The Approach: Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning

RARPA

A Learning and Skills Council Progress Paper on assuring the quality of learners' experience, achievement and progress in non-accredited learning

Responses are requested by 11 February 2005

**Contents**

# Foreword

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

One of the five key tasks given to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is to "raise the quality of education and training delivery". The LSC has pursued quality with all providers of education and training it funds through performance review, self-assessment and continuous improvement development planning, and through inspection.

Accredited learning that leads to qualifications awarded by organisations external to the learning provider has an extensive range of quality assurance arrangements and standards, with over-arching agreements and codes of practice that the awarding bodies maintain. Qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) are approved by the Secretary of State and by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

Since 2002, the LSC has been working to establish an appropriate way of recognising and recording the progress and achievement of learners on provision that does not lead to a qualification or external certificate - provision described as non-accredited provision. The approach that has been developed has become known as 'RARPA'.

In this paper, the term 'non-accredited learning' is used to describe formal and non-formal provision that does not lead directly to any form of external accreditation, award or qualification. Non-accredited learning opportunities are offered in the further education sector and they are currently funded as *other provision.* But, they will come within the new arrangements for learning for personal and community development. This learning is provided by adult community learning and voluntary sector providers; through partners of providers; through workforce development; Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes; through Ufl/**learndirect**; in sixth form colleges; and in specialist institutions.

The development work undertaken to date has relevance in all these contexts. It is also relevant in relation to the development of new forms of provision arising from activity to address the Government's social inclusion agenda, for example, in the context of Neighbourhood Renewal.

The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) have developed a model, called the 'Approach' and the 'Staged Process', that establishes a way of recognising and recording progress and achievement of learners that can be applied in any setting.

The LSC together with LSDA and NIACE have been developing and testing the Approach and the Staged Process with a range of providers and in learning contexts that are typical of non-accredited learning. This work has become known as 'the RARPA project' and has been followed by a far wider audience than those who have been participating in the project and testing the Approach and the Staged Process.

This progress paper is linked to *Investing in Skills: Taking Forward the Skills Strategy – An LSC Consultation Paper on Reforming the Funding and Planning Arrangements for First Steps, Personal and Community Development Learning for Adults* published in September 2004. This progress paper should be read in conjunction with that document. Comments on the proposals being consulted on for 'first steps learning' and 'personal and community development learning', to which RARPA is applicable, should be directed to that consultation.

(AdultLearningConsult@lsc.gov.uk )

The proposals in this progress paper are for assuring the quality of learners' experience, progress and achievement in, non-accredited provision.  Any comments or suggestions about the funding of non-accredited learning should be directed to the consultation paper mentioned above.

This progress paper is not asking for comment or suggestion over the key aspects of the RARPA Approach and Staged Process, which is now established and recognised as good practice.  The progress paper is intended to identify the views and opinions of those who have the responsibility for assuring the quality of learners' experience in non-accredited provision as to how to implement and embed the Approach into existing systems and practices in an appropriate, fit for purpose way.

We recognise that these proposals are wide ranging and will affect every learning provider.  Providers will need to review their quality assurance arrangements to take account of the RARPA requirements.  The purpose of this view gathering exercise is to ensure that this process is not onerous or bureaucratic and that the arrangements made are fit for purpose, key themes of the whole RARPA project.

We are committed to developing effective practices and systems that benefit learners, as the test projects have demonstrated, and to ensuring that the RARPA principles and approach is effective and equitable and can be applied appropriately in all contexts of learning.  We are seeking your comments, views and ideas on how the RARPA approach can best be implemented.  Please take the time to consider the proposals in this document carefully and the likely impact, on learners and your organisation, of implementing the proposals.


Responses to this document (see Annex D for pro forma) should be sent to:

Email to RARPAprogress@lsc.gov.uk

Or by post to:

RARPA Progress
Adult Learning Group
Learning and Skills Council
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Fax:  024 7682 3250

Responses are requested by Friday 11 February 2005.  In order to keep to required timescales, responses received after this date cannot be taken into account.  Please raise any issues you may have on the issues in this document with your local Learning and Skills Council in the first instance.

# Section 1

## Background and Context

Learning which does not lead to external accreditation forms a significant part of the provision delivered across the learning and skills sector. These courses are typically part-time and non-vocational, but also take place in work based learning, for example, Entry to Employment programmes (E2E) and some Centres of Vocational Excellence programmes, and as enrichment activities for young people. Non-accredited learning is a vital part of lifelong learning, including first steps learning, learning for personal and community development and opportunities for older learners. These courses are crucial to encourage those who would not otherwise participate to get involved, enjoy and progress further. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for planning and funding this learning across the range of providers that deliver it, including Local Education Authorities (LEAs), colleges, Ufi and independent providers.

The LSC works with a range of providers, through local LSCs, to plan the range of provision designed to meet the needs of young people and adults and to stimulate demand for learning. As well as funding provision for adults to gain qualifications and 'first rung' programmes enabling progression, the Council funds opportunities for learning for personal and community development. This provision is to be secured in the longer term by establishing a safeguard, as set out in the Skills Strategy, *Investing in Skills: Realising our potential* (DfES 2003). The range of provision is planned to meet individual, social and economic needs and to contribute to regeneration, community self-confidence and capacity building, citizenship and social inclusion.

The LSC must secure high quality provision, high standards and value for money from all its providers with the minimum of bureaucracy:

> 'The Council has a duty to make the best use of its resources. It must secure high quality, high standard provision and value for money from all its providers. It is vital that the systems and procedures of the Council promote excellence and high quality delivery of services; ensure the removal of unnecessary bureaucracy; and secure maximum effectiveness and value for money. ' *(Para 35, Secretary of State's Remit Letter, Nov 2000).*

The LSC must assure itself of the quality of any organisation or body receiving LSC funding through systems that enable accurate judgements to be made about the performance of providers.

The primary responsibility for quality lies with the provider. The starting point for quality improvement is objective, comprehensive self-assessment, based on evidence. The LSC needs to be confident that providers have systems in place enabling them to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited learning, and which inform their judgements of the effectiveness of their provision in meeting learners' needs and aspirations.

The LSC will work closely with providers through local LSCs, giving support where necessary to make improvements in quality assurance systems, including arrangements for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning.

The RARPA approach has an important role to play in supporting the delivery of the *Success for All* (S4A) strategy. In particular RARPA will be an important part of the

comprehensive range of success measures that the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is committed to introduce across all aspects of provision in the learning and skills sector from September 2005 onwards.

The responses arising from the joint consultation exercise by the DfES, the LSC, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) on *Measuring Success* are published and can be found at:

http://www.successforall.gov.uk/contentList.cfm?contSectionId=6&funcSectionId=0&contSubSectionId=28

The consultation produced a range of suggestions.  It is clear that the RARPA approach will form one of the key measures of success to be used in the future across provision in the learning and skills sector. This will be important in securing equal esteem for non-accredited provision with other types of provision in the sector.

The LSC's guiding principle in its approach to performance improvement is that its over-riding responsibility is to the learner. (LSC 2002) A key principle in the Council's quality improvement strategy is to '*put the experience, aspirations and success of learners at the heart of what we do*'.

The LSC commissioned LSDA and NIACE to undertake a development project on the implementation of the RARPA approach based on earlier research (See references, Annex E for further details).  As the LSC Position Statement (LSC 2003) made clear, the RARPA approach is accepted in principle as the method through which this aspect of the quality assurance procedures of providers in the sector will be measured and evaluated.

 The development project set out to test the application of the RARPA approach in a range of contexts. It focused on issues arising from the application of the Staged Process in the field, and on the experiences and views of both staff and learners across the sector in applying this process.  The RARPA project was guided by an external advisory group (details of its membership are in Annex A)

There were 22 core pilot projects supported with some funding and an LSDA or NIACE consultant evaluated each one.  (Details of the core projects are in Annex B).  In addition to the core projects, there were a further 40 providers that were interested in the work and wanted to contribute by testing some aspect of or all of the approach.  These projects were supported by staff from local LSCs and they received no additional funds for participating. (Details of this Wider Development Group are in Annex C).  More detail about all the projects and their aims and context are on the RARPA website http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/Quality/default.htm

(On the LSC website, select the 'Partners' channel, then the 'Quality' menu tab and select 'RARPA' from the pull down menu and click 'Go'.)

The Staged Process has also been tested in parallel projects.  In the 'Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme: 2001 – 2004' (see www.citizenshippost-16.LSDA.org.uk ) a joint project between QCA and the Citizenship Programme,  five organisations tested the RARPA approach in citizenship programmes as part of the core pilot programme.  Further information about the citizenship programmes for each project is available in the case studies, part of QCA's post-16 citizenship guidance www.qca.org.uk/citizenship/post16).

The RARPA Approach and Staged Process was also tested with LSDA's parallel project 'Disability Discrimination Act (DDA): Taking the Way Forward', In particular the DDA project sought to:

- pilot the Staged Process to improve the quality of provision through an exploration of time and cost effective, fit for purpose ways of recording and processing information related to learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited learning
- set up demonstration projects to implement the approach.

The outcomes of the project will be:

- an evaluative project report on the demonstration projects which sets out the Staged Process for validating learning
- a contribution to the good practice guidelines
- a network of practitioners who can share their experience to support other providers

The DDA project aimed to provide a complementary strand to the main RARPA project, related to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This research found that the Staged Process could be implemented with considerable success for such learners. The projects support the principle that the RARPA process puts learners at the centre of the learning experience by involving them in setting their own objectives, monitoring progress and recognising achievement. Many benefits to the learner were identified. These included improved self-esteem, motivation and retention, more enjoyment of learning, a sense of achievement and a pleasure in taking responsibility for their own learning.

RARPA is a powerful quality monitoring tool, both for new courses and as a means of revealing strengths and weaknesses in existing systems. It also raised the quality of teaching and learning.

See Annex D for a list of the organisations that contributed to the DDA parallel project and: http://www.lsda.org.uk/files/lsda/research/dda/Project12.doc

A Sixth Form College Extension Project was also run to test RARPA.  LSDA carried out a small-scale survey with about a dozen sixth form colleges to establish whether or not the Staged Process might be used to recognise and record achievement in the non-accredited learning programmes they deliver. The survey was carried out over the two-month period March/April 2004. Responses from this work were fed into the main evaluation of the RARPA project

A further parallel project was run by NIACE on behalf of the DfES during 2003-04 to identify issues for providers and learners in applying the RARPA approach to learners with learning difficulties. In particular, NIACE sought to identify current thinking, knowledge and practice in this area by reviewing relevant literature and conducting a survey of providers and practitioners.  The full report on *Achievement in non-accredited learning for adults with learning difficulties* is available from NIACE.

(See http://www.niace.org.uk/Publications/A/AchievNonAcc.htm )

The extensive work undertaken to test the RARPA approach and Staged Process have demonstrated that RARPA is of value in a wide range of settings and contexts across the sector.  Further development work is being undertaken and many of the providers that tested the RARPA Approach are consolidating practice across their provision.  It is intended

that much of this experience and expertise will be available during the wider implementation of RARPA through the work of RARPA 'Champions' and will be available to be shared through networks and an effective practice resource.

# Section 2

## The Approach

The RARPA approach consists of the application of the 'Staged Process' to non-accredited provision, plus the arrangements put in place by a provider to ensure that the Staged Process is applied consistently and effectively. Details of the Staged Process follow in the next section. The arrangements to support the consistent and effective application of this process will be an integral part of the quality assurance processes of the provider, and evidence arising from these arrangements will be presented to both the LSC and inspectorates to ascertain that the RARPA approach is in place.

The approach that has been developed by LSDA, NIACE and the LSC acknowledges the paramount importance of the diverse needs, purposes and interests of learners.  It seeks to address the requirements and interests of other stakeholders, particularly providers and the LSC and local LSCs.  In addition, it takes account of the wider needs of communities, of employers in relation to workforce development and of the imperative to attract potential learners, that is, those not currently participating in learning.

The approach that has been developed comprises two elements:

- the 'Staged Process' for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning
- quality assurance processes for assessing the Staged Process and RARPA principles that are appropriate, fit for purpose and create no additional bureaucracy forming part of the normal self-assessment undertaken by providers which is shared with the LSC and the inspectorate

In addition, there were key themes that are central to RARPA.  These are:

- the approach, both the Staged Process and the quality assurance of learning are to be non-bureaucratic
- the application of RARPA should be fit for purpose
- the learner is at the centre of the RARPA approach, it is not intended as solely an organisational tool for providing information for a quality assurance system but one that enhances the learning experience
- the approach should complement and integrate with existing processes for quality assurance and learner recording
- the Staged Process can be mapped to the Common Inspection Framework and should encourage effective self-assessment and evidence of effective learning processes at inspection

Providers' three-year development plans will include a clear statement, in the strategic summary, about how RARPA is being applied in their organisation and demonstrate a clear commitment to applying the RARPA principles to non-accredited learning.  The quality assurance of non-accredited learning will be demonstrated in the provider's self-assessment report.

# Section 3

## The Staged Process

The Staged Process is best described in the following extract from the LSC RARPA Position Paper :

> *It is proposed that all providers in receipt of Council funding for non-accredited learning adopt a Staged Process of essential or 'core' elements, with associated evidence requirements. The adoption of such a Staged Process, consistent with the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), will enable providers to make sound judgements as to the effectiveness of their arrangements for and practice in recognising and recording learners' progress and achievements through rigorous self-assessment. It will support providers in identifying areas for improvement and contribute to the raising of standards and an enhanced experience for learners.*

The elements of the Staged Process are set out below. Providers' internal systems should also make provision for learners' evaluation of their learning experience, and feedback from learners which contributes to and informs providers' judgements during self-assessment, and their strategies for continuous improvement, including programme design.

The Staged Process has been designed to:

- focus on and promote the needs and interests of learners
- take account of learners' diverse and sometimes multiple purposes in learning
- allow for negotiation of the content and outcomes of learning programmes
- encourage learners to reflect on and recognise their own progress and achievement, thus increasing their confidence
- promote and support informed learner self-assessment, peer assessment and dialogue about learning and achievement between learners and tutors/trainers
- enable both the achievement of planned learning objectives and learning outcomes not specified at the outset to be recognised and valued
- promote good practice in teaching, learning and assessment
- enhance providers' quality assurance and improvement practices.

Providers will also be expected to ensure that learners' views are taken into account in the planning of future provision.

The Staged Process will also:

- be open to flexibility in interpretation and application, to take account of local needs and circumstances and the particular features of the learning programme
- require the minimum level of formal documentation in line with the LSC's commitments to avoid additional bureaucracy
- operate alongside and support the implementation of the CIF
- be compatible with the LSC's funding arrangements
- provide a nationally consistent and responsive approach to recognising and recording progress and achievement in adult and community learning (ACL).

## The elements of the Staged Process

| Element | Evidence |
|---|---|
| 1. **Aim**(s) appropriate to an individual learner or groups of learners (CIF Q1 and Q5) | Clearly stated aim(s) for all programmes<br><br>*[Could include aims which do not specifically mention a learning aspiration, for example, in some informal and community based non-accredited learning]* |
| 2. **Initial assessment** to establish the learner's starting point (CIF Q4, 1 and 2) | Record of outcomes of process of establishing learners' starting points<br><br>*[Process and level of detail will vary according to the nature and duration of the learning programme. Records may include learners' self-assessment of prior learning and/or learning and support needs]* |
| 3. **Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives**: initial, renegotiated and revised (CIF Q2, Q4 and Q5) | Clearly stated suitably challenging objectives for all programmes and, wherever feasible, for each learner<br><br>*[The level of challenge which is appropriate will vary according to initial assessment of learners' needs, aspirations and starting points. Learning objectives may be amended during the learning programme, for example, as a result of formative assessment]* |
| 4. **Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programme (formative assessment)**: tutor feedback to learners, learner reflection, progress reviews (CIF Q1 and Q4) | Records of learner self-assessment, group and peer assessment; tutor records of assessment activities and individual/group progress and achievement. Learners' files, journals, diaries, portfolios, artwork; videos, audiotapes, performances, exhibitions and displays; individual or group learner testimony; artefacts, photographs and other forms of evidence<br><br>*[Research indicates that learners prefer the term 'feedback' and that learners' capacity for reflection and informed self-assessment would be enhanced by more dialogue with tutors and the sharing of criteria and norms used to evaluate progress and achievement]* |

| Element | Evidence |
|---|---|
| 5. **End of programme learner self-assessment; tutor summative assessment; review of overall progress and achievement.** This will be in relation to appropriately challenging learning objectives identified at the beginning/during the programme. It may include recognition of learning outcomes not specified during the programme <br> (CIF Q1 and Q4) | Records of learner self-assessment, group and peer assessment; tutor records of assessment activities and individual/group progress and achievement. Learners' files, journals, diaries, portfolios, artwork; videos, audiotapes, performances, exhibitions and displays; individual or group learner testimony; artefacts, photographs and other forms of evidence <br><br> *[Evidence is likely to comprise qualitative and quantitative information and to demonstrate planned learning outcomes and learning gains identified subsequently]* |

# Section 4

## Evaluation of the Pilot Projects

The evaluation report on the pilot projects (*Evaluation Report on the Pilot Projects April 2003 to March 2004*, LSDA & NIACE 2004, http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/New/Default.htm and http://www.lsda.org.uk/pubs/) found strong support for the Staged Process and noted that many of the organisations that applied the Staged Process recognised it as "good teaching practice".

Many organisations used the Staged Process to develop and improve existing systems for teaching and learning, for example, developing initial assessment across all programmes in an adult and community learning organisation or fully implementing individual learning plans across an adult education service.  Many organisations found that:

> *"Staff do not see the staged process as additional to their normal practice"*

The test projects have demonstrated that implementing RARPA affects a wide range of staff, managers, curriculum leaders, tutors, and administrators. Despite an occasional reference to the problem of the time required for implementing changes, the response of staff was, in general, enthusiastic.

It is clear that in order for RARPA to be implemented successfully, the process must be owned and led at a senior level, and therefore be supported with appropriate staff development and be rolled out and monitored in a systematic way. The pilot demonstrated that while the support of heads and senior management of institutions was essential, the nature of this support and type and level of involvement also had an effect on the quality of the development.

Most progress was made where an institution designated a named person to manage and develop RARPA, especially where the staff member with a remit to develop RARPA worked closely with the quality manager and within the context of emerging quality systems.

Less progress was made where RARPA was added to workloads that were already weighty. The least effective model seemed to be where staff had to take on the RARPA development role because of staff turnover.The application of the RARPA approach inevitably became one of a number of competing priorities, so that hands-on leadership and development work was fairly limited.

Good examples of recording progress were observed in the test projects, many of them non-paper based, using new technologies to good effect.  For example, the use of digital images to demonstrate to learners their improvements in posture and technique in yoga and, the use of digital video to record and then discuss with learners their technique when 'throwing a pot'.  In both instances the images were not kept but used for formative purposes.  Other examples have included putting galleries of learners' artwork onto the provider's internet website, to which the individual learners could add their own commentary.

There has been a diverse range of different recording systems noted in the test projects. No single approach is to be recommended, as individual tutor preference and the needs and wishes of learners and the learning context all play a part in determining what is appropriate.

In recognition of the range of effective practice that has been observed, it is intended to develop a resource base that providers of non-accredited learning can access to develop their own recording mechanisms, and to act as a source of ideas to stimulate imaginative and effective ways of recognising and recording learner progress and achievement.

# Section 5

## Assuring Quality for Learners

Developing quality assurance processes for RARPA proved to be one of the more difficult and challenging aspects of the project.  The key aims to keep RARPA non-bureaucratic and fit for purpose are themes that have led the project.  In order to keep to these aims the processes for assuring the quality of non-accredited learning are to be non-intrusive and present no additional administrative or managerial burden on learning providers beyond that which they should already be undertaking for their own self assessment, and to meet the expectations of the Common Inspection Framework.
The publication of *Extending Trust* (LSC 2004) and the key messages arising have informed the development of quality assurance processes.  In doing so we have not simply equated 'bureaucracy' with 'paperwork' but seek to avoid the unnecessary or counter-productive intrusion of paper-based or electronic devices into systems of recording and recognising progress and achievement.

One of the particular principles put forward in *Extending Trust* is that of 'single validation'. We have sought to build on this principle in our proposals on the application of RARPA.

Feedback from the test projects in the pilot indicated that there is a strong resistance to any additional process or requirement on learning providers arising from the application of RARPA.  The strong message they gave during the regional meetings was to make RARPA fit within existing LSC requirements not to add further processes.

In order to meet these requirements, we are proposing a two-fold approach which fits with existing LSC requirements for learning providers:

Firstly; that the strategic summary in the three-year development plan includes a statement that demonstrates the provider's commitment to the RARPA principles, in their statement about quality assurance and continuous improvement in support of the mission of the provider.

Secondly; that the provider's self-assessment process includes an assessment of the provider's processes to assure the quality of learners' experience in non-accredited learning.

The LSC will not seek to externally validate or audit such self-assessments, but extends trust in the provider to act in the best interests of learners.  The inspectorates will be the final arbiters of the effectiveness and efficacy of each provider's arrangements for assuring quality and applying the Staged Process, judged against the Common Inspection Framework.

# Section 6

## Matters to be considered

The progress paper is intended to give providers and stakeholders not involved in the RARPA projects an opportunity to comment on the proposed approach and the findings from the projects described in the evaluation report. It is also designed to ensure that the positive messages from providers and others involved in the testing and development process are disseminated to a wider audience.

The RARPA Approach has been developed from a range of research and development work on non-accredited and informal learning that established the basis for good and effective practice. The Evaluation Report of the RARPA pilot projects, recently published by LSDA and NIACE, clearly identifies the benefits of RARPA to learners and learning organisations. As a result it is not intended to consult on the fundamental elements of the Approach and the Staged Process, which are now commonly agreed as good practice. These are described as 'givens'.

The issues for consultation are centred on two areas. First, issues that have shown that further exploration and development is required and on which the LSC should seek further advice from providers and stakeholders. Second, issues where the need for emerging good practice is identified. The evaluation has highlighted that such practice needs to be developed relating to the application of the Staged Process to particular types of provision, in particular learning contexts or for particular forms of organisation of learning.

The questions for the consultation can be found below under the appropriate section.

### 6.1    Givens

The progress paper does not seek comment on these aspects of the RARPA Approach and Staged Process. The evaluation has demonstrated the positive benefits of RARPA in regards to:

- **the structure and content of the Staged Process reflecting commonly agreed good practice**

- **the RARPA approach is appropriate as a quality assurance mechanism for teaching and learning in non-accredited provision funded by the LSC**

- **the approach is a suitable quality improvement tool**

- **the coherence of the approach with the requirements of other internal and external quality assurance processes including; observation of learning, self-assessment and inspection**

- **the benefits to learners, staff and institutions of implementing the Staged Process**

- **the need to implement the Staged Process in a manner which is fit for purpose, that is suiting the context of the learning and meeting the needs of learners without creating unnecessary paperwork**

- **the attitude of tutors presenting the Staged Process to learners is crucial to realising the benefits of the approach**

- **the potential positive impact of the process on the achievement of learning goals**

- **the potential for increased learner engagement where the Staged Process is delivered in an appropriate and sensitive manner, especially for learners with a prior negative experience of education and the development of reflective learning processes**

- **the role of the process in recognising unanticipated outcomes.**

## 6.2    Areas for further exploration

The areas detailed below show where workable solutions are being developed and will need advice and guidance, and examples of effective practice so that the full range of learning contexts and providers in the sector can apply the RARPA Approach effectively.

a) **Application of RARPA to the 'wider activities' recommended by the Tomlinson Working Group on 14-19 Reform.**  (See paras 79 – 83 and Recommendation 10, *14-19 CURRICULUM AND QUALIFICATIONS REFORM*: *Final Report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform*, http://www.14-19reform.gov.uk/ )

b) **Application of the Staged Process to work based learning and employer-dedicated provision.**  Work based learning was included in the pilot testing and the potential benefits identified in the evaluation report.

c) **Cost and time-efficient ways of utilising non-paper based methods of recording progress and achievement.**  There are examples of practice using digital voice and image recording and ICT based recording.  NIACE is currently running an action research project with providers to develop and evaluate such methods. The project, Learning Outcomes, will provide examples of effective recording that can be included in the proposed effective practice resource for RARPA.

d) **Management, capacity and administration of the process in institutions where quality assurance procedures are less well developed.**  Learning providers across the sector are at different stages of evolving quality assurance systems.  Some institutions are relatively new to the expectations of the LSC and to inspection and may require further advice and access to effective practice to develop such capacity.  There are also providers that are not directly funded by the LSC, but that have arrangements with directly funded organisations to deliver learning under franchise arrangements.  These providers will also be expected to apply quality assurance processes to their activities, under the normal terms of franchise, which will include RARPA in the future where the activities are non-accredited.

e) **Ensuring that RARPA is not identified with the collection of paperwork or the completion of forms, where this is actually a requirement of the institution itself and not the RARPA Approach.**  One of the issues identified in the evaluation of the pilot projects is that some providers work under the mistaken assumption that paper systems are necessary to record learners' progress and achievement.  It is clear from many of the returns from projects that more guidance and advice to providers is needed, both on the effective use of paper and other media within the Staged Process, and on the acceptability of non paper-based evidence to demonstrate to external bodies (the LSC and the inspectorates) that the Staged Process is being effectively and consistently applied.

f) **How to ensure that the process meets the needs of older learners and gives them the opportunity to access the benefits of the process.** One issue that has been reported from a number of projects is that many older learners find the Staged Process intrudes on their expectations of learning. In particular, providers report that many older learners are uncomfortable with the process of identifying and then recording individual learning objectives. Many older learners were uncomfortable with recording outcomes in writing. Clearly the adaptation of the Staged Process to take account of the age of learners will be as important as tailoring the process to suit the size and level of the course and the particular curriculum area. This is another area where more advice and guidance to providers will be needed in the future.

## 6.3: Issues that require examples of emerging and effective practice

This sub-section identifies aspects of provision, management, and organisation that will require specific examples of emerging good practice to demonstrate and encourage the development of effective practice across the sector.

### 6.3.1 In the delivery of learning

**The application of the Staged Process to short episodes of learning**. Examples of applying the Staged Process to short learning events has been seen and evaluated in the pilot projects.

**Fit for purpose application of the process to learning that might be broadly categorised as for personal development or enjoyment and community development.** The RARPA Approach will be applicable to all non-accredited learning. It is important however in assuring the quality of learners' experience that the process is non-intrusive, appropriate and fit for purpose. Providers will have to develop approaches that meet their requirements but which also satisfy the need to be able to self-assess and for inspection.

**Non-bureaucratic methods of evidence collection and examples of streamlined systems that meet the demands of the Staged Process.** Many inventive and effective methods have and are being developed and it is important that all providers have access to examples of this effective practice.

**The effects of RARPA on curriculum design and the responsiveness of provision to learners' requirements.** Examples have been observed of how curriculum development can enhance the application of RARPA to learners, tutors and the organisation's benefit. The lessons learned need to be shared.

### 6.3.2 In the management and quality assurance of learning

**How RARPA can be integrated into staff development in a timely-and cost-effective manner and, the potential for regional groupings and the work of champions to contribute to the sharing of emerging good practice.** This is a particular concern of learning providers with large numbers of, often, part-time or sessional teaching staff, where the need to embed changes in process are critical to the successful implementation of teaching and learning initiatives. A proposed staff development framework is to be developed to provide a 'skeleton' for such activity, based on the effective practice already identified to support providers deliver professional development activities.

**Effective involvement of the 'whole organisation' in the implementation of the Staged Process**.  It is not possible to identify an organisational blueprint for the effective application of the RARPA approach. Nevertheless, there were obvious differences between organisations in the implementation of the Staged Process. Where lines of accountability and responsibility were clear, the experiences of applying the Staged Process were clearly more positive.  Effective practice needs to be identified and made available across the sector.

**Evidence of the minimum requirements of the LSC and the inspectorates in terms of evidence arising from the application of the Staged Process**.  Some providers involved in the pilots were inspected during the project and there seems to be a correlation between the positive links established between the RARPA project activity, the process of inspection and the nature of the ALI reports on the providers concerned. Although the experience of preparing for and undergoing inspection inevitably becomes a key focus for activity within a provider, it seems that those providers with positive experiences of RARPA also have positive experiences of inspection.  The outcomes of the evaluation and their implication for inspection have been shared with the Adult Learning Inspectorate and the External Advisory Group.

### 6.3.3  Organisational issues

**Ownership of the process where provision is delivered by another institution.**
The arrangements for contracted-out or franchised delivery models need to be more fully explored, but examples of effective practice in the preparation of Service Level Agreements between providers, and sharing processes, are available to be shared through the proposed web-based resource for effective practice.  The LSC will publish a report looking at quality assurance in contracted out provision later in 2004.  (*Ensuring Quality in Adult and Community Learning Provision made Under Contracts: A Way Forward*)

# Section 7

## Timings and Next Steps

This section identifies the steps to be taken to fully implement the RARPA Approach and Staged Process for non-accredited learning.

### RARPA Champions

A number of organisations and individuals within organisations who have been piloting the RARPA Approach and Staged Process have gained a knowledge and expertise that will be valuable to others.  It is intended to create a network of 'Champions' other organisations can call upon for support and advice to help develop their practice to implement the Approach and the Staged Process.  NIACE and LSDA will contribute to the development and operation of the Champions network, together with local LSCs.

### Regional Networks

One particularly effective aspect of the pilot projects was the development of regional networks of providers that could share experience and ideas in the development of RARPA in their organisations.  The networks were particularly effective when organisations made a commitment to share their experience regularly and to update one another on progress.

We would like to emulate that success to facilitate the implementation of RARPA and to provide opportunities for meetings to identifyi and share good and effective practice.  Where appropriate networks would receive some support from local and regional and national LSC staff.

### Timescale

The RARPA project has a target for implementation of the Approach and the Staged Process by learning providers from September 2005.  The evaluation of the pilots and this consultation exercise are key to achieving this aim, but we recognise that the range of organisations, the number of teaching staff involved in delivery of non-accredited learning, many of whom are employed on sessional and part-time basis, make full implementation from September 2005 particularly challenging.

In order to implement the RARPA Approach and Staged Process effectively across all types of learning provider offering non-accredited learning, and in order to embed the principles, the following series of targets for implementation is proposed.

| Date | Target/Action |
|---|---|
| November 2004 February 2005 | RARPA Progress Paper (paper published, briefings for local LSC and Regional NIACE and LSDA staff, cascaded to providers) Establishing Regional LSC leads for RARPA |

| | RARPA Champions recruited and initial training held |
|---|---|
| February 2005 March 2005 | Review of responses to the Progress Paper |
| April 2005 | LSC circular on RARPA published |
| April 2005 September 2005 | Regional networks for providers established Roll-out briefings and development workshops |
| September 2005 | All learning providers implement RARPA Approach and Staged Process |
| September 2005 July 2006 | RARPA Approach and the Staged Process developed and embedded across all LSC-funded non-accredited provision |
| September 2006 | RARPA fully implemented and effective for non-accredited learning |

The timescale recognises the need of learning providers to incorporate the RARPA Approach and Staged Process into their teaching and learning practices and make arrangements for quality assurance. The key aim of the timescale is to allow providers to start the development and roll-out of RARPA in their organisations. All providers will be expected to make a commitment to the RARPA principles for September 2005 and will have until September 2006 to develop and embed the principles and requirements fully across their organisation. The 2005-06 Self-assessment Report of providers delivering non-accredited learning should include an assessment of the Staged Process and the progress and achievement of those learners. Providers need to be conscious that the new inspection framework places greater emphasis and reliance on providers' own self-assessment. (For information about the New Common Inspection Framework see: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/conDetails.cfm?consultationId=1264 )

There is a need to ensure that effective practice and exemplar materials are available for professional development purposes and for learning organisations to develop their systems and capacity to fully incorporate RARPA into their teaching and learning practices. In order for this to happen effectively, a longer time period to collect and publish examples of effective practice, to develop exemplar materials and to establish the Champions and Regional Networks is required.

# Section 8

## Questions

The questions set out below reflect the key concerns of the RARPA Project Steering Group and the External Advisory Group and reflect the issues identified in the evaluation of the pilot projects.

If you wish to respond to the questions raised in the progress paper please use the pro forma at Annex D and return by:

Email to RARPAprogress@lsc.gov.uk

Or by post to:

RARPA Progress
Adult Learning Group
Learning and Skills Council
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Fax:  024 7682 3250

The closing date for responses is 11 February 2005.


*Question 1:  Are there other areas that your organisation would like to see explored and developed in order to implement RARPA more effectively? (Please select the three that are most important to your organisation and learning context from the option list below)*

a) *Application of RARPA to the 'wider activities' recommended by the Tomlinson Working Group on 14-19 Reform.*
b) *Application of the Staged Process to work based learning and employer-dedicated provision.*
c) *Cost and time-efficient ways of utilising non-paper based methods of recording progress and achievement.*
d) *Management, capacity and administration of the process in institutions where quality assurance procedures are less well developed.*
e) *Ensuring that RARPA is not identified with the collection of paperwork or the completion of forms where this is actually a requirement of the institution itself, not of the RARPA Approach.*
f) *How to ensure that the process meets the needs of older learners and gives them the opportunity to access the benefits of the process.*

*Question 2:  What support, information or guidance would be useful to your organisation in implementing RARPA?  (Please indicate the nature of your organisation and the learning you are engaged in).*

*Question 3:  Are the proposed arrangements for assuring the quality of non-accredited learning (Three-year Development Plan Strategic Summary and Self-*

*Assessment) appropriate to your organisation and the learning you undertake?)*

*Question 4: The proposed support for RARPA includes 'Champions' from existing providers that have applied the Staged Process and provider networks to share experience and effective practice. Would your organisation use a Champion? If so, should the Champion be from an institution of the same type, for example, FE college, training provider or an institution delivering in the same area of learning and context, for example, yoga, languages for adults, work based training and so on?*

*Question 5: What sort of information and material would your organisation like to see on a web-based RARPA resource? (Please select from the list below and add any further specific examples your organisation would welcome.)*

*a) Exemplar processes with documentation*
*b) Tried and tested materials/media/methods for recording learner outcomes*
*c) Checklists for tutors, managers, learners*
*d) Self assessment tools that incorporate RARPA requirements*
*e) Exemplar 'Service Level Agreements' for use with contracted out learning*
*f) Staff development frameworks*
*g) Staff induction materials for RARPA*
*h) Database of organisations that can be contacted to discuss and share practice*
*i) Details of local, regional or sectoral networks for sharing experience and effective practice.*

*Question 6: Do you have examples of effective practice in recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning that you would be prepared to share through such a web-based resource? (If 'Yes' please indicate on your response the area(s) where your effective practice has been developed.)*

*Question 7: What staff development needs do you anticipate arising from introducing the RARPA approach and Staged Process?*

*Question 8: Do you agree with the proposed timetable or are there difficulties the timetable may present to your organisation in fully implementing RARPA?*

# Annex A

## Membership of the External Advisory Group

**Adult Learning Inspectorate**

**Association of Colleges**

**Canterbury College**

**Crawley College**

**Department for Education and Skills**

**HOLEX National Office**

**Lancashire College**

**Lifelong Learning Service, London Borough of Waltham Forest**

**LSC National Office**

**LSDA**

**NIACE**

**National Open College Network**

**Office for Standards in Education**

**Staffordshire LSC**

**The Association of National Specialist Colleges**

**Ufi Ltd**

**University of Exeter**

# Annex B

## Core Projects Group

**Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council**

**Bromley Adult Education College**

**Care Connect Learning Ltd**

**Cornwall Adult Education Service**

**Derby City Council - Adult Learning Service**

**Dorset Adult Education**

**Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education & Training (ACET)**

**Gordano Training**

**Hereford and Worcestershire Hub**

**ITS Training Services, Felixtowe**

**National Star College**

**NETA Training Group**

**Orchard Hill College**

**Rathbone E2E**

**Stockport Continuing Education Service**

**Stockton Riverside College CoVE (Performing Arts)**

**Surrey Community Action**

**The City Lit**

**The Learning Curve**

**Wakefield LEA**

**WEA**

**Wolverhampton Adult Education Service**

# Annex C

## Wider Development Group

**Bournemouth Adult Education**
**Brighton and Hove Learning Partnership**
**Buckinghamshire Adult Learning**
**Cambridgeshire LEA**
**City College Brighton and Hove**
**County Durham Learning**
**Coventry Adult Education Service**
**Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service**
**Eastleigh College**
**EETAC, Leicester College**
**Exeter CVS with Exeter College of FE**
**Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology**
**Halton Adult Learning**
**Hampshire County Council Adult and Community Learning Unit**
**Hull College**
**Kent Adult Education Service**
**Lancashire County Council Adult Education Service**
**Learning South West**
**Lincolnshire LEA**
**Liverpool Community College**
**New College Durham**
**Newbury College**
**North and West Essex Adult Community College**
**Northern College for Residential Adult Education**
**Pathways to Work**
**Peterborough LEA**
**Portsmouth City Council, Lifelong Learning**
**Solihull MBC Community Services (Libraries, Arts and Lifelong Learning)**
**South Leicestershire College, Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning partnership**
**Sutton College of Learning for Adults**
**The Mary Ward Centre**
**Thurrock Adult Community College**
**Tower Hamlets College**
**Tresham Institute, Kettering**
**Warrington Collegiate Institute**
**Warwickshire County Council Community Education Service**
**York LEA**

# Annex D

## Participants in the LSDA DDA project

**Benfield and Heaton Adult Association (ACL)**

**Kingston Maurward College (FE)**

**Milton Keynes Adult Continuing Education (ACL)**

**Morley College (ACL)**

**Southport College (FE)**

# Annex E

## Questions raised in the progress paper – Pro forma for return

The information you send us may need to be passed to colleagues within the LSC and/or published in a summary of responses received in response to this exercise.  We will assume that you are content for us to do this, and if you are replying by email, your consent overrides any confidentiality disclaimer that is generated by your organisation's IT system, unless you specifically include a request to the contrary in the main text of your submission. **Please insert 'X' if you want us to keep your response confidential □**

Name

Organisation
(if applicable)

Address

If you have a query relating to this consultation please contact your local Learning and Skills Council.

Please insert 'X' in **one** of the following boxes that best describes you as a respondent.

□ Further Education College     □ External Institution
□ Local Education Authority     □ Higher Education Institution
□ Trade Union     □ Work Based Learning Training Provider
□ Employer     □ Representative Body
□ Sectoral Body     □ National Organisation
□ Regional Body     □ Voluntary Organisation
□ School     □ Individual
❏ Sixth form College

□ Other (Please specify)

*Question 1:  Are there other areas that your organisation would like to see explored and developed in order to implement RARPA more effectively? (Please select the three that are most important to your organisation and learning context from the option list below)*

a)**Application of RARPA to the 'wider activities' recommended by the Tomlinson Working Group on  14-19 Reform.** b)  **Application of the Staged Process to work based learning and employer-dedicated provision.**
**c)  Cost and time-efficient ways of utilising non-paper based methods of recording progress and achievement.**
d) **Management, capacity and administration of the process in institutions where quality assurance procedures are less well developed.**
e) **Ensuring that RARPA is not identified with the collection of paperwork or the completion of forms where this is actually a requirement of the institution itself, not of the RARPA Approach.**
f) **How to ensure that the process meets the needs of older learners and ensures gives them the opportunity to access the benefits of the process.**

**1st**

**2nd**

**3rd**

**Comments:**

*Question 2:  What support, information or guidance would be useful to your organisation in implementing RARPA?  (Please indicate the nature of your organisation and the learning you are engaged in.)*

**Comments:**

*Question 3:  Are the proposed arrangements for assuring the quality of non-accredited learning (Three year Development Plan Strategic Summary and Self-Assessment) appropriate to your organisation and the learning you undertake?*

**Comments:**

```




```

*Question 4:  The proposed support for RARPA includes 'Champions' from existing providers that have applied the Staged Process and provider networks to share experience and effective practice.  Would your organisation use a Champion? If so, should the Champion be from an institution of the same type, for example, FE college, training provider or an institution delivering in the same area of learning and context, for example, yoga, languages for adults, work based training and so on?*

**Comments:**

```




```

*Question 5:  What sort of information and material would your organisation like to see on a web-based RARPA resource? (Please select from the list below and add any further specific examples your organisation would welcome.)*

   *a) Exemplar processes with documentation*
   *b) Tried and tested materials/media/methods for recording learner outcomes*
   *c) Checklists for tutors, managers, learners*
   *d) Self assessment tools that incorporate RARPA requirements*
   *e) Exemplar 'Service Level Agreements' for use with contracted out learning*
   *f) Staff development frameworks*
   *g) Staff induction materials for RARPA*
   *h) Database of organisations that can be contacted to discuss and share practice*
   *i) Details of local, regional or sectoral networks for sharing experience and effective practice*

**Selection from list:**

**Comments:**

*Question 6:  Do you have examples of effective practice in recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning that you would be prepared to share through such a web-based resource?  (If 'Yes' please indicate on your response the area(s) where your effective practice has been developed).*

| Comments: |
| --- |
|  |

*Question 7:  What staff development needs do you anticipate arising from introducing the RARPA approach and Staged Process?*

| Comments: |
| --- |
|  |

*Question 8:  Do you agree with the proposed timetable or are there difficulties the timetable may present to your organisation in fully implementing RARPA?*

| Comments: |
| --- |
|  |

# Annex F

## References:

- *Investing in Skills: Taking Forward the Skills Strategy – An LSC Consultation Paper on Reforming the Funding and Planning Arrangements for First Steps, Personal and Community Development Learning for Adults,* LSC (2004)

- *21st Century Skills: Realising our potential* Department for Education and Skills (2003)

- *Paragraph 35,* Secretary of State's remit letter to the LSC 9 November 2000, Secretary of State for Education (2000)

- *LSC Circular 02/06 Quality Improvement: Intervention to Improve the Performance of Providers, paragraph 4.* LSC (2002)

- *Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills Sector: Responses to the invitation to comment on proposals for new measures of success contained in the consultation and discussion document 'Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills Sector'* LSC (November 2003)

**Research papers and publications that provide the basis for the RARPA approach and Staged Process**

- *Recognising and Validating Outcomes of Non-accredited Learning – A Practical Approach.* LSDA, (2001)

- *Recognising and validating learning outcomes and achievement in non-accredited basic skills and ESOL.* LSDA, (2002)
- *Learning in progress – recognising achievement in adult learning.* LSDA/NIACE, (2002)
- *Squaring the Circle: Funding non-accredited adult learning under the Learning and Skills Council.* NIACE, (2001)
- *Proof Positive: a report on research into learners' views on approaches to identifying achievement in non-accredited learning.* DfES research report, (November 2001)
- *Proof Positive – Learners' views on approaches to identifying achievement in non-accredited learning – Briefing on the aims, key outcomes and implications of recent research.* NIACE, (2001)

- *LSC Position Paper on Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-accredited Learning,* LSC (2003)

- *Summary Report: Adult and Community Learning Pilot Inspections, October 2001-March 2002* ALI (2002)

- *Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-accredited Learning – Evaluation Report on the Pilot Projects April 2003 to March 2004,* LSDA & NIACE (2004) http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/New/Default.htm and http://www.lsda.org.uk/pubs/

- *Extending Trust: A report of the Bureaucracy Task Force,* LSC (2004)

- *Ensuring Quality in Adult and Community Learning Provision made under contract: A Way Forward.* LSC (to be published later in 2004)