19+ Skills Strategy for North East Lincolnshire

2011-2013

Change Programme, Children’s Centres, Franklin College, Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education, Humber Learning Consortium, Humber Chemical Focus, Job-Centre Plus, North East Lincolnshire Council Community Learning Services, Skills Funding Agency and Voluntary Action North East Lincolnshire (VANEL)
Executive Summary
The 19+ Skills Strategy (The Strategy) reflects an aspiration to build community prosperity. Our local aspirations are centred on developing, in partnership, effective solutions that place our learners at the centre of all that we do. The challenges of public sector funding, policy change and welfare reform give rise to us all to reconsider how best to use finite resources to deliver the best solutions for our communities. It is for these reasons that there is renewed enthusiasm to develop effective partnership and co-ordination of adult and community learning services to best meet the needs of our community.

North East Lincolnshire (NEL) faces challenges including deprivation, unemployment, and lower skills levels than national averages. Some of these characteristics are deep-rooted, following years of changes and pockets of decline that have seen the loss of traditional industrial jobs within our labour market. However, we have strengths and opportunities, founded upon our industrial heritage and key assets such as the port infrastructure and our geographical location on the Humber Estuary and there has been recent success in terms of new inward investment developments. Our community reflects geographic diversity extending to rural hinterlands, coastal communities, as well as industrial heartlands and ports infrastructure and this diversity of needs give rise to a variety of solutions.

Developed by the Adult and Community Learning Strategic Group¹ (The Group), a sub-group of the LSP Regeneration Partnership’s Employment and Skills Board, The Strategy focuses on a range of objectives, in line with The Group's assessment of community stakeholder and employer needs, Government ambitions and funding requirements. In shaping a 19+ Skills Strategy rather than a workforce development strategy, this document is focused on the collaborative actions learning and skills providers will take to address community need.

Vision
NEL’s vision is to have a skilled and able workforce which we can be proud of and which fully meets the needs of our existing and future businesses, thus contributing to the economic prosperity of the area. It is our aim therefore that all adults within the area will have access to a range of provision, at the appropriate level, and will be supported to plan their own learning journey, and achieve their personal and economic goals supported by clear, accessible and transparent information and impartial careers advice.

Principles
Adult skills are key to supporting and developing the local economy and building a positive and cohesive society where residents want to stay and develop, people aspire to live, and businesses are encouraged to invest. It will be achieved firstly by all those involved in the delivery of learning and information, advice and guidance (IAG) working together to plan, promote and enhance learning in NEL. The Strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

¹ The Group is chaired by North East Lincolnshire Council and involves a number of partners including the Grimsby Institute, Franklin College, VANEL, the Humber Learning Consortium, Humber Chemical Focus, Jobcentre Plus and the Skills Funding Agency.
• All appropriate organisations will work in consultation to support the delivery of The Strategy’s objectives

• Support the ongoing development of The Strategy, including increasing engagement with local employers, looking at labour market information and workforce development

• Develop a mutual approach to respond to the diverse needs of current and potential learners and businesses ensuring the inclusion of more vulnerable groups

• Raise aspirations and motivation towards sustainable employment.

Introduction
Developing the area’s learning and skills levels is essential if we are to ensure local people are equipped to access future jobs and to give investors confidence that an appropriate workforce is available to meet their needs. There remains however a number of deep seated challenges which require sustained investment, across partnerships, to capture the spirit, creativity and enthusiasm of our community. The partners to The Strategy, in collaboration with local stakeholders, have an important role to play in addressing these issues to engage and equip our people to build and share in growing levels of prosperity.

Background
In terms of community profile the area of NEL faces significant challenges. In 2010, NEL was ranked 46th most deprived out of 326 Local Authorities in England. 27 of the 107 Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in NEL are ranked amongst the 10% most deprived in England. Another 15 are ranked amongst the 20% most deprived and a further 8 ranked amongst the 30% most deprived. One LSOA in the East Marsh Ward has been ranked the second most deprived in England, whilst another has the lowest educational attainment rate in England. Conversely, NEL has prosperous districts where educational attainment is above the national average illustrating, in what is a relatively compact community, significant variations.

NEL’s key sectors include Retail, Storage and Distribution (Port and Logistics), Manufacturing (Food and Chemical Processing), Renewable Energy, Healthcare, and Tourism. Within the Yorkshire and Humber region, Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2009 was 10% below the national average, which was the second lowest in the country (£13,300 per capita head). This indicates a deficit in productivity and economic performance across the area’s sectors.

Focusing on changes in the labour market in the past 5 years there has been a decline in Process Plant and Machine Operatives with the loss of 3,700 jobs, Administrative and Secretarial occupations (-1,300), Sales (-500) and Elementary occupations (-600). Over the same time period however there has been growth in Associate and Professional/Technical (+2,200 jobs), Managers and Senior Officers (+1,800) and Professional (+500). This indicates a pattern of growth in higher skills jobs and knowledge economy jobs and a reduction in low skills occupations. Furthermore, changes in Working Time Directives, New Agency Staff Directives coupled with technological and demographic changes will continue to create labour market turnover (estimated at 3.3% per month) which equates to 2,300 people joining, leaving or changing jobs in our workforce each month.

Indices of Deprivation 2010, Communities and Local Government

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In August 2011, Business Link reported that 75% of businesses across the region expressed optimism that they would create vacancies in 2011. Also, in terms of emerging and future developments, inward investment developments, Regional Growth Fund successes and the awarding of two Humber based Enterprise Zones are paving the way for multi-million pound investments which will help create jobs locally and further strengthen the Humber's super cluster for Low Carbon/Environmental Technologies. The renewable energy sector will also impact the learning and skills needs of NEL with the emerging demands arising from inward investment opportunities, notably within the developing low carbon/processing and construction sectors, where higher levels of technical skills are required.

NEL has a higher proportion of residents qualified to NVQ Level 2 than the national average and we have comparable profiles for Level 3 qualifications. There are, however, a significantly lower number of Level 4’s than the regional and national averages (17.3% have NVQ Level 4 compared to 29.5% nationally).

In terms of the generic local skills gaps, 62.4% of employers surveyed state there are gaps in customer handling, 60% cite effective team working and oral communication skills and 59% highlighted technical, practical or job-specific vocational skills shortages. Notwithstanding this, the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) labour demand and hard-to-fill vacancy data indicates a predominately effective labour supply system, albeit with some mis-matches in certain fields, for example, care sector jobs, HGV drivers, seasonal retail and sales occupations, and unfilled food manufacturing vacancies.

NEL’s other main characteristics include:

- A population of 157,300
- It is projected that the population will increase by 5.79%, to 166,400, by 2033
- An economically active population (aged 16-64) of 69,000
- People living in NEL earn 14% less than the national average. 38% of people work part-time compared to 32% nationally and 21% work on shift-patterns
- NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) levels, at 6.6%, are lower than the 7.5% target locally with around 50% being 18 years of age who are seeking work only. Those who are 16-18 years still have learner entitlement to free education, and are not the focus of this Strategy. The position alters for 18-24 year olds as this group now accounts for nearly one-third of all JSA benefit claimants.
- In May 2011, 6.3% of people (aged 16-64) claimed Job Seekers Allowance in NEL, compared to 3.7% in England
- Self employment is comparatively low at 7%, although this has been growing over recent years
- With regard to school performance, attainment of 5 A-C grades (or equivalent) has improved dramatically over recent years to 54.2% in 2010, compared to 53.5% nationally
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) learners account for 16.9% of the school cohort, compared to 10.9% nationally (and this extends in profiles to adults, where we have higher levels of community representation of people with learning difficulties or a disability).

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3 Source: ONS annual population survey (Apr 2010 – Mar 2011)
4 Annual survey of hours and earning, NOMIS, www.nomisweb.co.uk, Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright Reserved
5 NEET data report from the Young People’s Support Service
6 Claimant count, NOMIS, www.nomisweb.co.uk, © Crown Copyright 2011
The implications resulting from the changes in the local economic climate and the labour market position, which in turn impact the learning and skills needs of NEL, suggest, a greater need for flexible learning programmes, bite-sized programmes and flexible delivery, a need for effective adult and community learning together with an economic case to develop the knowledge economy and higher level skills.

Objectives
The objectives of The Strategy, detailed below, are focused on ensuring that, through effective partnership working, the qualifications, skills and employability of the current and future workforce match the economic needs of the area. The Group will work together to:

- Plan, deliver and evaluate learning opportunities collaboratively and flexibly, through an agreed delivery plan which identifies:
  - the range and strength of existing provision and how any gaps will be met
  - how fee remission policies\(^7\) have changed and what the implications are

- Provide high quality and impartial IAG which meets the needs of learners and employers

- Develop seamless progression pathways, avoiding unnecessary duplication of provision

- Use the restricted funding available from Government, employers and individuals, as appropriate, taking into account the need to meet national, regional and local priorities. This will include consideration of fees and charges.

As one of the key objectives, The Strategy will be developed with a series of measurable plans for delivery which will help support aspirations so that adult achievement at least reaches national standards within each respective qualification level (Level 2, 3 and 4). In so doing, The Strategy will also incorporate a range of entitlements for learners including:

- Contribute to the delivery of The Sustainable Community Strategy

- High quality learning opportunities across a range of levels

- Inclusive and supportive learning opportunities, which recognise the individual needs of learners

- Clear learning and progression routes linked to employment opportunities and higher levels of learning

- The development and use of long-term Individual Learning Plans (ILP)

- Access to high quality, independent IAG regarding learning opportunities and career pathways

- Delivery models which are appropriate for learners, including flexibly engaging with newer technologies

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\(^7\) In August 2011 Ministers announced that for 2011/12 academic year FE Colleges and training organisations will have local discretion to provide fully funded courses for people on a wider range of benefits than Jobseekers' Allowance and Employment Support Allowance (in the Work Related Activity Group) depending on what they need to help them enter and stay in work.
• A transparent process of application and admission
• Clear and common pricing policies.

Priorities
The partners to this Strategy will focus on the following priorities in line with their assessment of community, stakeholder and employer needs, Government ambitions and funding requirements. This will be characterised by innovation, vocational excellence and a renewed sense of enthusiasm for and pride in skills.

1. Align The Strategy with the Skills Minister, John Hayes’ vision of Further Education\(^8\):
   • Achieve “accessible” and “explicable” learning so there is a clear relationship between the skills acquired and the outcomes learners gain in terms of work and social skills
   • Learning must be seen to deliver on its promises
   • Employers should be given the power to challenge the skills system to meet their needs
   • Public investment should be balanced with the costs of training shared between employers, individuals and the state.

2. Increase employment and employability:
   • Work with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to implement Skills Conditionality\(^9\) for those who are unemployed on active benefits
   • Create borough wide work clubs to deliver programmes which will include vocational learning, basic skills, employability training as well as support with softer skills such as motivation and confidence building
   • Identify and provide programmes to meet specific skills training needs
   • Develop the capacity of the voluntary sector to participate in employment training and linking with employers.

3. Skills for Life (SfL):
   • Support those with low levels of basic skills to attain at least the minimum functional levels of Entry Level 3 for Numeracy and Level 1 for Literacy
   • Support those individuals without any qualifications to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills
   • Establish a direct link with schools and Children’s Centres to facilitate progression opportunities for parents and carers with SfL needs.

4. Offer a start on the learner journey towards qualifications at Level 2 and above:
   • Develop and publish a common programme of unitised learning opportunities in a variety of media accessible to all, identifying all providers and progression routes
   • Progression routes to be based upon learner need informed by real employment opportunities.

5. In anticipation of future sector needs, increase the number of adult who achieve the following qualifications (a Level 2 and Level 30:
   • Learners (of all ages) studying their first full Level 2 qualification
   • 19-24 year old learners studying their first full Level 3 qualification
   • Level 3 learners of all ages (those taking a full Level 3 without having a full Level 2).

\(^8\) Learning & Skills Improvement Service, Policy Update 11\(^{th}\) June-22\(^{nd}\) June 2011, FY 2011-12 No.5
\(^9\) This involves Jobcentre Plus referring claimants to a skills training provider, further education college, or Next Step adviser with potential benefit sanction for non-participation.
6. Provide progression opportunities to Higher Education:
   • Assess existing progression routes
   • Match appropriate qualifications with employer and community needs
   • Seek employer participation in supporting higher level qualifications.

7. Engage under-represented groups and widen participation in learning:
   • Ensure all communities, including those that are most disadvantaged, have access to a wide curriculum, high quality, responsive provision and progression in learning
   • Undertake consultation and a mapping exercise with communities to identify wider benefits for individuals and their learning needs in respect of personal and community development learning
   • Undertake capacity building with identified potential providers to establish and develop learning links with individuals and their communities
   • Undertake an initiative to raise aspirations and self esteem within communities
   • Utilise existing voluntary and community networks to promote learning and publicise success stories.

Implementation: Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability
The partners have already taken significant steps to provide high quality learning for adults in the area and accept shared responsibility for turning this Strategy into a reality for the adults of NEL. There is still much to be done, however, given the changes to fee remission policies and issues surrounding the incentives that providers will have to offer to support the education, skills and training needs of those learners who are unemployed or on active benefits.

The partners will continue to develop their respective strengths and jointly work to eliminate weaknesses and duplication to meet the needs of the learner. They will ensure that the education and training provided and skills that are developed by adults meet both their needs and the expectations of employers. Through the provision of IAG and access to work clubs and other relevant employment or job search support, partners will actively support their learners finding and remaining in employment, ideally with access to ongoing workplace training.

The Group will be coordinated by the Employment and Skills Sub-Group of the NEL Strategic Partnership. It will contribute and respond to the economic and skills priorities set by the Lincolnshire and Humber LEPs and the needs of learners referred by JCP Advisers under Skills Conditionality or those learners referred through the Work Programme. The Employment and Skills Sub-Group will draft and monitor a rolling delivery plan, which specifies the ways in which the partners will work together to achieve the outcomes and success measures. In addition The Group will:

   • Review and evaluate this Strategy annually over its timescale of 2011 to 2013
   • Revise the Strategy to take account of developing local, regional and national priorities and funding.

All partners agree the following principles and ways of working together:

   • Be more open to the views of learners and employers about how better to train learners
   • Think about the special strengths of each partner, and how to build on them
   • Promote greater employer and individual responsibility for and investment in skills development
- Share information on strategies and evaluate their outcomes for adult learning in NEL
- Evaluate their own partnership working annually and plan for continuous improvement
- Work jointly on potential funding opportunities for the benefit of NEL.

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