

successforall

Provider responsiveness to employers

This is a briefing document providing an overview of the development of new measures of provider responsiveness to employer needs. Further information on the new measures of success programme for the post-16 sector can be found in the dedicated New Measures area of the LSC website at: www.lsc.gov.uk/nms.

The aim of the new measures

- 1 New national measures are being developed that will show how well local LSCs and learning providers are responding to the skills needs of employers and learners.
- 2 We know that learner and employer skills needs are not always being met:
 - there are significant, widening skills gaps in some sectors of the economy because of growth and replacement demand
 - many adults do not have basic skills and a first full Level 2 qualification: the benchmark for employability
 - employer training pilots are demonstrating the need for flexible delivery to meet employer needs
 - many young people still leave full time education without the wider skills employers demand and without access to vocational learning.

To help remedy this situation, a coordinated and planned response of improvement and capacity development is needed across the post-16 education and training sector, facilitated by providers, the LSC and the inspectorates.

- 3 Many planners and providers already use their own measures for gauging how well provision meets learner and employer skills needs. But at present there are no nationally recognised measures for responsiveness to employers used by providers within the planning and quality frameworks of the LSC and inspectorates.
- 4 The new measures will help providers, the LSC and inspectorates to identify where improvement with provision is needed to ensure that employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses, and that individuals have the skills they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled.
- 5 The aim is to make learning truly demand-led, by securing a culture of engagement with employers through roles such as:
 - customers who purchase services for training and developing the skills of their workforce, innovation and business advice
 - local leaders - in developing and enhancing education and training that matches skills needs and supporting work experience

- strategic partners - in the development of teachers and trainers, infrastructure and delivery of training
- raising the issue of skills development of “hard-to-reach” employees of employers with whom providers already have relationships, to support Train to Gain (NETP)
- working towards the new employer-focused provider Quality Mark (due to be launched in 2006)
- actively seeking employer feedback on their experience of provider responsiveness and the relevance of the training provided, through the mechanism of the Employer’s Guide to Training Providers (due to be piloted in SW region from April 2006).

The importance of the new measures for local LSCs and learning providers

6 The new measures are being developed primarily to help planners and providers identify where improvements are needed in the provision of education and training. They will help providers compare their performance against national benchmarks, and help local LSCs and the inspectorates to make more informed judgments about where strengths and deficiencies exist, and where improvement is needed.

The likely impact on local LSCs and learning providers

7 Local LSCs and learning providers should take account of the skills needs of their local area when planning education and training provision. To do so they will need to identify how effectively provision is meeting learner and employer skills needs in comparison with plans and budgets.

8 The range of activities planned and undertaken by different types of providers and employers is too broad to develop a single, standard overall measure for responsiveness to employers. This view was backed up by the responses to the consultation on new measures of success for the learning and skills sector (December 2003). The range of measures being developed will therefore reflect the breadth and diversity of types of engagement with employers, and the local context. This will enable specific measures to be agreed that are relevant to the three-year development plans of each provider. Providers and local LSCs will retain flexibility to agree measures within the context of each provider’s individual mission and types of provision. The inspectorates will use the same measures to inform inspection.

9 The measures for responsiveness to employers are not targets: they are being developed as a tool for local LSCs and providers to use, and are of value only if they lead to improvements in performance by providers, the LSC and the wider learning and skills sector.

What local LSCs and learning providers need to do?

10 National measures for responsiveness to employers were not defined and implemented in time for the agreement of the 2005/06 provider three-year development plans. However, providers and LSCs need to keep abreast of those developments associated with Train to Gain (including the Quality Mark and the Employer's Guide to Training Providers) in order to ensure that they are ready to participate as they are introduced from April 2006 onwards. For the 2006/7 planning round, local LSCs and providers will be expected to include these developments in their discussions to agree appropriate measures which will improve responsiveness to employers. Local LSCs and providers need to develop and secure a culture that puts skills needs and flexible delivery to employers at the centre of what they do.

Next steps

11 Before any national measures are introduced, we must be confident that they are robust, fit for all providers and can be consistently applied, that systems can support the data requirements, and that their use does not lead to unnecessary bureaucracy.

12 The initial development work for the new measure was completed in summer 2005. Assuming that no significant changes are needed to management information systems, we are aiming for a phased implementation that will start during 2006/07 as part of the planning process.

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