

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

Opportunities for the Voluntary Sector

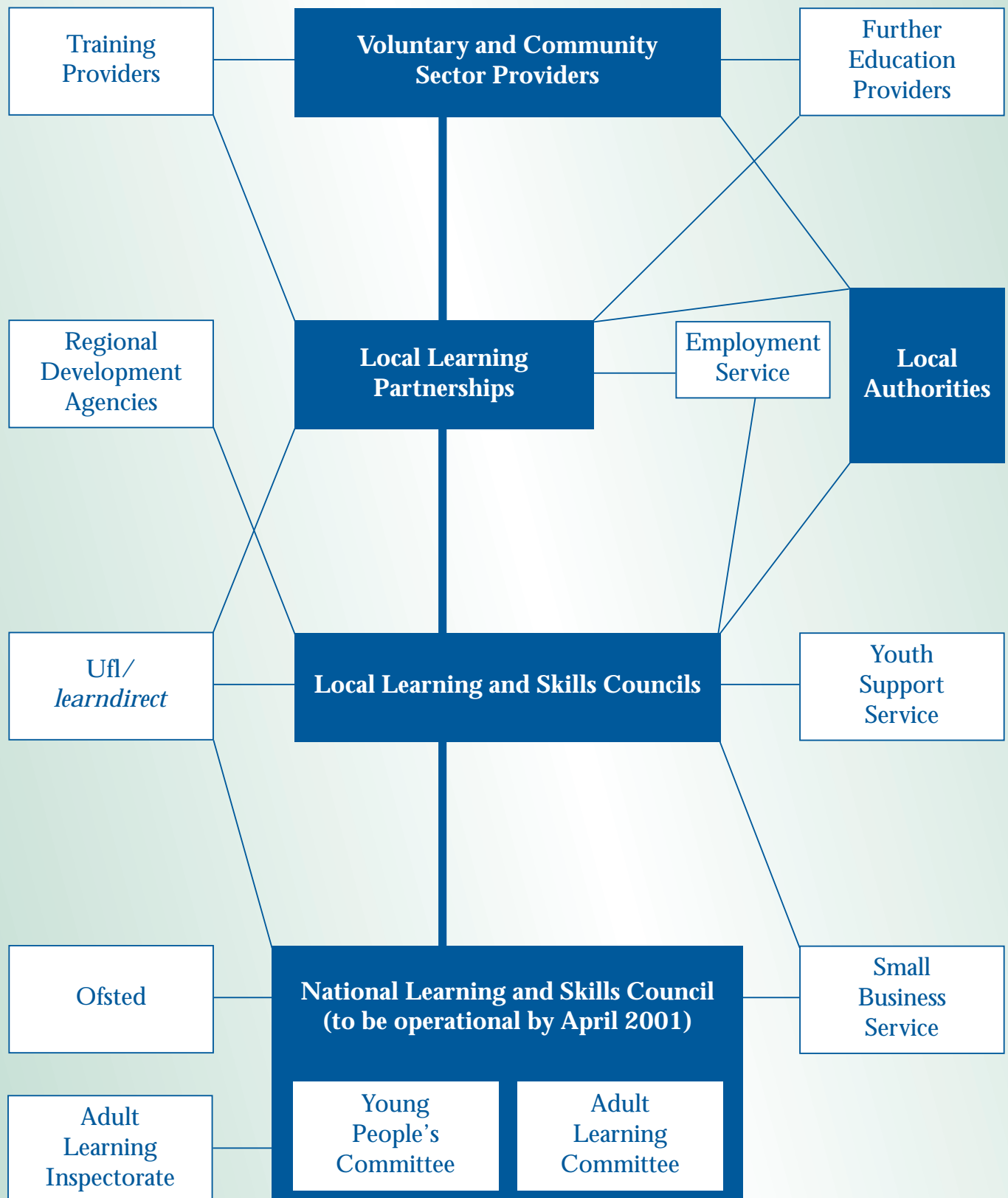
*A Guide to the Learning and Skills Council Prospectus
and the First Funding Consultation Document*

Spring 2000

“We want the Learning and Skills Council to make a real difference to people’s lives – to help support families, build stronger neighbourhoods, support the regeneration and the capacity building of communities and support competitive businesses”

(Learning and Skills Council Prospectus)

The Voluntary Sector and the Learning and Skills Council Framework



Key institutions in the new Learning and Skills Council Framework

National Learning and Skills Council

- A single coherent organisation including local LSCs and responsible for planning, funding and improving the quality of post-16 learning up to university level.
- Responsible for a budget of around £6 billion and almost 6 million learners.
- Key areas include National Learning Targets, widening participation and basic skills.
- At least 40% of members to have substantial recent business and commercial experience and to include a senior RDA figure.
- Expected to work in partnership with a wide range of national bodies, including education providers.

Young People's and Adult Learning Statutory Committees

- To advise national LSC on all aspects of learning, including learning for employment, individual fulfilment, and to tackle social exclusion.
- Members to include people who have special knowledge, understanding and skills in education and training for young people and for adults.
- Funded from the national LSC budget.

Local Learning and Skills Councils

- 47 sub-regional Councils responsible for ensuring that local



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community needs are met through LSC-funded provision.

- Shared goals with national LSC but significant local flexibility.
- Expected to work in partnerships with a wide range of local bodies.
- Membership to reflect diverse interest in post-16 field – 40% to have substantial recent business and commercial experience.
- Average budget in excess of £100 million – some discretion to vary funding rates within a national formula, and can deploy initiative funding.

Local Authorities

- Central partners in the new arrangements with greater strategic influence over post-16 learning in their areas.
- Local LSCs must consult local authorities over planning and state the Local Education Authority (LEA) contribution.
- LEAs must produce and implement a strategic plan to secure adult and community learning.
- Guaranteed funding in the first two years of the LSC's operation (comparable to current spend), provided LEAs maintain their own level of expenditure.

University for Industry/*learndirect*

- Expected to stimulate demand for lifelong learning among businesses and individuals; and promote the availability of, and improve access to, relevant, high quality and innovative learning opportunities especially through the use of information and communication technologies and networks of learning centres.
- Local LSCs, in seeking to ensure flexible and accessible provision in their areas, will build on the *learndirect* network established by the Ufi.

Local Learning Partnerships

- Voluntary partnerships to promote collaboration and higher standards between a wide range of local providers including employers involved in education and training, private sector training providers, trades unions, voluntary and community groups and others such as the cultural industries.
- LLSCs must consult Learning Partnerships over planning.
- Supported by £10 million in each of next two years from the DfEE.

Ofsted and Adult Learning Inspectorate

- Inspection of 16-19 provision in schools and colleges to be undertaken by Ofsted.
- Inspection of post-19 provision in colleges and work-based learning for all post-16s to be undertaken by a new Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), which will also cover education and training provision funded by the Employment Service, appropriate Ufi *learndirect* provision and community learning.
- Common inspection framework to be developed.
- Cross-remit provision will be inspected jointly, led by Ofsted.

Regional Development Agencies

- RDAs to work with the LSC to ensure that at national and local levels the priorities of the regional skills strategies inform, complement and are integrated with the LSC's plans and strategies.

An Invitation to Action

The Government intends to consult about various aspects of its proposals. You may wish to consider the following:

- Details of the new funding arrangements are set out in *Learning to Succeed Post 16 Funding and Allocations: First Technical Consultation Paper*. Responses are requested by 3 April. This will lead to a further consultation exercise in May.
- Regional Government Offices are to bring together small task groups for each LLSC by April 2000 for transition planning and to identify existing provision that will need continued funding by the LSC (6.5).
- There will be full public consultation around the new inspection framework (5.10).
- DfEE to work with representatives from provider networks and the Employment Service to develop measures of quality and value for money (5.20).
- There will be consultation on appropriate, nationally recognised standards for staff in early 2000 (5.24).
- National Training Organisation Groups and Sector Dialogue Groups will continue and will help to develop workforce development plans, occupational standards, qualifications and training frameworks (4.20).
- The sector is identified as a potential contributor to the development of a promotional strategy for post-16 national priorities (for example widening participation) which will underpin local strategies (4.34).

Figures in brackets refer to relevant paragraphs in the Prospectus.

Opportunities and challenges

Representation and influence

- Most action to advance the key objectives for post-16 education will occur through local and national Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) working with partners. Voluntary sector involvement with these bodies will be vital.
 - Scope for voluntary and community sector representation on local LSCs (LLSCs) exists through the expectation that Councils will include those who understand excluded communities (2.30), and through the sector's role as a learning provider (2.31).
 - LSCs are expected to develop links with diverse bodies including voluntary sector providers (2.18).
- **How can the voluntary sector secure appropriate representation on LSCs at local and national levels?**

► **Where and how should lines of responsibility be drawn?**

► **What support arrangements would be necessary?**

► **How can voluntary and community bodies assert their potential and ensure that LSCs are alert to their contribution?**

Funding

- Most of the annual national LSC budget will be allocated to LLSCs for use within a national framework. Councils must agree plans and budgets for adult and community education with various partners including voluntary bodies (2.18).
- LLSCs will have a range of flexible budgets (10-15% of the total) to deploy in response to local needs, including equality of opportunity and widening participation initiatives (3.10).
- LLSCs must keep the field open to new providers of high quality provision (including voluntary bodies) (3.6).
- Funding arrangements will allow for the higher costs of engaging marginalised learners, including outreach (3.16).
- The distinction between Schedule 2 and non-Schedule 2 provision is to go (5.27).
- LSC will have scope to allocate matched funds alongside European Social Fund budgets (3.7).

► **How can voluntary and community bodies ensure that LSCs meet the requirement to make funding accessible to the sector?**



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Planning

- Local Authorities are central to the new planning arrangements and have enhanced strategic influence. They will be expected to work 'very closely' with community bodies to develop provision (2.41).
- LLSCs will be required to consult with local Learning Partnerships over their plans and, in turn, it is expected that LLPs will 'necessarily need' to involve a wide range of bodies, including voluntary and community groups (2.48).
- LLSC plans will need support from Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) before formal approval (2.38).

► **In view of these new planning routes, how can the sector build on existing networks and consortia to plan strategically, build capacity and share good practice?**

► **What role can the sector play in ensuring that RDAs take a broad view of the requirements of community regeneration?**

Quality Assurance

- All providers will have to demonstrate the standard of their work against a range of LSC criteria (5.1), set improvement targets (5.20), and show that staff are either suitably qualified or have appropriate development plans (5.24) – eventually only providers who meet quality thresholds will be funded (5.6).
- All LSC funded provision will be



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covered by a new inspection system, involving a new Adult Learning Inspectorate and a common inspection framework (5.8).

- Qualifications and accreditation are seen as important and appropriate for the majority of courses. However, LSCs will be expected to fund some learning where recognition of achievement is not through qualifications (5.27)

► **How can voluntary and community groups influence the development of appropriate measures of quality and value and also support and inform potential or inexperienced providers?**

► **How can the sector respond to the resource implications of meeting new standards?**

► **How can the sector contribute to the development of new ways of identifying and assessing achievement in non-accredited learning?**

Further information

The text of *The Learning and Skills Bill* is available from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ldl99900/ldbils/014/2000014.htm>

The text of the *Prospectus* on the proposed arrangements for the Learning and Skills Council is available from:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/post16/brprospectus.shtml>

The text of *Learning to Succeed Post 16 Funding and Allocations: First Technical Consultation Paper* is available from:

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/post16/br_fund.shtm

Text copies are available from DfEE publications:

0845 6022260

Also available in Braille, large print and on audio cassette.

Regular briefings on issues in the legislation are available on the NIACE website:

<http://www.niace.org.uk>

Other useful contacts

Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)

Tel: 020 7925 5000

The Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation (VSNTO)

Tel: 020 7520 2497

National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS)

Tel: 0114 278 6636



NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. It works to develop increased participation in education and training. Tel: 0116 204 4200



The WEA is the largest voluntary adult learning organisation in England and Scotland. It has a commitment to high quality and social purpose learning and to voluntary and democratic forms of organisation and practice.

Tel: 020 8983 1515

NIACE is a registered charity. Number 1002775

The WEA is a registered charity. Number 314001