-R) Cherry Edwards, StAR Manager at LSC Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole with Peter Watkins, Chairperson of the StAR Steering Group and Richard Noah, Deputy Executive Director of the local LSC.



► *Skills for the construction industry – one of the priorities for the skills review in the North West.*

Some facts and figures

- ▶ Capital projects worth over £1 billion have been supported by the LSC.
- ▶ 280 Centres of Vocational Excellence have been created by the LSC.
- ▶ 18 merger proposals have been approved, involving 37 further education colleges and one university.
- ▶ Almost 50 new 16-19 educational organisation proposals have emerged.



▶ The new campus for South East Essex College in Southend – one of the many capital projects supported by the LSC.

Getting to the grassroots in Staffordshire

LSC Staffordshire's review is getting right down to the grassroots. It's examining education and training for 14-19 year olds, adult skills and community learning, plus an agricultural college, special schools and **learnirect** computer-based learning. It will also look at work experience for 14-16 year olds and training for the new vocational qualifications.



▶ Young people benefitting from computer based learning.

North East regeneration to meet local needs

A proposal to develop Northumberland Learning Park will create a single campus combining two schools and Northumberland College. It will also incorporate community facilities and is integral to the regeneration of Ashington.

The headteachers involved, Ken Tonge and Ged Lee, say the review "appeared, at first, to be yet another layer of scrutiny about our work in school. In fact, the process was not in any way judgmental and gave us a valuable insight."

Success for All refugees and asylum seekers

'Success for All' in Birmingham and Solihull means just that. One third of all refugees and asylum seekers in Birmingham and Solihull had skilled, managerial or professional jobs in their country of origin, but 96 per cent are now unemployed.

Tim Atkinson of the local LSC says "the review is meeting the needs of the people we serve and represent... this includes the refugee and asylum seeker population."

Education tops agenda in Gloucestershire

LSC Gloucestershire and the local education authority have conducted a major review of school sixth forms to identify their strengths and weaknesses, prompting a welcome public debate. They have also drawn up an entitlement statement, outlining what learners, businesses and the local community should expect from education and training in the area. Options range from basic skills and vocational programmes to higher education.



▶ Future sixth form students need the correct provision in their area.

Strategic options under consideration

- ▶ One proposal in LSC London North is looking to combine sixth forms at four schools into one centre in brand new buildings.
- ▶ County Durham, Gloucestershire and Greater Merseyside are all producing an agreed learner entitlement to let students know what they can expect.
- ▶ Several projects in Kent and Medway involve collaboration between schools and further education colleges, including joint prospectuses.
- ▶ North Bristol is consulting the public on the reconfiguration of sixth forms.
- ▶ In Cumbria, one scheme involves greater collaboration between the Federation of Carlisle Schools and other providers.
- ▶ Tees Valley has a proposal for three schools to set up a joint sixth form centre.

Pupils and parents give their views in Essex



▶ *Young people have important choices to make.*

LSC Essex is consulting learners and their parents to discover whether they have enough information about the range of choices after GCSEs. This is a typical example of local LSCs listening to the experience of learners. Paul Taylor at LSC Essex explains: "These focus groups are about asking our customers – young people and their parents – what they think of post-16 education and training and the opportunities available to them."

Looking forward

StARs are just the beginning of long-term reform of learning and skills. There is still a lot of work to be done. Progress is being made towards a coherent system of learning for 14-19 year olds and we are starting to identify ways in which education and training can promote sustainable employment.



▶ *Heads together for improved learning.*

Where to go for more help. Call **0870 900 6800** to find out about your local LSC. Or contact the **Success for All Implementation Team** on **02476 823342**. Or visit www.successforall.gov.uk

Some key milestones

Nov 2002: *Success for All* published.

May 2003: 47 local LSCs established local stakeholder groups to inform the reviews.

July 2003: Skills Strategy published.

Sept 2003: Principles to underpin the organisation of 16-19 provision published.

Mar 2005: StARs outcomes built into local plans.

If you would like to know more about any of the stories included here, feel free to contact the relevant local LSC. If you have a story that you think may interest others, email us at successforall@lsc.gov.uk