

Learning and Skills in Greater Merseyside

2002/05

Consultation



Learning+Skills Council
Greater Merseyside

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Chair's foreword

I am delighted, as Chair of Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council, to welcome you to our first consultation exercise.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has been set up with a clear remit to raise levels of skills and knowledge for all adults and young people, to world class standards. This is to be done against a backdrop of an increasingly knowledge based, service sector economy, in which too many people are prevented from achieving their potential by a lack of basic skills, outdated knowledge, or simply a mistrust and dislike of 'the learning system' – a learning system that too often is inflexible and unresponsive to learners needs.

Our task is to ensure that the people of Greater Merseyside are equipped, through learning, with the necessary skills to participate fully, both in the economy and as citizens. We need to develop a culture where lifelong learning is an integral part of people's lives and is seen as a way of expanding life chances and creating better futures for themselves, their families and their communities.

Whilst the LSC's key objectives are common across England, we must ensure that our local plans reflect local needs. We need to understand where Greater Merseyside differs from other parts of the country and to develop appropriate responses. Local challenges include:

- Low levels of participation in learning and below average levels of achievement amongst both young people and adults;
- A higher than average number of people who lack the basic skills of literacy and numeracy;
- A concentration of lack of access to learning and work amongst particular communities of people – both by geography and characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, gender, disability) - compounded by high levels of economic and social deprivation;
- The general absence of a learning culture across Greater Merseyside, within both communities and the employer base;
- A higher than average incidence of people in low skill jobs in industries vulnerable to economic change.

However, we know that we cannot meet this challenge alone. We need to secure your involvement – as partners, deliverers of learning, employers, communities, young people and adults – in developing our strategies and plans. This document sets out our initial thoughts on the key issues facing Greater Merseyside and the ways we might address them.

We are committed to an open approach to consultation, and your response to this document will help us to shape the learning and skills agenda for Greater Merseyside over the next three years and enable us all to more effectively use our resources to meet local needs.

We look forward to receiving your views, and hope that you will take the time to respond.

Jim Michie

Chair, Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council

1. Your views

1.1 The purpose of this document and the consultation exercise we are engaged in is to share our thoughts on the nature of the challenges in Greater Merseyside and to ask for your views and help in developing a coherent, responsive and locally focussed first Strategic Plan.

The document covers the following themes, on which your views are sought:

- Extending participation in learning by adults and young people
- Increasing the engagement of employers and meeting the skill needs of the economy
- Increasing the achievement of young people
- Increasing the achievement of adults
- Raising the quality of learning provision

1.2 Under each theme, we set out what we perceive to be the local challenges, our strategic objectives and some of the key actions we think we need to take. We are also consulting on our local ambition for learning and skills and the type of targets we need to set locally (and in some cases nationally). We have attempted to provide enough flavour throughout the document to illustrate some of the thinking we have done over the last six months. However, we want to make sure this is a strategy that reflects the learning and skill needs of Greater Merseyside, and for that we need your views of what we have got right so far, what we have missed and how you can contribute to the learning and skills agenda.

Whilst we have asked particular questions, do not feel that you need to restrict yourself to these areas or answer all of them – you may wish to concentrate on particular aspects of the plan or provide additional feedback.

1.3 You can respond to this consultation document by November 30th in 2001 in a number of different ways:

- By completing and returning the attached questionnaire, either electronically or by post (electronic copies of the questionnaire are available from the e-mail address below);
- In writing by post or e-mail;

For either option, please contact Andy Frith, Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council, Tithebarn House, Tithebarn Street, Liverpool, L2 2NZ

E-mail: andrew.frith@lsc.gov.uk

- Through participation in the various consultation events we are organising over this period.

Details are set out in the accompanying letter, but should you require further information, please contact Andy Frith on 0151 672 3541.

Planning Timetable

Outline Strategic Plan made available for informal consultation	October 2001
Programme of consultation events	October 2001 – November 2001
Informal consultation closes	December 2001
Full Strategic Plan, incorporating consultation responses, made available for formal consultation	January 2002
GMLSC Strategic Plan 2002-2005 published	March 2002
Business Plan 2002-2003 published	March 2002

2. Planning context

National context – the LSC’s objectives and targets

2.1 The LSC came into existence at the end of March 2001, with a remit to integrate the planning and funding of all post compulsory learning outside of Higher Education. The LSC published its Corporate Plan in July 2001, setting out the organisation’s strategic framework to 2004. This strategic framework also provides the framework for the development of this local Strategic Plan. The Corporate Plan sets out our national mission and vision, and our key objectives and targets for 2004.

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.

2.2 Nationally, our key objectives are:

1. To extend participation in education, learning and training
2. To increase the engagement of employers in workforce development
3. To raise the achievement of young people
4. To raise the achievement of adults
5. To raise the quality of education and training and user satisfaction

2.3 Each of these objectives has associated outcome targets; these are national targets but their achievement is made up of the sum of local progress towards the targets. The targets – both national and local – are discussed further in section 3. Our local objectives, targets and actions, as set out in this

Plan, have been developed within this national framework, and relate back to these national key objectives. This Plan therefore needs to be considered both in the context of this national planning framework, and the local planning environment, as set out below.

responding to the skills and learning needs of Greater Merseyside. We will make most progress if we can agree on what the local skills and learning priorities are and work together to address them.

GMLSC OBJECTIVES	NWDA	Connexions	Objective 1	Employment Service	TMP	GME
1. Extend participation in learning	●	●	●		●	
2. Increase engagement of employers in workforce development	●		●	●	●	●
3. Raise achievement of young people	●	●	●		●	
4. Raise achievement of adults	●		●	●	●	
5. Raise the quality of learning provision	●	●	●	●	●	

Table 1

Local context – strategic environment

- 2.4 In developing this Plan we are seeking to produce a learning and skills strategy for Greater Merseyside, not just a Strategic Plan for Greater Merseyside LSC. We would like our partners to contribute to and sign up to this learning and skills agenda, and as a starting point we have sought to align our strategic objectives to those of our key strategic partners across the Greater Merseyside sub-region – the North West Development Agency, The Mersey Partnership, Greater Merseyside Connexions, the Employment Service, the Objective 1 Partnership and Greater Merseyside Enterprise. Table 1 sets out where we see the linkages between our strategic objectives and the strategies of these organisations.
- 2.5 We are developing this plan within a landscape of local strategic change. The Mersey Partnership has recently taken on a strategic role on behalf of local partners and has just published its draft Action Plan for Merseyside. We have a new Connexions service for Greater Merseyside, with a role to provide coherent support and guidance for young people. The Employment Service too is refocusing the way that it operates, in particular broadening it’s focus to support all people of working age that are in receipt of benefits. The new Objective 1 programme, running from 2000 to 2006, is being managed more strategically with an emphasis on commissioning activity that meets the needs of Merseyside. Greater Merseyside Enterprise are responsible for providing business support to SMEs across the area and are key partners in delivering the workforce development agenda.
- 2.6 All of these organisations (together with many at district level) have an important role to play in

- 2.7 Reflecting the fact that this Plan focuses on the broad learning and skills agenda, we have set out in the main body of this document, against each strategic objective, a range of possible actions by ourselves and others that will enable these Strategic Objectives to be met. Some of these actions will be taken forward by Greater Merseyside LSC through our providers; others will need to be taken forward in partnership with others. In developing this aspect of the plan, we will be seeking over the coming months to identify, with partners, areas in which we can agree local impact measures to add value to the LSC’s and other partners’ expenditure.
- 2.8 These local impact measures will address issues of local importance that are a priority for a number of partners. Such issues could relate to particular parts of the community, either in terms of specific groups within the population, or to specific geographical areas. Local impact measures could also relate to specific skills needed in the Greater Merseyside area. A key feature of local impact measures is that they add value to work that would otherwise be taken forward in a more fragmented way by individual partners.

Local context – the labour market

- 2.9 We are also developing this plan in the context of the local economy and labour market. Greater Merseyside remains an area facing enormous challenges to upskill its current and future workforce. It is one of the UK’s most densely populated urban areas with 1.5 million people living in the six Boroughs. The resident labour force is around 900,000 of whom around 530,000 are in employment, 56,000 are self-employed and 320,000 are not employed. Of those not in employment around 40,000 are claiming unemployment benefit and 280,000 are economically inactive – a proportion far higher than for Great Britain overall.

2.10 Employment has been growing over the past 5 years and now 560,000 people are employed in Greater Merseyside businesses – with growing sectors in finance, retail and tourism. The area has a large public sector, representing a much higher proportion of employment than that of Great Britain, with nearly 4 in 10 employees working in this sector. A lower proportion of the workforce is employed in manufacturing than elsewhere, but this still represents 82,000 people – food processing, chemicals and the automotive sector are particularly important. Tourism is a considerable growth sector for the area. It is estimated to generate around £500 million and support in excess of 16,000 jobs. Call centres represent an important and growing sector. Merseyside is the number one location for call centres in the UK.

2.11 Greater Merseyside has 26,000 businesses registered for VAT, with a registration rate below that for the UK. Compared to the national average the area has fewer small firms and a higher proportion of large firms.

2.12 Despite the improving employment situation, Greater Merseyside continues to suffer from high levels of unemployment. Although the claimant count rate has been falling steadily for five years, it still stands at 42,000 (6.5%), over twice the average rate for the UK. Other measures of unemployment indicate that the numbers of people affected are considerably higher. The ILO unemployment rate, measured by the Labour Force Survey, is 9.3%. The Index of Deprivation would suggest that there are 174,000 people who are employment deprived.

3. Our ambition and targets

Our ambition for Greater Merseyside

3.1 Our ambition for Greater Merseyside reflects the local challenges we face and the scale of change that we

believe is necessary to enable us to address the barriers to learning faced by the people and employers of Merseyside.

"To create a learning culture in Greater Merseyside in which everyone is encouraged and enabled to reach their potential, where high quality provision is available to meet the needs and desires of learners, and people are equipped with the skills needed to enable the development of a prosperous local economy"

Achieving this ambition will take time, and is probably beyond the lifetime of this Plan. Below we set out our local strategic targets for 2004 which represent our first step towards achieving that ambition.

Our key objectives and targets for 2004

3.2 As part of our local planning process, we will need to set local targets which will contribute to the achievement of the LSC's national targets. It is important that we are able to make the link between what we do and our progress towards our targets. For that reason, we have chosen to use the national framework of five key objectives for our local Plan:

- Extend participation in learning by young people and adults
- Increase the engagement of employers in workforce development and meet the skill needs of the local economy
- Increase the achievement of young people
- Increase the achievement of adults
- Raise the quality of learning provision

Key Local Objectives	Measure	National Target (2004)	Local Target (2004)
1. Extend participation in learning by young people and adults	% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning	80%	
	Views welcomed on the target for adults		
2. Increase the engagement of employers in workforce development and meet the skill needs of the local economy	Views on an appropriate measure are sought		
3. Increase the achievement of young people	% at Level 2 ¹ by age 19	85%	
	% at Level 3 by age 19	55%	
4. the achievement of adults	Raise literacy and numeracy skills of adults	750,000	
	% of adults at Level 2	Target to be set next year	
	% of adults at level 3	41%	
5. Raise the quality of learning provision	Views sought on appropriate targets		

¹See Annex 1 for explanation

3.3 We set out below, in summary, the key objectives and the targets we will set to measure our progress towards them.

3.4 We have not set out any proposed local numerical targets. We will, in the autumn, receive from our national office baselines and target ranges that can be used to benchmark Greater Merseyside LSC against other LSCs and nationally. We can then, in discussion with local partners and our national office, develop our local targets.

Equality of Opportunity and Social Exclusion

3.5 Underpinning all that we do is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and social inclusion. In implementing our plans, we will strive to give everyone the chance, through education, training and work, to realise their full potential and thus help to build an inclusive and fair society and a competitive economy.

3.6 We have mainstreamed equality of opportunity and social inclusion throughout this strategic plan, addressing inequalities of race, gender and disability, together with inclusion of those disadvantaged by age or multiple deprivation. We will measure and track progress towards our local targets for all such groups, and produce a detailed Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Action Plan, which will set out our operational priorities for 2002-2003, with delivery targets to reflect our commitment to equalising opportunities in learning and increasing social inclusion throughout Greater Merseyside. Later in the year we will be consulting on our equal opportunities and social inclusion action plan, which sets out our objectives for 2002-2003.

What do you think?

- Does our ambition express the LSC's task? Does it focus on the core learning issues?

We haven't yet identified any additional local targets. These would probably be a subset of a national target and reflect areas of specific local concern. We would need to be able to measure these targets and report on them locally.

- Are there additional local targets you would like to see set outside the national targets?
- Setting targets at Greater Merseyside level masks wide disparities in performance at district (and sub-district) level. How do we address this?
- Do you agree with our approach of mainstreaming equality of opportunity within our Plan?

4. Extending participation in learning by young people and adults

4.1 *The Challenge – young people*

- Participation in learning by young people is not significantly behind the national average. However, this still means that (based on 1999 figures) more than 3,000 young people stop participating in learning when they left school at 16.
- There remains significant unemployment amongst 16-19 year olds in Greater Merseyside. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) annual estimate for 1999 suggests that around 8,000 young people are unemployed at any one time.
- Participation in post-16 learning cannot be tackled without looking at pre-16 achievement – research has shown that the formal qualifications that pupils achieve at the end of compulsory schooling are the most powerful predictor of participation in further education.
- Given this, we need firstly to ensure that we work with LEAs to support pre-16 achievement through, in particular improving pre-16 vocational opportunities, and secondly provide a post-16 'curriculum offer' that is appropriate to the needs of the individual.
- At least three per cent of young people leave school at 16 and go into employment without any training. These young people are less likely to have achieved a Level 2 by the end of their compulsory schooling.
- There is significant variation in the percentage of young people continuing in learning at the end of compulsory education across the Greater Merseyside area – from 77% in Knowsley to 86% in Wirral.
- Boys are slightly more likely than girls to leave learning at 16, and this disengagement from learning continues into adulthood.
- National research shows that particular groups of young people are less likely to participate in learning. For example, young people with disabilities are twice as likely to not participate in post-16 learning. Local anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a higher rate of teenage pregnancy in some parts of Greater Merseyside than nationally, and that teenage mothers are less likely to continue in learning. There is a need to provide learning appropriate to the needs of particular groups: the recent area inspection report for Liverpool stated that "the lead on developing [entry level and level 1 provision] should be given to those providers with a proven track record of working with groups currently under-represented in post-16 learning".

4.2 We have divided our response to the challenge of increasing the participation of young people into two areas:

- a. Making sure that young people receive encouragement and appropriate levels of support to enable them to continue in appropriate learning at the end of compulsory schooling; and
- b. Bringing back into learning the estimated 3,500 16-18 year olds who have become disengaged from formal learning.

Clearly, this is an agenda that we share with a number of our partners, and in particular with the Greater Merseyside Connexions service. We will need to work closely with Connexions to develop shared targets and complementary approaches to encouraging increased participation in learning. Whilst improving the quality of the provision available to young people will also help to promote participation in learning, this is addressed separately under our objective of 'Raising the quality of Learning Provision'.

Strategic Objective 1.1: Encourage and support young people to continue in learning

4.3 We have identified some potential ways of achieving this objective:

- Improving destination and achievement feedback to learners so that they have a clear idea about the benefits of the various learning routes and actively promoting to young people the benefits of learning
- Working with Connexions, schools, colleges and work based learning providers to ensure high quality information and impartial advice is provided to young people on all post-16 learning opportunities and that this guidance focuses on both labour market needs and individual preference
- Improving support for young people who want to continue to learn. This could be financial support (e.g. working with LEAs to promote the effective use of the Education Maintenance Allowance), learning support for those with particular learning needs, pastoral support to help young people deal with problems inside and outside learning, or developing different ways of delivering provision to meet the needs of young people (e.g. providing provision to meet the needs of pregnant teenagers and young mums).
- Developing with our delivery partners new pathways for learning that will encourage young people to view learning as a continuous process from 14 to 19.

Actions here could include:

- supporting the development of more vocational learning within the 14-16 school curriculum
- developing with LEAs alternative modes of delivery

from 14 for those for whom the school environment is not working.

- developing and promoting links between schools, post-16 providers and employers, working with the Greater Merseyside Education Business Link Organisation and its constituent organisations

- Ensuring that young people and employers are aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to paid time off for study, and encourage and support the provision of suitable opportunities
- Promoting to young people the benefits of learning and the consequences of not learning
- Working with GM Connexions and Learning Partnerships to enable young people to influence the range of opportunities and design of learning programmes available to them through the development of learner feedback and consultation mechanisms
- Ensuring that all young people have access to work experience that enables them to increase their understanding of the workplace, the different sectors open to them and the learning required
- Promoting 'citizenship' as part of all young people's learning

Strategic Objective 1.2: Bring back into training and education those young people who have disengaged from learning

4.4 Our initial ideas for achieving this include:

- Working with Connexions to identify and implement targeted strategies for engaging disengaged young people through integrated provision led by the needs of the individual. Activity supported will include outreach, mentoring, industry links and leisure services.
 - Providing support for our partners to target those young people who disengage from compulsory education.
 - Developing attractive provision – both in terms of programme design and delivery – that meets the needs of disengaged young people and promotes the benefits of learning to them
- Strengthening links with other agencies, such as Social Services (young people in and leaving care) and Youth Offending Teams, to support young people's re-engagement in learning
- Promoting to employers the benefits of training for young people they employ

What do you think?...participation by young people

- Have we correctly identified the challenge?

We feel that there are two distinct issues relating to the participation of young people – keeping their engagement in learning at the end of compulsory learning and tackling that group of young people who have already disengaged from learning.

- Do you agree with this distinction?

We have identified some of the ways in which we might achieve our objectives.

- What else do we need to do and what should we prioritise?
- Do you disagree with any of the things we propose to do?
- How best can we ensure that young people have an opportunity to influence what we do?

4.5 *The Challenge – adults*

- Nationally, it is estimated that between 20% and 26% of the working age population have not undertaken any form of learning in the last three years. If we translate these estimates to the Greater Merseyside population, it would suggest that between 181,000 and 230,000 people of working age have not undertaken any learning in the past three years. The National Adult Learning Survey 1997 suggests that the proportion of Merseyside residents who had recently participated in learning was lower than the national average.
- Of the working age population in Greater Merseyside, almost one third are economically inactive (compared to 21% in Greater Britain). Claimant unemployment is twice the UK figure.
- National research shows that of those who had not recently participated in learning, almost half said that they preferred doing other things and a third were not interested in learning at all. Other reasons related to a lack of confidence – including those that had not done any learning for a long time (24%) or who thought they might not be able to keep up with others on the course (17%).
- DfES research has suggested that to engage adults from socially excluded groups we need to provide learning that meets them on their own terms and on their own territory through outreach and community venues, involves the voluntary and community sectors, and targets groups rather than individuals.
- Some groups in the national population are less likely to participate than others. Women are significantly under-represented in learning at NVQ Level 3. People over the age of 50 represent less than 10% of people in training, although they represent 30% of the working age population.
- The trend in recent years for people to extend their working lives is set to continue as people live longer. Learning should be made accessible to older adults to enable them to continue to develop and update their skills.

- National research shows that of those individuals who have not accessed learning for the past three years, only 6% had sought any guidance (compared to a quarter of learners).
- There are significant obstacles to increasing the demand for learning. Almost a third of female respondents to the DfES's 1997 Adult Learning Survey did not have time for learning because of family commitments, whilst more than a fifth of adults cited the cost of learning as a barrier.

- 4.6 In response to this challenge we have identified three areas on which we need to focus if we are to increase the participation of adults in learning:
- a. Improving the awareness and understanding of adults of the benefits and availability of learning to promote the development of a lifelong learning culture
 - b. Breaking down the barriers to learning experienced by adults and making learning more accessible to people and communities
 - c. Ensuring that appropriate learning opportunities are available for those taking the first steps or returning to learning
- 4.7 As our estimates show, there could be almost a quarter of a million adults of working age in Greater Merseyside who have not participated in any learning for the last three years. Whilst we need to focus on this group, we must also ensure that existing learners are retained within the learning system. We also need to support provision for those beyond the working age. Given such a large potential market, we need to identify the different segments of the adult market and prioritise the use of our resources. Our initial thoughts on the groups that we could target are:
- All adults with basic skills needs
 - Adults who have not engaged in learning since leaving school
 - Adults working in vulnerable industries where redundancy is a threat
 - Those people who are economically inactive (but not claiming unemployment benefit)
 - Groups suffering disadvantage in the skills and labour markets such as:
 - Ex-offenders/prison populations
 - People suffering from high levels of deprivation
 - Specific cultural/ethnic groups
 - People with disabilities
 - Those with social, domestic or caring responsibilities
 - People aged 50+

This list is not exhaustive, and we will need to refine this further as we develop the Plan.

Strategic Objective 1.3: Improve the awareness and understanding of adults of the benefits and availability of learning throughout their lives

4.8 We believe that we need to improve the demand by adults for learning by:

- Working with our partners, including Learning Partnerships and Local Education Authorities, to develop promotional materials that demonstrate the benefits learning brings in terms of employment prospects, family benefits and personal satisfaction.
- Developing ways to draw into learning those people who have not engaged in any structured learning in the previous three years, building on existing practice of University for Industry (Ufi), Adult Learners Week and other initiatives.
- Ensuring that high quality adult information, advice and guidance services are available to people in appropriate locations, at the right times and in a range of formats (e.g. face to face, on-line, Braille, printed); and that appropriate linkages to learndirect are in place.
- Improving the availability of information and advice on progression to other learning to keep adults in learning and encourage a culture of lifelong learning.
- Working with learning providers to develop effective methods of tracking adult learners and use this information to promote the impact of learning to adults.
- Targeting the promotion of learning at the hardest to reach non-learners through other agencies working with these groups, such as social services, probation services and health services and the development of an 'outreach' approach.

Strategic Objective 1.4: Make learning more accessible

4.9 Some of the ways in which we can break down barriers include:

- Helping to overcome financial barriers to learning through:
 - The promotion of Individual Learning Accounts and Career Development Loans
 - Working with LEAs and colleges to devise imaginative fee admission schemes in order to make provision for adults more accessible and simple to understand
- Working with Early Years Childcare and Development Partnerships and learning providers to improve access to learning for those with childcare or other caring responsibilities.
- Developing local access to learning, including basic skills, through for example:
 - Providing more support for family learning programmes
 - Working with learning providers and other agencies to develop a network of outreach workers/centres to bring learning opportunities to communities

- Supporting the development of mobile learning facilities to local communities, industrial areas etc
- Encouraging local companies to open up their learning facilities to communities in evenings and at weekends
- Developing the potential of on-line learning as a means of encouraging adult participation in learning, working with Ufi/learndirect
- Enhancing basic skills self learning initiatives and provide these free of charge to all learners
- Making basic skills learning more acceptable and accessible through the development of Learning Champions, who would be trained to recognise basic skill needs and act as role models in accessing basic skills support. Learning Champions could be in community support groups, tenants associations, local hairdressers, doctors' surgeries etc.
- Providing appropriate learning opportunities for minority ethnic groups, including English for Speakers of Other Languages, so that adults have the opportunity to reach their potential
- Supporting access to inclusive and specialist learning opportunities for disabled people and those with learning disabilities

Strategic Objective 1.5: Ensure that learning opportunities meet the needs of adults returning to learning

4.10 We need to make sure that if we raise the demand for learning by adults, we have available a range of high quality learning opportunities that meet their needs. Some of the things we could do are:

- Work with learning providers to develop learning materials that take into account the different characteristics of learners from different cultural and social backgrounds
- Use development funding to encourage innovative basic skills provision and ensure that basic skills learning materials are relevant to adults and their daily lives
- With our partners, ensure that we have a wide range of 'first step' or 'taster' opportunities to encourage participation, and ensure that access routes are available to those progressing to formal learning
- Ensure that sufficient entry level basic skills and ICT learning opportunities are available and that these are presented in imaginative and attractive ways
- Support the provision of vocationally relevant learning opportunities that will enable adults to return to education to upgrade existing skills and acquire new ones

What do you think?...participation by adults

- Have we correctly identified the challenge? If not, what have we missed?

The LSC is going to develop a target for measuring adult participation in learning, and is looking for views on how best this can be done.

- Do you have any suggestions for an adult participation target?

We have separated the challenge of increasing adult participation into three areas – creating demand for learning, facilitating access to learning and providing the right kind of opportunities for those returning to learning. Our focus here is very much on bringing into learning those adults who are not currently participating, although some of the services we describe will be available to all adults. We have also started to identify some of the groups we might want to target our resources on.

- Are there any potential target groups that we have not identified, and how can we prioritise these groups?
- Do you agree with the way we have broken down our response to the challenge?

We have identified some of the ways in which we might achieve our objectives.

- What else do we need to do to get more adults involved in learning, particularly in deprived parts of Greater Merseyside, and what activities should we prioritise?
- Do you disagree with any of the things we propose to do?
- What can we do to make basic skills provision more attractive to learners?
- Should we incentivise learning for adults? What sort of incentives could we offer?
- How can we ensure that adult learners are given a voice in evaluating our programmes?

5. Engaging employers in workforce development and meeting the skill needs of the economy

5.1 *The Challenge*

- Measures of the local economy indicate that Greater Merseyside is performing poorly relative to the rest of the UK, for example per capita GDP is 73% of that of the UK (1996). This poor performance is reflected in Merseyside's Objective 1 status.
- Employment in the North West is expected to grow by 0.5% per annum to 2010, and much of this employment will require higher level generic and specific skills. If Greater Merseyside is to take advantage of this growth potential we must ensure that we are developing these skills. Currently too many local people are working in low skill jobs in

traditional industries vulnerable to economic change

- NWDA research predicts that the industry sectors that will require the greatest skills uplift are:
- clothing, electronics, construction, textiles, paper, printing & publishing, basic metals & metal goods, motor vehicles, aerospace, textiles, other manufacturing, chemicals and construction
- As businesses become increasingly knowledge based and responsive to change certain generic skills will be needed by the workforce regardless of sector, including the need for basic, key and employability skills. Without these basic skills employees will be unable to cope with the changes in culture and working practices that are being demanded of companies to ensure their survival.

The DfEE's "The Learning Age Green Paper" suggests that the workforce needs to extend these basic skills to include a range of key skills, including: problem solving; working with other people; effective communication; use of information technology and developing learning skills.

With an employer focus, the CBI and regional respondents have identified further characteristics needed, including a work ethic; up to date knowledge and experience; language and customer service skills.

Unless this challenge can be faced the Merseyside workforce will be severely hampered in responding to the changes it will face.

- It is the CBI's belief that employability is characterised by the ability to learn, to adapt to more frequent job and career changes and to take increased ownership of their job role within a company and career as a whole. It is not sufficient to face the challenge of addressing skills issues without addressing these more far reaching issues.
- We need to persuade employers that if they are to be competitive they need to look to the whole economy to provide the skills they need – providing opportunities for people from minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, individuals from disadvantaged communities, older workers etc.
- National research suggests that reasons for employers not engaging in training
 - fear of staff being poached
 - a failure to recognise (or under-estimate) the benefits of training
 - financial constraints
 - working time lost
 - supply and relevance of courses/qualifications
 - occasionally, resistance from employees.
- People employed in lower level jobs or with low or no prior qualifications are less likely to have access to workforce development opportunities. Significantly, Greater Merseyside has a higher proportion of employees in those

lower skill occupations and this is reflected in the Labour Force Survey measure of job related training – 11% of the Greater Merseyside workforce, compared to a figure of 13% for Britain

- Research also shows that people working for small firms are less likely to receive training.
- A further challenge is to bring together the many funders and deliverers of workforce development – including GME, Chambers, Local Authorities, the Objective 1 programme – to develop a shared workforce development agenda that we can work in partnership to deliver.
- Some workforce development support has little clearly apparent link to the current and future skill needs of the local economy
- Some employers say that there is too much emphasis on on-the-job assessment and too little on delivering the off the job training employees require

5.2 In responding to this challenge, we have identified three areas in which we believe we need to take action if we are to ensure that the workforce of Greater Merseyside is equipped with the right skills to improve the area’s competitiveness and to promote economic growth:

- Ensuring that individuals, employers and planners have access to high quality learning and skills information so that they can make clear informed decisions about skills development, and promoting demand for workforce development
- Making sure that appropriate learning and development support is available to employers and their workforces
- Responding to the impact of local industrial and economic changes and supporting potential inward investors

5.3 We also, in response to our analysis of the challenge facing us, propose to adopt – in line with national policy on the role of NTOs and key local strategies – a sectoral approach to skills development. The NWDA 2020 Regional Strategy has identified 14 sectors in the North West of established or emerging economic importance. Following further research, GME has decided to take a wide view of the number of sectors to prioritise, focusing on the port related and construction sectors in addition to the 14 sectors identified by the NWDA. We will work closely with GME, the NTOs (who are responsible for developing sector workforce development plans) and business organisations to identify and eliminate their skills shortages and skills gaps in Greater Merseyside:

Growth Sectors	Targeted by GME	Targeted by the NWDA
1.Environmental technologies	●	●
2. Life sciences	●	●
3. Medical equipment and technology	●	●
4. Financial & professional services	●	●
5. Tourism/culture	●	●
6.ICT/New Media	●	●
7.Creative industries (media & PR)	●	●
8. Chemicals/pharmaceuticals	●	●
9. Textiles	●	●
10. Aerospace	●	●
11. Mechanical & other engineering	●	●
12. Energy	●	●
13. Automotive	●	●
14. Food and drink	●	●
15. Port and port related	●	
16. Construction	●	

5.4 This sectoral approach will underpin our activities in relation to workforce development, and indeed inform our approach to securing appropriate vocational learning opportunities for adults and young people. However, we recognise that many companies straddle more than one sector, and that all sectors of our economy need to be supported to engage more in workforce development.

5.5 The development of this element of our Plan will also be influenced by a number of national workforce development studies – the LSC’s Workforce Development Strategy, a study by the Cabinet Office’s Performance and Improvement Unit and a Treasury lead investigation. All three are expected to report in the autumn and will influence policy nationally and locally. However, in identifying the wide range of activities and actions that must take place for us to achieve our objectives, we have taken the view that this agenda is not one for the public sector alone. Responsibility for workforce development must be shared between individuals, employers and the government.

Strategic Objective 2.1: Ensure that high quality information is available to individuals, employers and planners in order that clear informed choices and decisions can be made and promote the benefits of workforce development

5.6 To achieve this objective we need to:

- Improve the quality and availability of sectoral labour market and skills information, and develop a shared understanding of Greater Merseyside’s current and future skill needs and skill gaps that can be used by agencies, employers and individuals to enable them to provide, introduce or take up appropriate learning provision.
- In collaboration with partners, develop persuasive messages aimed at employers and individuals highlighting the benefits of learning at all levels (including basic skills), and for all sectors of the workforce in terms of impact on

- business and individual performance.
- Utilise networks (e.g. excellence-net) to promote best practice sharing and enable employers to overcome the barriers to workforce development
- In partnership with Employment Services and local regeneration agencies, develop skills registers that employers can use for recruitment and infill purposes.
- Ensure that there are effective mechanisms in place for adults (ref SO 1.3) and young people (ref SO 1.1) to access labour market and skills information
- Encourage employer involvement in pre-16 learning through the Work Experience Programme and Education Business Link activity

Strategic Objective 2.2: Ensure that appropriate and timely learning and development support is available to meet the needs of local employers and their workforces

5.7 To secure the right provision, we propose to:

- Develop effective approaches to engaging employers in the development of services and learning provision to support workforce development, working closely with GME and other partners
- In collaboration with partners, develop sectoral clustering and networking to support the sharing of excellent workforce development practices and ideas.
- Ensure workforce development support and training provision responds to sectoral skill and employability needs, working closely with National Training Organisations.
- Work with employers to provide basic skills learning to their employees. Some of the ways in which we can do this are through:
 - The introduction of the National Basic Skills Brokerage Scheme in order to create a network of accredited brokers who will identify basic skill needs and the necessary support to meet these needs.
 - Working with the TUC Learning Services to develop the skills and knowledge of Learning Representatives in the workplace to support those with identified basic skill needs.
 - Ensuring that organisations pro-actively develop effective basic skills strategies as part of their implementation of the Investors in People standard.
 - Collaboration with the Local Government Association (LGA) to raise the profile of workplace basic skills provision, build capacity and develop models of delivery for the public sector.
 - Working with basic skills providers in Greater Merseyside (colleges, private providers) to ensure that there is sufficient high quality provision available to meet the needs of employees locally (ref SO 5.1).

- Improve management skill levels in organisations of all sizes, including owner/managers in micro businesses, which will include a focus on equal opportunities and social inclusion.
- Continue support towards the uptake of Investors in People amongst local employers and the development of the practices that underpin the standard, both directly and through GME.
- Encourage employers to be engaged in work based learning via Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships.
- Make available appropriate learning provision to enable local employers and their staff to maximise their use of new technologies, both through the existing employees and the training of young people and adults
- Foster and develop employee development programmes and promote new and innovative approaches including on-line learning in the workplace. This will include collaboration with relevant organisations such as learndirect and the Ufl to ensure that learning materials are developed that are appropriate to the needs of SMEs
- Improve graduate retention in local businesses and promote links between industry and HEIs.
- Provide support for adults and young people to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Strategic Objective 2.3: Respond effectively to the impact of local industrial and economic change and ensure that the best possible support is made available to potential inward investors.

5.8 Whilst our focus here will mainly be on supporting lead agencies, the particular ways in which we are able to contribute are:

- Through working with other local agencies, including the Mersey Partnership, to ensure that local resources are galvanised to present relevant packages of support to potential inward investors that will provide opportunities for local people.
- By responding to the needs of identified growth sectors for Greater Merseyside in our procurement processes to ensure that we are continuously developing an appropriately pool of local skills
- By supporting the development of a skills register (see SO 2.1) to provide relevant and up-to-date skills data for use by potential inward investors.
- By developing a cultural change programme, based on successful models used locally, for use in organisations where industrial and economic change is prevalent.

What do you think?...employer engagement and skills development

- Have we correctly identified the challenge?
 - Are we right to focus on the 16 growth sectors identified?
- The LSC needs to develop a measure of employer

engagement. The previous national learning target of IIP recognitions was felt to be too narrow to fully reflect all that employers do in relation to developing their workforce.

- Do you have any suggestions for how we can best measure the extent to which employers are developing their workforces?

We have separated our response to the challenge of improving the skills of the workforce and engaging employers into three areas – understanding skills needs and sharing that knowledge, making available provision that meets those skill needs, and promoting economic growth.

- Do you agree with the way we have broken down our response to the challenge?

We have identified a number of things we need to do to achieve our objectives.

- Currently, employers, individuals and the government invest in workforce development. What should be the balance between these three groups? Given our limited resources, in which circumstances should the LSC contribute to workforce development costs?
- How do we engage employers and employees and ensure their involvement?

6. Increasing the achievement of young people

6.1 *The Challenge*

- Level 2 achievement rates at the end of compulsory learning are lower in Greater Merseyside than the England average (49.2%), ranging from 25% to 48.7% across the six LEAs. We need to ensure that post 16 learning provision can respond to these lower levels of prior attainment.
- A sizeable minority of the young people who leave education at 16 have failed to achieve the equivalent of a Level 1 qualification
- Some young people are failing to achieve because they do not reach the end of their course. Retention rates vary across all providers: for example, retention in the FE sector in Greater Merseyside ranges from 75% to 93%. In two recent 16-19 area inspection reports, poor retention rates were identified as a key weakness in the work based learning programme.
- Achievement of Level 2 at 19 is broadly similar to the national average – we estimate the percentage of 19 year olds with a Level 2 qualification to be 73%, compared to 72% in England as a whole. However, the challenge we face is great if we compare our achievement to the national target for 2004 – 85%. Once again, our overall performance masks

considerable variations in achievement across Greater Merseyside, with Level 2 achievement varying from 58% to 80%.

- Achievement of Level 3 qualifications is also lower than that of England as a whole. Figures for achievement at 21 (the previous National Learning Target) show that although we are above the national average (47%) in some parts of Greater Merseyside, in our poorest performing district only one in five 21 year olds have achieved a Level 3.
- Nationally, achievement varies according to ethnicity:
 - Less than 25% of African-Caribbean boys achieve 5 GCSEs (A*-C) compared to nearly 50% of all white pupils;
 - Among youth trainees, young people from minority ethnic groups are less likely to obtain qualifications and jobs;
 - Post 16 achievement also varies, with 74% of white students in colleges achieving a level 3 qualification, compared to 69% for Indian students (the next best performing ethnic group) and 59% for Black Caribbean students (the lowest performing ethnic group).

6.2 In considering how we need to respond to these challenges, we have considered a number of other factors. Firstly, increased participation will per se provide us with a better chance of raising our achievement levels. However, this will not by itself make the kind of step change we need, and more importantly, it does not address the imperative to ensure that every young person has the opportunity and support necessary to reach their potential. Current levels of achievement as a proportion of those aged 16-19 who continue in or take up learning are not high enough.

6.3 Secondly, a number of the issues impacting on achievement relate to the quality of teaching and training and the learning infrastructure. This is addressed as part of our fifth objective. Our focus here, therefore, is on encouraging people to stay in learning once they've begun, to give them the best possible chance of achieving that potential.

Strategic Objective 3.1 : Enable all young people to achieve their potential and reach their maximum level of achievement

6.4 To achieve this objective, we can:

- Work with partners to create clear and stimulating pathways up to and beyond 19, including Foundation Degrees, which reflect both vocational and academic preferences.
- Ensure that there is sufficient, appropriate Entry Level and Level 1 provision to enable those young people who have not achieved this standard by the age of 16, and for whom it is an appropriate 'first step', to enter learning.
- Work with providers to ensure that all young people for whom poor literacy or numeracy skills might be a barrier

to achievement have access to high quality basic skills support and that this is delivered in a way that will break down taboos about basic skills education/training.

- Work with local Higher Education Institutions and our providers to ensure young people have access and progression to Higher Education, utilising existing initiatives such as Excellence Challenge.
- Work with providers and Greater Merseyside Connexions to ensure that young people are placed onto courses or programmes that they are able to cope with and that they are sufficiently challenging to raise young people's aspirations.
- Ensure that young people have access to appropriate additional qualifications and/or enrichment programmes alongside their mainstream qualifications.
- Make sure that equal opportunities is embedded in all learning programmes
- Support providers to develop approaches to improving retention – for example Mentors for learners on work based learning programmes - to retain mainstream young people at risk of leaving their programme or course early
- Facilitate the Education Business Link programme to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to experience the world of work through contact with employers and through activities that support the curriculum and the development of key skills
- Work with providers to ensure the learning environment – including ICT access, buildings and equipment – supports young people's achievement (ref SO 5.1)

What do you think?...achievement of young people

- Have we correctly identified the challenge?

We believe that whilst increasing participation and improving the quality of learning will make a big contribution towards increasing achievement, there are a number of specific actions we can take that will help to bring about an increase in achievement.

- Do you agree that we need to have a strategic objective focussing on driving up the achievement of young people?

We have identified a number of things we need to do to achieve our objectives.

- Will our actions help us to achieve this objective?
What should we prioritise?

7. Increasing the achievement of adults

7.1 The Challenge

- Greater Merseyside generally lags behind the rest of the UK in terms of its educational achievement. 41.5% of adults have achieved a level 3 qualification (compared to 46% nationally), and 22.1% have achieved a level 4 qualification (nationally this figure stands at 26.5%)
- There are a significant number of adults in Greater Merseyside who lack the necessary basic skills: almost 29% of working age adults have poor numeracy skills, and more than 27% have poor literacy skills.
- The impact of poor basic skills is pervasive, adults without basic skills are more likely to:
 - be on lower incomes
 - be unemployed
 - be prone to ill health, social exclusion, and are more likely to turn to crime
 - have low self confidence and low motivation
 - have children that struggle at school
- Unemployment rates in Greater Merseyside are higher than in the UK as a whole – without increasing their learning attainment those who are 'employment deprived' will be unable to take advantage of new job opportunities when they become available.
- In areas of high unemployment, employees who do not develop the necessary skills are most at risk of becoming unemployed and finding difficulty in becoming re-employed.
- Nationally, disabled people are twice as likely to have no qualifications as non-disabled people.

- 7.2 As with young people, increased participation and improvements in standards of learning for adults will have a significant impact on the ability of adults to achieve qualifications. There are, however, specific actions we can take to promote adult achievement:

Strategic Objective 4.1: Enable adults to achieve their potential and reach their maximum level of achievement

- 7.3 To achieve this we will:

- Work with HEIs and FE colleges to continue and develop routes for adults to achieve in HE and FE
- Identify and share good practice in retaining and motivating adult learners to complete and achieve
- Develop pathways from informal/non-certificated courses into formal learning
- Ensure that provision for adults not only responds to economic needs but also reflects the demand for learning for its own sake

- Provide support for adult learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ensure that disadvantaged groups of learners have access to the additional support they need to achieve their learning goals
- Support the development of ICT skills/qualifications by adults through the provision of basic level ICT learning opportunities

Strategic Objective 4.2: Encourage and support adults in the achievement of competency in basic skills

7.4 To achieve this objective we must:

- Ensure that basic skill education and training provides pathways to further learning
- Work with other agencies (e.g. Employment Service, GME) to embed Basic Skills training/education into their programmes and projects
- Work with employers to improve basic skills in the workplace (ref SO 2.2)

What do you think?...achievement of adults

- Have we correctly identified the challenge? If not, what have we missed?

As with the achievement of young people, we believe that there are a number of specific actions we can take that will help to bring about an increase in achievement.

- What else can we do to improve the achievement of adults and what should our priorities be?

8. Raising quality in learning provision

8.1 *The Challenge*

- Recent Post-16 area inspection reports suggest that provision within the Greater Merseyside area is currently planned and delivered based on and uninformed demand philosophy resulting in provision which remains fairly static and is slow to respond to changing local economic, employer and learner demands.
- Within Greater Merseyside there is a large number of small voluntary and community sector learning providers. Whilst such providers are ideal for engaging those hardest to attract into learning, they are less likely to have the internal capacity and resources to address the quality agenda.

- There are variations across Greater Merseyside in terms of the range of courses and variety of levels available, depending on where individuals live. A specific issue is the lack of opportunities for lower-achieving learners.
- Currently the mechanisms and benchmarking data used within the Greater Merseyside area to review and evaluate provider performance are not robust; the standard of learning being delivered across the area is inconsistent and there is a lack of parity of esteem across the local post 16 sector as a whole.
- Within the Greater Merseyside area the proportion of providers with inspection grades denoting aspects of unsatisfactory or poor provision (grades 4/5) within work based learning provision is 52%. Many trainers in Greater Merseyside are either insufficiently qualified or not qualified at all
- Learner feedback across the area is not systematically gathered and used to inform and influence the development of learning provision, satisfaction rates are low with too few learners completing their learning programmes and progressing into employment.
- Across the post 16 sector within the Greater Merseyside area our customers are faced with a plethora of differing quality standards and kite marks designed to denote excellence in provision; this is confusing for customers and does not provide a user friendly measure to inform their choice.
- Within the Greater Merseyside area not all providers can demonstrate they deliver good value for money; participation, retention and achievement rates amongst providers are mixed.
- Greater Merseyside has access to significant amounts of additional monies through the European Social Fund and Single Regeneration Budget, which must be managed effectively to ensure projects receiving funding complement and add value to mainstream resources providing a cohesive and planned approach to the development of the area.

8.2 Improving the quality and standards of provision funded by the LSC – and for that matter by other public funds – is fundamental to achieving our objectives of improving participation and achievement. Our response to the significant challenge outlined here is divided into three parts:

- a. Making our learning infrastructure more flexible and responsive to the needs of learners and the economy and ensuring that the quality and range of learning opportunities is not limited by geography or any other factors
- b. Ensuring that all the provision we fund is delivered to defined standards and by qualified teachers and trainers
- c. Developing excellence and promoting specialisation by learning providers

Strategic Objective 5.1: Ensure that the local learning infrastructure meets the needs of individuals, communities and employers

8.3 Some of the things we need to do over the next three years are:

- Expand provision that meets the needs of individuals, communities and employers – whether that is delivered by school sixth forms, FE colleges or work based learning providers – and rationalise that which does not
- Work with the provider base to improve its capacity to deliver our objectives and respond flexibly to emerging skill needs and policy developments.
- Make use of available resources to deliver innovative projects to enhance the range of learning provision and encourage in new providers and types of provision to meet the needs of all
- Work with local partners on government initiatives to drive up standards, such as Excellence Challenge and Excellence in Cities.
- Seek to bring coherence to the deployment of European and other funding
- Ensure that all providers are subject to robust provider review processes to challenge poor and coasting providers and to ensure only high quality providers are awarded contracts.
- Carefully manage the balance between learning that leads to qualifications and that which does not.
- Lead the development of action plans in response to 16-19 Area Inspections
- Remove inequalities in learning programmes – in relation to e.g. access, learning materials, outcomes - in terms of race, gender, disability, age, marital status, religion, sexual orientation or that experienced by those suffering social exclusion

Strategic Objective 5.2: Raise the standard of teaching and learning across Greater Merseyside, ensuring a sustainable culture of continuous improvement is embedded within the provider base

8.4 Working closely with our learning providers we will:

- Ensure excellence in teaching and learning by increasing the take-up of professional teaching and training qualifications and require all providers to demonstrate their commitment to investing in their people
- Raise standards in adult and community learning where previous inspection arrangements have been weak
- Utilise learning partnerships to promote self managed provider collaboration and quality improvement work
- Provide a range of quality support initiatives, which promote good practice and stimulate the sharing of information and resources across post 16 sectors
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement and positive self-criticism within providers.
- Ensure that all providers undertake rigorous annual

self-assessment against the Common Inspection Framework and prepare and submit a self-assessment report and development plan

- Improve the collection, analysis and use of data by providers to promote better planning and delivery
- Forge strong relationships with key partners (e.g. Adult Learning Inspectorate, OfSTED, Local Education Authorities, Employment Service, Learning and Skills Development Agency and each of the local Learning Partnerships) to ensure the sharing of information and expertise and to promote and support a coherent approach to quality improvement
- Ensure that learners influence the development of provision through regular and comprehensive learner feedback, sought via a variety of methods e.g. surveys, learner fora, one to one interviews.
- Build capacity within the community and voluntary sector to deliver LSC funded programmes to appropriate quality standards.

Strategic Objective 5.3: Encourage and support providers within Greater Merseyside to achieve excellence in the delivery of learning programmes

8.5 In addition to working across the whole of our provider base to improve standards, we want to encourage excellence and expertise in the delivery of particular types of learning by:

- Promoting the concept of provider excellence in subject areas relevant to the needs of the Greater Merseyside economies, for example through the Centres of Vocational Excellence initiative.
- Supporting colleges to become beacons within their local community, responding to the needs of local communities and economies
- Encouraging excellence through the provider review process, making decisions on interventions, rewards and sanctions
- Ensure all learning providers either hold or are working towards a recognised quality standards kite mark which is appropriate to their programme delivery

What do you think?...quality

- Have we correctly identified the challenge?

Our response to this challenge is broken into three areas: developing a learning infrastructure that meets the demands of employers and individuals, improving the quality of teaching and training, and promoting excellence.

- Do you agree with the way we have broken down our response to the challenge?

We have identified a number of things we need to do to achieve our objectives.

- Will our actions help us to achieve this objective and what should we prioritise?
- What should the balance be between learning that leads to qualifications and learning that does not, and how will the mechanisms for assessing quality differ?

Annex 1

National Qualifications Framework

LEVEL	GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS	VOCATIONALLY RELATED QUALIFICATIONS	OCCUPATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
Level 4	Higher-level qualifications		NVQ Level 5
Level 3	AS/A Levels AEs	Vocational A level (Advanced GNVQ)	NVQ Level 3
Level 2	GCSE Grades A*-C	Intermediate GNVQ	NVQ Level 2
Level 1	GCSE Grades D-G	Foundation GNVQ	NVQ Level 1
Entry Level	Certificate of achievement		

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