

'Progression through Partnership'

A Joint Strategy between the DfES, DH and DWP on
the role of Further Education and Training in Supporting
People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities to
Achieve Fulfilling Lives

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Ministerial Foreword



Any fair society should be judged not only on the way it cares for vulnerable people, but on the steps it takes to ensure that they can lead integrated and fulfilling lives.

This Government is committed to improving the life chances of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A fundamental part of this commitment is the development of services which are personalised around the needs of disabled people and which provide seamless support to help people achieve their full potential.

This report sets out our shared vision of how the three Departments most closely involved in this area: Education and Skills, Health, and Work and Pensions, will work together to deliver high quality support and incentives for young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in further education and training. This forms part of wider cross government strategies around fulfilling lives. Working together towards shared outcomes, these Departments can do far more to improve services, create more efficient relationships with delivery partners, and allocate resources effectively.

We would like to thank the many people who support those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly parent and carers, some of whom provided valuable help with this strategy.

We are determined to tackle the barriers faced by individuals. We do not underestimate the challenge ahead, but nor do we shrink from it. For increasing social mobility is not simply a means to social and economic betterment for all; it is the right thing to do.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Mcguire".

Anne Mcguire
Parliamentary
Under-Secretary
(Disabled People)
Department for
Work and Pensions



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Rammell".

Bill Rammell
Minister of State for
Lifelong Learning,
Further and Higher
Education
Department for
Education and Skills



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ivan Lewis".

Ivan Lewis
Parliamentary
Under-Secretary
for Care Services
Department of Health

Executive Summary

The background of the page features two overlapping, curved shapes that sweep upwards from the bottom left towards the top right. The lower, larger shape is a solid, dark olive green. The upper, smaller shape is a lighter, muted green, creating a layered effect. The shapes are smooth and fluid, contributing to a modern and professional aesthetic.

The development of comprehensive and personalised services is central to the Government's aim of supporting the life chances of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

This strategy focuses on the essential need for the Departments for Education and Skills, Health and Work and Pensions to work closely together in helping young people and adults achieve the education they want and need to be able to live fulfilling lives in their local communities and particularly enter the world of work. This focus on further education and training is part of wider initiatives across government on all aspects of peoples' lives. It requires that their principal delivery agents and local delivery partners, the Learning and Skills Council, Local Government's Adults and Children's Social Services and Job Centre Plus, mirror this approach in delivering sustainable positive change to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By working more closely together we can maximise the impact we have and ensure we use the resources we have more effectively and efficiently.

We need to concentrate on three areas: what further education and training is provided; the quality of that provision; and how it is funded. We have developed a joint **'programme of change'** which over the next five years will:

- 1 Agree a definition of the target group and an exploration of the various interagency issues and barriers through data collection and supporting research and analysis.
- 2 Deliver joint policy development, so that each Department is aware of priorities and how each contributes to the delivery of these, the impact on other Departments of policy change and establish processes to deliver future joint policy.
- 3 Improve workforce capacity and performance around information, advice and guidance, assessment, delivery of support services, and delivery mechanisms.

- 4 Develop joint data collection, evaluation and monitoring systems to measure progress.
- 5 Support our delivery agents and local partners to help them achieve their aims and targets, particularly around local and regional planning.

A joint delivery group will be responsible for making this happen and will link up with wider delivery action around employment and day services. The Group will include key stakeholders as well as the three Departments, and will oversee the delivery plan accompanying this strategy. The Group will report progress on a regular basis to Ministers.

This strategy sets out our ambition to create more sustainable and seamless services for people with learning difficulties and or disabilities. Above all we want to make it clear that our three Departments recognise how important it is for us to be working closely together and for this to be mirrored through our delivery agents and partners so that we make a telling and lasting contribution to people's lives.

I Introduction

The Vision



1 In **Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People** the government set out the goal of true equality by 2025. We believe that by working closely to a joint programme and by requiring our delivery agents to do the same we can make a real and telling contribution to that ambition.

- 2 This document reflects the determination to create a sustainable strategy of working together which delivers change effectively. It is concerned with the field of further education and training and is part of a wider set of cross-government initiatives that also look at employment, day service modernisation and what people do during their day in its widest context. This document sets out the areas and themes for further education and training where we believe change will impact quickly on the lives of disabled people and improve their life chances considerably.
- 3 The funding for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen considerably within each of the three Departments over recent years and this is set to continue. This strategy does not pledge any additional funding increases above those already set out, but it brings the thinking of the three Departments together to make sure that existing funding is used in the most effective way.
- 4 Any costs of reform are expected to come out of existing programme budgets from each Department (e.g. costs of curriculum reform will be embedded in the Foundation Learning Tier budget following their commitment to this strategy). In the long-term there are expected to be cost savings and opportunities for reinvestment arising from various developments following the strategy, including greater collaboration across Departments and pooling customer resources through individual budgets.
- 5 In setting out practical steps we also want to get the messages right to the disabled community and to the workforce serving that community. These are simple but absolutely vital if we are to change one key factor which we think hinders progress and that is the **culture** in which we operate. We take the view therefore that we must set out what we expect and our actions must follow this.
- 6 Our belief is that all people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:
 - have a right to expect high quality services which are person-centred and/or personalised to meet need
 - should expect to learn and continue to learn appropriate to their needs and aspirations - and be expected to do so by services provided to help them succeed
 - should have the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for adult life across all areas of their lives, including to work
 - should receive the support they need to enable them to live independently
 - should lead fulfilling lives as equal citizens in our society
- 7 Furthermore we believe that all people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities should have an **entitlement** of opportunity and access to education and training provision that is meaningful, relevant and appropriate. Underpinning this is the need for:

- alternative and more flexible assessment methods on both accredited and non-accredited programmes, including all academic and vocational qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework and in the future the Qualification and Credit Framework, to enable wider access to mainstream programmes
 - dissemination of best practice, and guidance for the LSC and post-16 providers, which enables them to plan for and develop a balanced and varied curriculum locally that can be used to build on what the individual has already learnt at school or other education setting
 - person centred planning and Individual Learning Pathways for all learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure that individual needs and aspirations are central to any and all learning objectives
- 8 This vision underpins what follows and sets our course of action for the next five years, although we expect to see impact in less than that period. We intend to monitor closely what we do as government and what our delivery partners carry out for us on our behalf. We will report our progress regularly to all stakeholders and review what we do, taking action to adjust and improve constantly what we have set out. And we will continue to consult with and involve those with a learning difficulty and/or disability to ensure we are making a real difference to their lives.
- 9 Our vision for the future, and the aim of this strategy, is to ensure that there is high quality local provision and support for the full range of post-16 learning required so that people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can learn in the setting that best suits their interests and aspirations at particular points in time. This may mean choosing to remain in their local communities, or leaving home to go on to a specialist college or university. Indeed, we expect that person-centred

approaches and effective multi-agency planning and co-operation will enable our various agencies to better support these learners to access appropriate local provision and challenge traditional assumptions about post school destinations.

- 10 In the interim and as a priority, the three Departments will, in the next year, produce advice and guidance on where responsibility rests for funding different aspects of provision, and in particular, placements at specialist residential providers. We would then expect local organisations to reach agreement over who funds what as part of broader inter-agency planning and funding based around person centred approaches. The aim will be that education and training monies fund education and training and associated support costs (i.e. to access education and training provision), social services fund social care costs, and the NHS funds health costs. However, we need to heed the specific warning, made in "Through Inclusion to Excellence" that "these arrangements should be introduced and implemented in a way that does not impose additional bureaucratic burdens on the frontline of delivery".

The Purpose and Remit of this Strategy

- 11 This document represents a cross-government strategy for further education commissioned by three Ministers from the Department for Education and Skills, Department of Health and the Department for Work and Pensions. Its purpose is to demonstrate how the three Departments intend to work together to improve outcomes for **all 'learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability'** beyond the age of 16 and how further education will contribute to the goal of people living fulfilling lives as local citizens and in particular achieve the goal of paid employment.

- 12 The term 'learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities' is deliberately wide, including people with mental health difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, physical, sensory and cognitive impairments and other identified and non-identified difficulties in learning which may (or may not) have led to 'special educational needs' interventions at school under the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001).
- 13 We expect our actions to impact on **all people** with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. We are keen for this strategy to build upon and strengthen previous, existing or planned future initiatives. For example, elements of this strategy will contain a specific focus on the issues and challenges facing learners with a 'learning disability' (as defined in the Valuing People White Paper). This is in recognition of some of the specific and additional challenges facing learners with a cognitive disability. This is also the first attempt to address the specific issues for learners with a 'learning disability' since the Valuing People White Paper in 2001. The actions and implications of this report for people with learning disabilities will be integrated with similar work on employment. This will then be incorporated into an initiative to 'refresh' the Valuing People White Paper that is currently being developed through the recently established and Minister-chaired cross government Learning Disability Programme Board.
- 14 In the same way, however, we are keen for this strategy to build upon and strengthen previous, existing or planned future initiatives in relation to **other** groups of learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability (e.g. those with mental health difficulties). Furthermore, as we take this strategy forward with our colleagues from the three Departments, we expect to identify and agree where existing mainstream or specialist activity or services do not work for certain people or groups contained within the wider definition we have adopted. We will then set out what we expect of our Departments and delivery partners in order to address those inequalities.
- 15 The strategy will, in time address the specific issues for those learners who are admitted to hospital recurrently or for long periods because of a disability-related problem. We acknowledge that this is something which needs to be addressed and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) have begun to consider the issue relating to FE for those aged 16-19 who are medically ill. In taking this strategy forward we will work with our colleagues at the LSC to agree how future improvements in the way provision and support is targeted at those for whom periods in hospital is likely will need to impact on learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In general, however, this Joint Strategy does include those people with a disabling condition caused by serious long-term illness.

2 The Situation

The Policy Context



16 The specific educational barriers for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been well-documented over the last thirty years. This strategy does not, therefore, seek to repeat such analyses.

- 17 In the past six years there have been a number of key Government publications which have had an impact on the lives of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (details are given in Appendix B):
- Learning and Skills Act, 2000
 - Valuing People White Paper, 2001
 - The Children Act, 2004
 - The DfES 14-19 White Paper, 2005
 - Improving Life Chances of Disabled People 2005
 - Giving People with Disabilities the Chance to Work, 2005
 - The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (parts 1,2,and 3), 2001 (part4- the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
 - The DDA 2005 which brought in the Disability Equality Duty, 2006
 - FE White Paper: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances, 2006
 - Aiming High for Disabled Children; Better Support for Families, 2007
- 18 Some of the above have sought to address the inequalities or gaps in the current system for this and other excluded groups and, arguably, the conflicting agency priorities underpinning some of the above have caused further problems. We do not seek to engage in such an 'inter-relational analysis' between these various initiatives at this stage, although this will be a necessary part of taking this work forward.
- 19 In 2004, the LSC commissioned Peter Little, OBE, to chair a Steering Group to carry out a thorough review of all Learning and Skills Council provision for the full range of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. (In 2004/05 there were 641,000 learners in the FE system who self-declared a learning difficulty and/or disability.) 'Through Inclusion to Excellence', published in November 2005, was a unanimously accepted report by the Steering Group and made 40 recommendations, most of which were for the LSC. These included a key recommendation for "the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education to raise the issue of the LSC's spend on health/care costs with appropriate Ministers in other government Departments and seek to reach an agreement about appropriate funding responsibilities and partnership working."
- 20 The LSC has already set out its own response in its strategy document 'Learning for Living and Work' published in October 2006, and that presents a number of challenges to the post-16 learning community. This followed a formal public consultation, which produced an overwhelmingly positive response to "Through Inclusion to Excellence". It also sets out the LSC's core ambition that by 2015, England will be an international exemplar in providing high quality post-16 learning provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- 21 This strategy is the government's own response to the Little Report and a crucial outcome of this strategy will be a 'framework' for the three Departments setting out
- how we can make learning for this group more relevant, meaningful and accessible,
 - how we can ensure support is provided at the right time and
 - how pathways to work can be made more flexible.
- 22 Within this framework, we expect to set out specific recommendations and guidance for the LSC and other delivery partners, building on and strengthening the existing policy initiatives aimed at supporting people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (e.g. 'Learning for Living and Work').
- 23 This framework also needs to be viewed within the wider remit of ensuring that the LSC commissions high quality post-16 provision for all learners, including people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The learners have in general, the same aspirations as their peers and are entitled to at least the same quality of provision to achieve their aspirations.
- 24 Furthermore, the political, social and economic drivers for ensuring a qualified and skilled workforce are paramount. Recent studies have shown that the UK is experiencing a 'skills gap' in comparison with other European countries, in spite of the many initiatives aimed at making compulsory and post-16 education and training more accessible and vocationally focused. The recent Leitch Report: 'Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills' (December 2006), sets out a vision for the UK where 95% of all adults achieve basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy and where more people achieve at educational levels 2, 3 and 4. There are others with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who can, and want, to make an economic contribution but require other approaches such as supported employment and this too needs to be given priority. Some of the principles outlined in this report could be of significant benefit to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities if the latter are given the right kind and level of support to achieve their aims. This is the challenge both for the LSC and for our three government Departments.
- 25 In January 2007, Ofsted published the findings from its survey into college provision for young people in this group: 'Current Provision and Outcomes for 16-18 year old Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities in Colleges'. Whilst acknowledging much good practice and some improvements, it also highlighted the fact that 'the quality of provision was very uneven' and that the 'quality of planning, nationally and regionally, to meet the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was variable'.
- 26 These reports recognise that there is much improvement needed, at all levels, to ensure that learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not remain excluded and disadvantaged. It is out of this context that this strategy has evolved, and the three Departments want to make the clear and unambiguous statement that we expect our Departments and their principal delivery partners to reassess and reinvigorate their work with people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensuring this not only meets legal requirements but exceeds them.

A Commitment to Work Together for Change

- 27 In 2005, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report **Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People 2005** prompted the three government Departments represented in this strategy to consider the practical ways in which real changes and improvements can be made to the lives of all disabled people.
- 28 There is now a willingness to work collaboratively across the three key government Departments to improve access to and outcomes from education and training for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In parallel to this, the same three Departments are also working together in response to the joint committee report: 'Improving Work Opportunities for People with a Learning Disability' (DWP 2005), and it is envisaged that there will be some overlap between the two work strands, since successful employment is one of the intended outcomes (and perhaps the most desired) for many learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Why it is Important for the Three Departments to Work Together

- 29 Of all government actions impacting on the lives of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities those arising out of the three Departments identified here contribute the most. Living, learning and working are bound together, yet all too often we treat these separately, with the consequence that people receive fragmented services. This is exemplified in the way government Departments work together and the way we require our delivery partners to work together – or not.

- 30 It is equally important that the Departments work together to address the barriers that currently exist. One of the first significant problems for interdepartmental working arises from the fact that different Departments use different definitions. This immediately presents problems in identifying those who require services, providing appropriate and coherent systems for accessing their requirements and determining eligibility for and access to services.
- 31 We have identified the varying definitions and some of the complexities of arriving at an agreed definition in Appendix A. Our intention is to determine a resolution of this problem as one of the first tasks of the interdepartmental group and to consult on our options with our colleagues from the further education system.

Building on Existing Governmental Initiatives (Joined Up Working)

- 32 The LSC has launched its own Mental Health Strategy (Improving Services for people with Mental Health Difficulties 2006) and the DfES, DH and DWP recognise the need to develop and share expertise in providing services for this group. We are aware that a number of people with other learning difficulties and/or disabilities also have some form of mental health difficulty. There are a number of such learners who are capable of level 4 training that may be inappropriately placed in lower level work, but with the right intervention they could move on effectively. The DWP has also noted there are significant numbers with mental health difficulties claiming Incapacity Benefit who could move on if the right support was made available. We believe there is often confusion about the way in which mental health difficulties are manifested, and that in young people in particular, often interventions address the behavioural consequences rather than the underlying cause of mental health difficulties.

- 33 There is much work to be done on this subject and we commend recent studies, such as that by the Thomas Coram Research Unit of the Institute of Education, University of London (Mental Health and Well Being of Students in FE – a scoping study) which has provided a detailed analysis of the issues affecting FE and mental health difficulties. Coupled with the work of the National Institute for Mental Health in England which has supported the LSC in its strategy, there is a real opportunity to change the climate of support for this group. We expect our delivery partners to continue to explore solutions and improve access to support services.
- 34 Similarly, services provided through the forensic services in both high and medium secure units represent a significant area of support for learners who are capable of entering the employment market at some stage and the expertise of staff in these areas should be more widely shared.
- 35 Current developments considering the concept of 'the Healthy College' could significantly contribute to improving participation and achievement. We shall monitor progress with partners to identify and disseminate best practice.

The Barriers to Learning

- 36 It could be argued that the barriers* which this group of learners face fall into three broad (but interrelated) categories:
- i those related to the attitudes of policy makers, education and other sector professionals, and post-16 funders about the purpose of learning for this group;
 - ii those related to or arising from the political or structural processes which govern or influence post-16 education, including the sometimes conflicting Government priorities and inter-

departmental debates about the best way to support young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in our 21st century society, and

- iii the failure to work together to achieve a holistic response to what individuals require to lead independent, successful lives

*Some of the most widely accepted and documented 'barriers' to ensuring that people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, access the provision they want and need are listed in Appendix C

- 37 In a recent Learning and Skills Research Centre (LSRC) research report, the authors state that 'rather than being governed by new knowledge and insights about learning, decisions about how best to teach adults with learning difficulties are likely to be attitude and beliefs about the nature of their disability their status as adults and their place in society. This in turn has influenced ideas about the forms of provision that best meets their needs (whether specialist or mainstream) and the purpose of learning for this group' (Dee, Devicchi, Florian and Cochrane, 2006:).
- 38 Necessary links between post-16 education and training and employment have also influenced the way provision for this group has been conceptualised. When seen too narrowly in terms of academic, vocational or skills for life, this has been to the detriment of some individuals. For these learners an over-emphasis on 'work preparation' and 'independence skills', coupled with the LSC's priority to fund programmes which lead to full level 2 vocational qualifications has, in some cases, led to their being excluded from post-16 education altogether. This is something that this strategy seeks to address, whilst recognising that for many people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, employment is their identified primary goal.

- 39 Other shifts in policy and/or structural processes have also impacted on the lives of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some have been positive, other less so, but any implementation of this strategy must seek to explore the potential tensions between them and the barriers these might cause for this group of learners. These include:
- Changes in social services provision to enable more individualised support (for example, Person Centred Planning and Direct Payments)
 - Changes in post-16 education funding to prioritise level 2 qualifications and 'Skills for Life'
 - Changes in the way local authorities are structured (for example, the division between Children and Adults services, which has implications for strategic planning with LSCs and Connexions around Transition)
 - Recent initiatives intended to support those on long-term benefits back to work (such as those mentioned earlier)
 - Recurrent transport policies
- 40 The Leitch report highlights that 'skills and employment systems are disjointed' (p.13) and 'have different aims' leading to individuals not receiving the support they need. This kind of incoherence creates even greater obstacles for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities whose need for clarity of direction and consistency of support is paramount. This strategy seeks to address such issues, and the three government Departments are committed to exploring how differing priorities and aims can be brought together within a common aim to better support this group of learners.

Learning from Best Practice: The Solutions?

- 41 There is much to celebrate however. There is growing evidence that many providers from around the country have been making inclusion a reality for this group of learners, working across agencies to remove the barriers mentioned above. The following gives a list of case studies where local providers have worked with other agencies, including voluntary organisations, to support people's aspirations (further details of these are in Appendix D):
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne Children and Young People's Plan
 - Improving Choice (East of England Pathfinder)
 - In Control – Dynamite Project
 - Westminster Learning Disability Partnership
 - ROSE – Real Opportunities for Supported Employment
- 42 The above examples show that where interagency working is effective and barriers for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can be reduced or removed. Innovative ways of reconceptualising learning for this group can lead to provision that is interesting, rewarding and relevant to the interests of the individual. Personalisation and advocacy are key in this approach.

- 43 We must also ensure that the role of employers in breaking down barriers in the workplace is recognised. We will ensure that effective practice in improving access to the workplace is identified and disseminated. The LSC has rightly highlighted in its strategy the contribution that the LSC's National Employer Service can make. The work-based learning route generally has an important role to play. Many providers have excellent employer links but we need more employers to recognise the potential of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. We expect all partners to work with employers and to establish how they can contribute to breaking down barriers. Employers can help challenge barriers by providing their own solutions, and publicising their successes. These can demonstrate the valuable contributions people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can make in the work place.
- 44 In taking forward this strategy we will explore with our colleagues from the further education system and the relevant research agencies, the best way to build on and disseminate best practice. More specifically, we will:
- Ensure that, people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, like anyone else, have access to learning to promote three fundamental aspects – **being** (developing a sense of and belief in one's own identity and who we want to become); **having** (acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding and accessing new opportunities); **doing** (becoming empowered to participate, and being enabled to participate), (Dee et al 2006). We must ensure that these are being catered for in our post-16 provision.
- Seek to promote the idea of person-centredness as the starting point and encourage staff at the frontline as well as policy makers to actively involve learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and listen to what they want.
 - Recognise that meeting learning requirements is not restricted to one service provider or another, and links well to person centred planning. For example, a professional adult with mental health difficulties, seeking to rebuild confidence before retuning to the labour market needs something completely different from a young 'A' level candidate with physical and sensory impairments, which is again different from someone with cognitive learning difficulties who needs job coaching through a supported employment agency. At present all these require learning and support that is not a priority, because they are not leading to level 2 or 'Skills for Life' targets.
 - Create local targets related to closing equality gaps.
 - Make more flexible uses of funding from different Departments to meet the holistic requirements of individuals.
 - Explore a refocusing of policy for LSC funding, in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, to fund, as a priority, a whole range of learning activities outside the current priorities of Skills for Life and level 2 to allow for provision including short courses that:
 - Provide stepping stones designed to help people a) make the transition from unemployment to employment where the purpose is to increase their confidence, b) develop a routine, c) concentrate on a task etc. and recognise the value of this learning to the individual.

– Provide learning programmes that support people in realising their person centred plans e.g. receiving training on how to work in a shop to support someone’s voluntary work in a local shop; going to a course on local history to foster an interest in the neighbourhood; joining a cookery class to support independent living. These may or may not be accredited at present, but may be considered as part of the Qualifications and Credit Framework, (QCF), which will support the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) in the future. Work is already underway to identify appropriate non –formal awards to support the initial stages of the FLT.

45 In all of the above, and what follows, we will seek to promote the idea of person-centredness as a starting point and encourage staff at the frontline as well as policy makers to listen to what learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities want.

3 The Strategy

Our Commitment



46 In order to remove the barriers cited above and to ensure the 'entitlement of opportunity and access' for all people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities 'to provision that is meaningful, relevant and appropriate'.

We will work together to:

- 1 Promote our vision that people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can and should benefit from learning, challenge negative cultural expectations and deepen understanding of why and how individuals with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn.
- 2 Promote our vision that the vast majority of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can and should enter into and sustain employment whilst ensuring that those who are unable to access work can also access meaningful educational provision which enables them to live fulfilling adult lives.
- 3 Agree with our colleagues from the Further Education sector and the relevant research agencies, the best way to build on and disseminate best practice. This involves a reconceptualisation of how and why people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn, which we will promote.
- 4 Create a stronger and clearer commissioning framework for the LSC, setting out our expectations of what people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can and should expect in supporting them to lead the kinds of lives they want to. This will include exploring the possibility of a refocusing of policy for LSC funding regimes to fund, as a priority, a whole range of learning activities outside the current priorities of Skills for Life and level 2 for these learners.
- 5 Determine local targets related to closing equality gaps.
- 6 Examine with the QCA, awarding bodies and other partners how accredited programmes through the development of the QCF and then FLT, can be made more accessible to this group of learners by developing more flexible assessment methods. This includes ensuring that existing progression routes are made more accessible so that personalisation of learning pathways is possible, through the Foundation Learning Tier, when developed.
- 7 Determine the use of the RARPA process (recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning) as a means of monitoring standards and tracking individuals' progress across the country.
- 8 Agree with our colleagues in Higher Education and Higher Education Funding Council for England how higher education programmes might be made more accessible to people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 9 Ensure that 'person centred planning' is at the heart of all decision making and planning for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities services and provision, at the strategic, local and individual levels.

- 10 Work collaboratively across Departments with our delivery partners and other colleagues to improve the experience of **transition** from school to further learning, training and work and from children's services to adult services; and to explore the notion of a definition of 'transition' which covers the period from the year 9 review to when they enter employment or alternative adult provision (age 25 for some young people). This will include:
- Person centred transition planning at school which takes into account the long term aspirations of the individual
 - Annual reviews from year 9 **and throughout college/FE/HE** that take into account the developing aspirations and views of the individual with regard to employment, relationships, citizenship, leisure activities etc
 - Ensuring that FE colleges and learning and training providers build strong networks with local Connexions and successor bodies, Job Centre Plus and other employment agencies or support networks (including adult social services) so that young people do not 'fall off the edge' when they leave education and training
 - Strengthening opportunities for work experience or learning in real life contexts; better training for education staff supporting work placements and more flexible use of employment support monies (e.g. Workstep and Access to Work) will need to be addressed (in conjunction with the cross-government work-strand on employment opportunities which will also target employers)
- 11 Simplify the systems and processes of support for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly in regard to accessing funding to support their learning and route into employment.
- 12 Create more flexible uses of funding from different Departments to meet the holistic requirements of individuals. For example, developing and building on the current models and pilots for Individual Budgets to include LSC and DWP monies, as well as those from Local Authorities and the NHS, so that all people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can have control over the funds to support them into FE/HE and employment.
- 13 Improve the training and development for all staff (across education, employment and adult social services and the NHS) to foster a greater and deeper understanding of how they can support people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, particularly, to encourage joint training between health, social care, employment services, teaching and support staff – delivered by people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities where possible.
- 14 Ensure the improvement of information, advice and guidance available to people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, their parents/carers and the professionals supporting them, particularly with regard to signposting to other support agencies and clarification of complex mechanisms and processes (e.g. at transition). Such information should be made available in formats and languages that people can access and understand.
- 15 Ensure that the LSC and/or FE providers, health services and Job Centre Plus are represented on operational planning groups in local authority children and young people's services, at least from age 14, to establish the likely demand for provision early. This also must include regional offender managers to ensure that planning and commissioning covers those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from the offender population.

- 16 Ensure that our three government Departments and their agents and local delivery partners establish and maintain protocols for collecting, sharing and acting upon information on people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Such data should enable organisations to identify and ensure that they continue to provide services to all people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including the most complex disabilities. We recognise we must improve our data collection, access to and use of data, and the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) programme should help greatly here.
- 17 Provide clarity on the appropriate use of the respective budgets of central government, their delivery agents and local delivery partners – with a view to ensuring transparency and clarity in processes to access and use resources.
- 18 Seek to provide services at the point of need and not related to age.
- 19 Seek to create 'an entitlement' to learning, lifelong information, advice and guidance which prepares for life and working life, locating this within the Disability Discrimination Act. We will also ensure those with an acquired disability are able to access learning and information, advice and guidance to adjust appropriately and move forward successfully.
- 20 In all of the above, promote the idea of person-centredness as a starting point and encourage staff at the frontline as well as policy makers to listen to what learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities want.

How we Will Achieve this

- 47 To help us move forward we have grouped these into four themes:
 - 1 The way **Government Departments** work together and the way our **delivery partners** work together, particularly with stakeholders
 - 2 The way we put together the content of learning and work for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
 - 3 The way we fund learning, support for living and work
 - 4 The quality of what we provide including services and staff

From these will flow our Delivery Plan and we have recognised what is already in existence as 'improvement strategies'.

The Way we Work Together

- 48 The three Ministers supporting this Strategy have committed their Departments to working together using the Joint Programme of Change. We expect our Departments to:
 - Determine new policy and amendments to existing policies together
 - Analyse and determine the impact of policy, through joint research
 - Determine the scope for joint commissioning of provision through our agents
 - Collaborate and share costs on delivery, innovation and evaluation
 - Involve learners and users of services in all of the above, ensuring that involvement activities are meaningful and co-ordinated

49 We expect our delivery partners to follow this approach. We expect absolute collaboration in regard to planning and commissioning of provision to ensure that provision is effective, efficient and removes barriers to progression in learning, living and work.

The Content of Provision

50 The three government Departments have explored the notion of establishing a 'core curriculum' for this group of learners to ensure that they have access to a broad and varied curriculum. However, early consultation has led us to believe that a 'core curriculum' might lead to a prescriptive and reductive offer of provision, as opposed to giving people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities a choice to pursue what they feel meets their needs and aspirations for their lives as a whole. This reflects the diversity of ability and experience within the full range of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities of different ages. We will, however, build upon and disseminate what has been learned from best practice about the types of provision that are most effective in meeting learners' needs.

51 The Foundation Learning Tier will give new ways for learners aged 14 and over to progress at a pace suited to their needs and talents and different elements are being trialled. The advent of Diplomas with an entitlement for every young person to have access should enable learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to follow vocational routes, should they choose to, which provide incentive and stretch. We expect the new 14-19 Partnerships operating in every local authority area to produce a plan which reflects the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and makes clear what is being provided for them within the area. The Foundation Learning Tier

will also create a framework for adult learners who are working below Level 2. We anticipate that the FLT will offer three curriculum strands: Skills for Life and Work, Vocational Learning and Personal and Social Development. Progression through the FLT will be possible, both laterally and towards Level Two, and learners will be able to receive 'credit' which will be recognised formally as part of the Qualifications and Credit Framework. We need to ensure that people progress within this by avoiding unnecessary repetition and enabling as much flexibility as possible, so that the offer does not become too prescriptive.

52 Work Experience is an established expectation but there is evidence to suggest that not all young people or adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given an opportunity. Even if assessment shows that supervised work experience is not practical every effort should be made to offer work simulation, sheltered work or tasters. If employability is to be meaningful this seems the very least to be provided. The engagement of employers is vital to ensure that there are sufficient real experiences available. If attitudes in the workplace are to be challenged then we need to engage employers and promote success stories about people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have overcome barriers. LSC has challenged its providers to adopt the "supported employment" model to meet the work preparation needs of these learners, no later than 2010 in "Learning for Living and Work".

53 Information, advice and guidance must be provided consistently and effectively and in formats and styles that people can access and understand. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities must be prioritised by support agencies such as Connexions and

Nextstep. There must be clear statements of entitlement for all and sufficient attention paid to training on learning difficulties and disability issues for all personal advisers. Assessment procedures arising out of the preparation of section 140 reports need improvement and although a new manual of good practice was produced in 2006 this needs following up with training for all personal advisers likely to produce section 140 assessments. Regional LSC Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Managers need to be able to work effectively with the recommendations from section 140 assessments and it is recommended that there is an annual plan drawn up with the local Connexions service or its successor body and the local authority detailing how jointly the needs of learners will be met. It is important to ensure that those learners with additional needs but without statements are included in processes in line with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Of particular concern are those students who will proceed to higher education. Evidence from the Snowdon Awards Scheme 2006 Survey highlighted the lack of expertise available to help students with disabilities navigate the higher education application process and link this with identifying the right care and support packages. There should be expertise resident in either Connexions Partnerships or their successor bodies to provide this function.

The Way we Fund Learning, Support for Learning and Work

- 54 The amount of money we spend in our respective Departments represents a significant total. This strategy does not pledge any additional funding increases above those already set out, but it brings the thinking of the three Departments together to make sure that existing funding is used in the most effective way. The Departments involved need to examine closely what we spend together; agree how we can align our budgets better and then re-invest what we can re-direct into service improvement. Above all we will be clear about what we are buying and how effective our investment is. There is already new money in the system. For example the DfES is supporting the development costs of the Foundation Learning Tier and the DH are supporting the In Control programme both of which will significantly impact on outcomes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, without being described as new money for this group of learners.
- 55 Each Department has been in the process of reviewing aspects of its provision. For example the Department of Health has required its care services partners to review and modernise day care services, the DWP has begun its Review of Disability Employment Services and is consulting on this, and the DfES has requested its main post 16 delivery partner, the Learning and Skills Council, to ensure all its programmes lead to positive outcomes. The LSC has set out its intentions in 'Learning for Living and Work' and this includes a number of actions to improve the sufficiency and quality of provision.
- 56 We believe there are savings to be made to enable reinvestment, derived from joint commissioning from common providers. For example the LSC will commission courses from colleges and from independent providers who in turn will be contracting with Job Centre Plus for adult provision. There are often very different monitoring requirements for each contract sometimes doubling the audit requirement. We expect our delivery partners to share information on contractors and examine the possibility of joint contracting, to reduce the costs and the unnecessary bureaucracy.

57 Travel is a key access issue and our Departments are very aware of the frustrations among learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families over accessing the right support. While local determination of priorities is vital we think there is room for sharing innovative practice in transport provision and potential savings in joint commissioning. The DfES will review its transport priorities in light of new developments such as the 14 – 19 personalisation proposals and work with stakeholders to identify a more comprehensive approach, including learners over the age of 19, as recommended in “Through Inclusion to Excellence”. We shall draw on the experiences of partners and other stakeholders and use evidence collected such as the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education report ‘Getting there and back again’ published in January 2006 for the LSC.

The Quality of What we Provide

58 Planning for excellent provision requires strong leadership and partnerships, intelligent data collection and sharing, and collective responsibility for clear action. Post-16 providers are not always involved early enough in the planning process and certainly are not in receipt of information from schools, local authorities and social services consistently enough to be able to plan their provision or anticipate how to use their resources effectively and efficiently. Equally we believe there are insufficient links made between all FE providers and the Job Centre Plus network to facilitate a smooth transition, between children’s services and adult services and between health/social care and education and training.

59 As more evidence emerges from pilots indicating clear success in increasing the participation of young people in provision we feel able to commend the **Individual Budgets** programme run by the Department of Health and the **Improving Choice** pilot run by the LSC in the East of England. Both have resulted in significant improvements in individualising support to meet need and increased participation in post-16. (These activities are described in more detail in Appendix D.)

60 It is our contention that these programmes have shown the way to bring about change consistently and sustainably and have improved the quality of the outcomes for people involved. Both programmes rely upon step changes in the way different agencies and organisations work together and have fostered a climate of trust upon which future innovation can be built.

61 The DWP has carried out a Review of Disability Employment Services and proposals for improvement are to be published in a public consultation later this year. These proposals recognise that many disabled people share the same barriers to finding employment as non-disabled people and so would benefit from access to a wider range of their non-specialist employment services. At the same time DWP wants to develop their specialist employment services for disabled people, such as those with learning difficulties, who experience complex, disability-related barriers to work. The overarching objective of the Review and the associated proposals is to ensure that DWP and its partners are able to respond to individual’s needs and be better at helping them achieve their full potential. It will be important to align the outcome of this review with that of LSC and consider how the policies of two Government Departments and their agencies can complement each other for the benefit of disabled people.

- 62 We expressed concern that the outcomes for people with disabilities have not improved. We think that locally agreed targets could be agreed based upon convergence of employment rates of people with disabilities and with the population as a whole. There should also be targets which ensure that all learners including people with the most complex disabilities achieve equal access and outcomes. Local actions to achieve this should be published and reported on and have the active involvement of disabled people and employers.
- 63 We expect our agents to raise the quality of provision and support services and will ask our respective inspection agencies to report regularly and consistently on progress. We expect that inadequate provision will be given notice to improve or cease. We expect that all providers will be responsible for their own self improvement leading to self regulation.
- 64 Underpinning these actions it is vital to have a professional and effective workforce which delivers a consistently high quality service to its users. We expect a fully qualified workforce to be in place within the lifetime of this report and a sustainability strategy to have been agreed. We need to attract and retain a high calibre workforce and to ensure that career pathways are attractive and at least on a par with comparable mainstream careers. There must be specialist training to ensure the right expertise is available to deal effectively with complex cases. We expect new leaders and managers to be trained in disability issues and to be able to support their staff appropriately, promoting and resourcing partnership working.
- 65 We expect there to be an effective interchange of good practice and a consolidation of what works. There should be recognition of organisations which have developed expertise in particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ways established by which other organisations can benefit.

- 66 We expect delivery partners to celebrate the achievements of organisations which exceed expectations and ensure that in particular the achievements of young people and adults in obtaining and sustaining work are celebrated.

Next Steps

- 67 From the publication of this document we expect our Departments to move rapidly to agreeing a detailed action plan which we will consult on with key stakeholders and implement. We will publish the action plan and agree reporting on progress and review and evaluation processes.

Conclusion and Recommendation

- 68 We must continue the momentum if we are to achieve our vision. It is essential that the people this strategy is intended to benefit have confidence in what we deliver, know that poor performance and provision is challenged, and that our joint actions are making the differences we need to improve outcomes for all people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 69 We are confident that working together our three Departments will ensure a more consistent and coherent approach to the issues we have identified, and that we will deliver recognisable and sustainable changes.
- 70 We recommend the vision to all our partners. We require that all those we work with adopt this approach with energy and absolute commitment. We expect success and believe this strategy is an important step towards delivering it.

4 Delivering the Strategy

Outline Framework



Outline Framework for Developing a Comprehensive Joint Delivery Plan between DfES, DH, DWP for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Objective	Responsibility	Timescale/Milestones
1 Create Delivery Steering Group drawing on officials from each Department and colleagues from key stakeholder bodies to oversee delivery and achievement of objectives of strategy and explore whether this should merge with the group overseeing the Improving Work Opportunities for People with a Learning Disability . Group reports quarterly to Ministers.	DfES, DH, DWP	In Progress. Group already meeting and agreement to merge discussed.
2 The three Departments use the 'consultation period' (June – September) to further explore the interagency issues with key external experts and to draft with a comprehensive Delivery Plan which comprises an outline of the 'Programme of Change'.	DfES, DH, DWP	June – end September 2007.
3 Strategy Launch following sign-off by Ministers		June 2007.
4 The three Departments agree the full scope of a joint 'programme of change'.	DfES, DH, DWP	Agreement reached by autumn 2007, and internal work plan disseminated by end October 2007.
5 Protocols agreed for joint policy development and joint consultation on new policy areas.	DfES, DH, DWP	Agreement reached by December 2007.
6 Examine scope for joint commissioning with providers and joint contracts.	DfES/DWP/LSC	Agreement reached for contracting year 2008/2009, with pilot contracts used.
7 Agree new strategic planning protocols between LSC, Local Authorities and Job Centre+ to include specific plan for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.	DfES lead through Local Area Agreement Process	Protocols exist by end of 2007 to trial in 2008/2009.

Objective	Responsibility	Timescale/Milestones
8 New protocols agreed to improve mental health support.	DfES/DH	Protocols drawn up by end of 2007.
9 Agreement on how learning requirements of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be met within the new Foundation Learning Tier and how those unlikely to reach level 2 will receive credit value for their learning.	DfES	Being taken forward – should become clear by summer 2007. Entry to Employment Programme will be merged into FLT and new credit value system agreed by autumn 2007.
10 Agree improvements to information, advice and guidance and how improvements to section 140 assessments will be made.	DfES/LSC	Action plan to be agreed by summer 2008 based on new IAG standards. Recommendations for section 140 assessments by late Spring 2008.
11 Agree how the new model for supported employment will be implemented.	DWP/LSC/DfES	In place for the contracting year 2009/10.
12 Agree total budgets available for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.	DfES/DH/DWP	Audit of spend completed in summer 2008, and identify alongside this areas for savings/reinvestment.
13 Research cost benefits of funding joint packages of support and impact on future costs.	DfES/DH	Potential for joint research identified in summer 2008.
14 Agree potential for alignment of budgets to enable full roll out of Individual Budgets programme.	DfES/DH	Feasibility study conducted during 2008/09.
15 Agree plan for how a fully qualified workforce for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be achieved and joint training for leaders and other management staff.	DfES/DH/DWP	Agreement reached by the end of 2008.
16 Agree how effective practice particularly that derived from Improving Choices and In Control can be implemented.	DfES/DH/LSC	Agreement reached by summer 2009.

Appendices



Appendix A

Terminology and Definitions

The authors of this strategy acknowledge the problems associated with adopting the definitions given in this strategy for two reasons:

- i Many adults with learning disabilities choose to use the term 'learning difficulties' to describe themselves. Furthermore, the term 'learning disability' can be seen as a medicalised one.
- ii The three government Departments responsible for this strategy use different definitions to describe the same groups of learners. These, in turn, are not consistent with the definition used in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) to define those groups whom it seeks to protect.

Furthermore, there are difficulties in identifying target groups because learning difficulty and disability are not absolutely fixed, but are comparative and dynamic states. The 'problem' or 'deficit' should not be seen as located within the individual (medical model) but as a result of the attitudinal and physical barriers which people with impairments and health conditions, face in everyday life (social model). It is this interaction which is disabling.

Appendix B

Policies and Legislation which have had Major Impact on the Lives of People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Learning and Skills Act 2000

In 2001, in England, responsibility for the 'securing of provision' for all learners aged 16-19 was placed under the remit of the LSC for England, established under the Learning and Skills Act, 2000. Their main duties under Part I of this Act include the securing of 'proper facilities' for the education and training of young people, as well as the organised leisure time associated with such education or training. Powers conferred on them also include the allocation of resources to 'persons providing or proposing to provide information, advice or guidance about education or training or connected matters (including employment)'.

The LSC also has particular duties with regard to those defined as having a 'learning difficulty'. Responsibility for securing the provision for this group includes up to the age of 25.

Additionally in 2001, under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the Government set up a national 'Connexions' service for young people in England aged 13-19. The aim of this service is to provide support and advice to young people as they move from school to further education, training or employment. 'Connexions' also provides support up to the age of 25 for young people who have learning difficulties or disabilities (or both).

The service is managed locally by Connexions Partnerships or local authorities that bring together all the key youth support services. A key part of the Connexions service is the provision of a 'Personal Advisers' to work with young people in each local partnership. Some Connexions partnerships have specially trained personal advisers to work specifically with young people with learning disabilities and/or disabilities as they move from compulsory education to further education, employment or social services provision (i.e. in the 'transition to adulthood').

Valuing People White Paper, 2001

In 2001, the launch of the Government's White Paper 'Valuing People' set out the Government's vision for the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in society. Since then, their rights have been actively promoted through government-led initiatives, and the creation of the Learning Disability Task Force and the Valuing People Support Team have given learning disability issues a higher profile across government Departments.

The Children Act, 2004

The Children Act 2004 (building on the Children Act 1989) provides the legal underpinning for 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' – the programme aimed at transforming children's services. This Act placed additional duties on local authorities with regard to the safeguarding and care of children and young people, including young people with learning disabilities up to the age of 20. One of the main thrusts of this legislation was to foster local multi-agency 'co-operation' in the planning and evaluation of provision, including support for those children with 'special educational needs' under the SEN Code of Practice, 2001. As a result, local Children's Trusts were formed. A specific duty was the development of a single Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) to replace various previous statutory plans.

The 14-19 White Paper, 2005

In 2005, the DfES published the '14-19 Education and Skills White Paper' in response to the recommendations of the working group led by Mike Tomlinson. This sets out proposals for 'a radical reform of the system of 14-19 education', which is focused on high standards and is 'much more tailored the individual talents and aspirations of young people'. This includes extending opportunities for work-based learning, the

introduction of new specialised Diplomas (including vocational and academic material) and the introduction of a pilot programme linked to the DfES post-16 Entry to Employment programme to support those learners who face additional barriers to achieve level 1 Diplomas and progress to apprenticeships where possible.

Improving the Life Chances for Disabled People, 2005

This report was published by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and is now being taken forward and reported annually on by the Office for Disability Issues. It proposes that the Government should set the ambitious vision for improving the life chances of disabled people that 'By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society'. It indicates that future strategy for disabled people should seek to realise this vision through practical measures in four key areas, independent living, and families with young disabled children, transition into adulthood and support and incentives for employment.

Employment Initiatives

The last five years have also seen a number of employment related initiatives aimed at supporting people on long-term benefits back into employment. These include:

- Access to Work (DWP)
- Entry to Employment (DfES) – linked to the Foundation Learning Tier

Giving People with Disabilities the Chance to Work, 2005

In 2005, the DWP published its report called: 'Giving People with Disabilities the Chance to

Work'. In addressing the recommendations in this report the DWP are planning to introduce a new three-stage process to support disabled people to enter into employment and enable them to stay in work. These plans are currently under consultation, and the Learning Disability Task Force has already fed into this process.

The Disability Discrimination Act, 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005, which builds upon earlier disability discrimination legislation (principally the 1995 Act) places specific duties on all education providers, including post-16 providers and Higher Education Institutions. These duties can be summarised as:

- Duty not to treat disabled students less favourably or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to prevent them being placed at a substantial disadvantage
- Duty to provide auxiliary aids and services as part of the reasonable adjustments
- Duty to make reasonable adjustments to their premises where there are physical features that are placing students at a substantial disadvantage
- Duty to ensure that all students that undertake work placements as part of a vocational training programme are given adequate preparation and support

The DDA 2005 also has implications for employers, public buildings and services (including libraries, employment services and transport), leisure services and private clubs, covering the 'whole life' experiences and aspirations of people with disabilities, all of which, in turn, impact their reasons for, and experiences of, learning.

The Disability Equality Duty, 2006

In December 2006, the duty to promote disability equality came into force across all public sector bodies including LSC, Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), schools, colleges and universities. This has major implications for all those involved in the strategic planning, funding, development, delivery and monitoring of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities since it places on them a duty to actively and systematically promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people.

Appendix C

Specific Barriers to Learning

- Cultural expectations: low expectations/ aspirations and assumptions about people's (lack of) potential for learning and working; this includes parental views on where and how young people should be educated
- Inadequate and inappropriate provision – particularly for those with more severe or complex needs: often this provision is discrete, segregated and focuses on stereotypical 'life skills' or 'work preparation' which does not meet the interests or desires of the individual
- Lack of appropriate support services for people with high support needs living at home (particularly in non-term time)
- Lack of staff awareness and/or training: staff often do not understand how to measure progress on non-accredited programmes making Individual Learning Plans difficult to review (Ofsted 2007); some staff simply lack awareness of how to support people with specific impairments
- Poor transition planning: schools often do not think about the whole life needs of the individual young person beyond 16/18; colleges often do not receive the information given on statements of special education need or other documentation about the existing levels of skills and knowledge, and conversely where this may be received is not implemented adequately (Ofsted, 2007)
- Lack of real work experience opportunities or real-life situations of learning (proven to be most effective for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities)
- Narrow or restrictive assessment methodologies (particularly on accredited programmes) which exclude many people from getting any credit or recognition for the things they can do
- Lack of person-centred approaches at transition to FE and beyond
- Systems of support (at transition and other times) which are overly bureaucratic and complex: this includes the way that funding support is allocated to individuals wanting to enter the workforce
- Lack of co-ordination or shared responsibility between different agencies involved in decisions around funding placements
- Stigma and discrimination which can lead to low disclosure rates in job applications. Equally acquired disability can be hidden for fear of discrimination or the impact on career progression

Appendix D

Examples of Best Practice

Effective Practice Identified

We have been very impressed by the level of commitment to improving the outcomes of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities shown by many of those we have consulted to produce this document. Some of these innovative ways of reconceptualising learning for this group can lead to provision that is interesting, rewarding and relevant to the interests of the individual, while offering better value for the Departments involved. We believe that the following examples of effective and emerging practice are vital in helping the three Departments to realise their goals, particularly of taking joint leadership and action on the ground and we hope to see the work of these groups spread further throughout post 16 provision.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

The City of Newcastle is an example where the development of integrated services is clear and transparent and is reflected in their Children and Young People's Plan. The northern region of England has the highest population of disabled children in the country and the lowest mortality rate for children with complex health needs. The trust has identified a future growth in learning difficulties and/or disabilities for both young people and adults in the area.

- Strategic Planning – operational managers from all agencies involved with disabled children were brought together and asked to look at priorities. The work they did formed the basis of the strategic plans that were decided by parents and senior trust managers.
- Commissioning services/pooled budgets – Newcastle is working towards a coherent multi agency funding policy. This entails both joint funding across services and joint commissioning

of some out-of-authority services. The most innovative aspect is the involvement of parents in ensuring an audit trail which reports back to parents how money is being spent on their child. Parents are also asked to participate in the selection of providers offering short breaks. This involvement of parents in the commissioning process deserves wider dissemination as good practice.

- Joint working and co-location – for Newcastle it has been a challenge to ensure that the Children's Trust works together in the same location. The Trust settled on a school building which has encouraged the concept of schools being a community resource. An innovative feature is that clear work-streams have been established in respect of children with disabilities, and these work-streams are monitored closely by the Trust management team and the Parent Forum. The involvement of parents in monitoring and evaluation of service delivery 'completes a circle' with their involvement in commissioning i.e. they are party to the whole process.
- Assessment and Information sharing – Newcastle identified that children with disabilities are subject to as many as 18 different assessments. Building on their membership of FAME (Framework for Multi Agency Environments – a government initiative to encourage the sharing of information), Newcastle now have an IT Link/ software system that brings together different systems and allows for referral and single assessment by several agencies using a 'lead professional.'
- Key working/lead professional and Transition – the Trust has recruited a transition worker to work with children moving from children's services to adult services.

- Developing Capacity to Change – the Trust has a communication strategy. Regular reports are given to staff about developments and information provided to a Parent Forum. Information is cascaded to all staff including administrative and maintenance staff in all agencies to ensure a sense of full participation in developments.
- Participation – Newcastle has a strategy to enable children with all levels of disability to assist with recruitment of staff. The Trust's HR department is working with specialist workers to enable children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to assist in recruitment.

Improving Choice in post-16 Education for People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

'Improving Choice' is an East of England Pathfinder that set out to develop local post 16 provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities whose only alternative, if they wished to continue in education, would be to attend a specialist, residential college. It was an LSC funded project that involved 31 young people from the region.

The project heralded an innovative way of working and the following outcomes were identified:

- Some young people were able to stay at home and have their educational, social and health needs met locally
- The identification of a brokerage role to ensure services was person centred
- Providers of services created new person centred models of provision that had successful outcomes for young people.

These were:

Model 1 – college-based provision: most of the providers involved in the programme are colleges.

This model offered:

- Close partnerships with feeder special schools, including, in one college, staff secondments, and in another, staff working across the two establishments
- A recognition that schools may have greater expertise in specific disabilities and a willingness to learn from their experience.
- Close partnerships with parents
- Strong and committed staff teams with good leadership and support
- Careful planning and lead in time for individual learners
- Work experience opportunities, often in social firms to develop the skills for employment and begin to develop progression routes

Model 2 – supporting community based provision: colleges have a more distant relationship with the delivery of programmes although they have been involved in steering groups and the development of action plans. One college has acted as a conduit for funding individual packages of learning, which are delivered to young people in schools or in the community.

This model offered:

- A bridge between school and college for those young people needing a more gradual transition
- Integrated planning and working between partner agencies: Established clear roles and responsibilities
- Person-centred planning

Model 3 – the role of the work-based learning provider: colleges helped to support a training organisation by providing kitchens, flats, carpentry workshops etc.

This model offered:

- Opportunities for those young people who were unable to fit into college
- Established partnership working between colleges and other providers

The evaluation of the project concluded that the momentum created by the project would be lost unless there was a strategic lead ensuring that all the agencies worked in partnership. There was also an issue about funding streams as it was identified that the LSC was funding services that were not purely education or training.

There was a need to shift thinking away from the concept of residential college to one of creative local provision. The common assessment framework was seen as the obvious tool for assessment to be used by all agencies. The other development that was seen as crucial was the brokering role. This had become well developed by one of the participating local authorities and the lead was taken by a Connexions manager. The evaluation highlighted the issue of change management and the need for all the agencies associated with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to think in a different way. There were also examples where parents were unable to change their mindset because they had believed for years that their child would go to a residential college.

In Control – Dynamite Project

The Dynamite Project is a current initiative that is supporting 12 children's trusts to look at implementing individual budgets to enable children

and young people and their parents or carers to self direct their support. There are four northern trusts, one in the Midlands, three London trusts and three Southern county trusts.

The Project has evaluated outcomes for young people and has looked at how the individual budgets and self directed support have impacted on decision making, accommodation, employment of Personal Advisers and community support. The overall picture is of a move away from dependency on professionals, group living and day care to supported independent living. The overall feeling from young people is that they felt happier with their life and the choices they have made compared with how they felt before being involved in the scheme.

We believe this is an exciting initiative which brings alive the concept of individual budgets and being in control of the means of support. Professionals have overcome concerns about losing authority over processes by recognising the changes brought about in the young people and their families and developing their relationship as a partnership.

Westminster

Westminster has a learning disability partnership that has been running for some years which has a multi agency membership. They have a transition group that meets every month and that has children's and adult's services, education and connexions representatives. Westminster runs a service called Pursuing Independent Paths (PIP) which is an educational project with a structured programme. It has 16 service users with learning disabilities aged 18 to 25.

The programme is as follows:

- Vocational life skills
- IT and internet guidance

- Support and access to education and training at colleges of further education
- Support in travelling independently
- Work experience with a range of employers
- Individual life planning sessions with key workers
- Transitional planning to assist service users to progress from the scheme to work or college.
- One to one individual work

ROSE – Realistic Opportunities for Supported Employment

ROSE is a good example of a project set up in Havering College, Essex by two lecturers who have children with learning difficulties. The aim of this project is to help learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into employment by supporting them and their employers through their transition into work. Students are assigned a job coach who supports them into paid suitable work on a one to one basis. The job coach will take the student to work from their home by public transport and remain their entire shift to settle them in. They will ensure the student is happy and be there to help the student or other employees with anything they can. At the end of the shift they take the student home again. The support that the coach gives is gradually withdrawn so that at the end of a given period the student is travelling and attending work completely independently.

This method of working has many advantages over traditional classroom-based work preparation schemes. Students are paid for their work from the first day and undertake various different roles depending on their interests. The travel training they are given as part of the package has a

massive impact on the learner's independence in all aspects of their life. This project typically results in learners being able to attend work independently without their job coach within three months and of the 20 students with LDD who have undertaken this scheme, 12 are now independently sustaining employment.

ROSE is an example of a creative approach to the transition of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into work that is producing good results. There should be greater emphasis on projects like this directed from the three Departments, rather than relying on local initiative and action. ROSE currently receives the bulk of its funding from Havering College and has fought to get some funding from their local authority and the LSC. The long term benefits and cost savings of projects such as this should be recognised and collaborative funding be made more readily available, though it is our intention that the roll out of Individual Budgets will help to facilitate this.

Appendix E

Bibliography and References

No	Document Title	Publisher	Date
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7	Current Provision and Outcomes for 16-18-year old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in colleges	Ofsted	January 2007
8	Greater Expectations : Provision for learners with disabilities Adult Learning Inspectorate	Adult Learning Inspectorate	2006
9	National Learner Satisfaction Survey: FE Learners with disabilities 2004/05	LSC	July 2006
10	Learning and Skills Act 2000	OPSI	2000
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12	The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005	OPSI	1995, 2005
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15	Being, Having, Doing: Theories of Learning and Adults with Learning Difficulties (Dee, Devicchi, Florian and Cochrane)	Learning and Skills Research Centre	2006
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