

***Skills and Employment in London: Proposals for the
London Skills and Employment Board's Strategy***

Summary of Responses to consultation

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1. Introduction

Background and purpose

The London Skills and Employment Board has been established to provide leadership in improving adult skills and employment outcomes in London. The Board is chaired by the Mayor of London and is employer-led.

The Board's role is to set the strategic framework for the spending of the London Learning and Skills Council's adult skills budget (of around £600m for 08/09). In addition, it will have the ability to influence the spending and priorities of other key agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and the London Development Agency.

The Board is developing its first Strategy for adult skills and employment in London. The Strategy has a five-year horizon and is being drafted in consultation with stakeholders and partners. It draws on an evidence base - which the Board has set out in '*Globalisation, Skills & Employment - The London Story*'.

2. The Consultation Process

Methods Used

The consultation document '*Skills and Employment in London: Proposals for the London Skills and Employment Board's Strategy*' was issued for consultation on 30 October. The consultation was carried out through a combination of stakeholder meetings, and an invitation to submit formal written or online responses.

Stakeholder events

The main stakeholder event took place on 10 January. 89 attendees attended. A transcript outlining the points made at the event is included in Annex 1. In addition members of the Board and the Secretariat undertook a wide range of stakeholder meetings to discuss the Strategy.

Written and online submissions

For the duration of the consultation people wanting to comment could:

- Register and participate in a set of seven online questions;
- Request paper versions of the document to be sent to them and return paper responses via a Freepost address; and/or
- Email comments/responses to a Board email address.

Participants who completed the questions online, logged on to a website with usernames and passwords generated at the time of registration. On the website they could read background information about the consultation, its objectives and how the results will be used, and ground rules for participating in the process. Participants could then read and respond to questions related to specific sections of the document.

A help line and e-mail contact was available to assist anyone with other special needs through the process. Details of the consultation exercise were also available via the London Skills and Employment Board website.

Marketing of the consultation

The formal consultation period was 12 weeks, from the 30 October 2007 until 21 January 2008.

The marketing of the consultation was carried out by the London Skills and Employment Board. It included a mailout to a series of stakeholders, advertising through the London Skills and Employment Board's website and through the Mayor of London's website, promotion through various periodicals and press, and promoting the consultation through meetings with stakeholders.

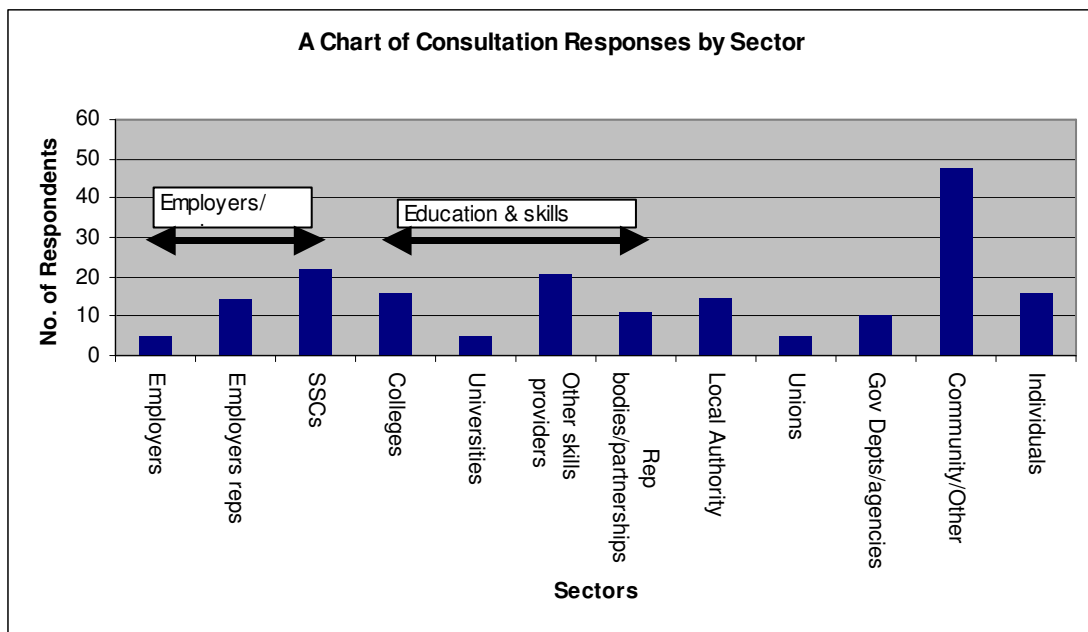
3. Respondents

The total number of people and organisations who **registered** to take part in this consultation was **310**. Of these people and organisations registered **188 submissions** were received to the consultation of which **87 were received online**, and **101 were received offline** via post, email and fax.

Of the people that registered to take part in the consultation **194** stated that they **would like to be kept informed of news and developments** from the London Skills and Employment Board and **116** choose **not to opt in to future communications**.

Figure 1 below shows the breakdown of the number of participants by sector that submitted to the consultation. A full list of the names of respondents (excluding those from received individuals) is given in Annex 2.

Figure 1: Number of participants by Sector who participated in the consultation¹



¹ Based on a secretariat categorisation of responses to ensure consistency of classification

4. Summary of the consultation responses

Set out below is a broad overview of the views and responses given on the Draft Strategy and its policies and proposals. It identifies where respondents supported the proposals and identifies common issues and themes for further consideration. All comments and suggestions will be considered by the Board and taken into account in drafting the full Strategy, which is to be published in May.

Are these the right challenges for action by the Board? If not, what key things are the most important for action by the Board to improve the employment and skills of Londoners?

Respondents overwhelmingly endorsed the proposed challenges for action as representing the 'right' area of focus for the Board. Many noted their support for the overall direction set out in the document. Respondents also welcomed and endorsed the focus on simplifying, joining up and integration of the skills and employment system. In some areas respondents wanted more information about the shape and form of proposals in particular how they relate to existing or planned local or national activities. There was a call for clearer statements on what the strategy expects from employers and how the strategy will support employers from a range of sectors.

Many respondents spoke of the need to strike a balance between helping people back to work and supporting the development of the existing workforce, especially at higher skills levels, on which the long-term competitiveness of London's economy will depend.

Many respondents also suggested that the draft Strategy should reference more widely the range of factors and barriers impacting employment and skills outcomes such as housing, health and transport. Submissions highlighted the wider policy context in which the Strategy is operating for example the 14-19 agenda and the importance of ensuring coherence between pre and post compulsory learning.

Future jobs in London will require higher level skills and some respondents felt that significant action is also required to ensure that Londoners have the skills to access these opportunities. For example some respondents noted the need for 'green skills' to be included given the challenge of climate change. Green skills are almost all at a medium to high level and should not be overlooked. The complexity and cost of meeting some specialist occupation requirements could also be noted in the Strategy e.g. in construction, science, engineering and manufacturing.

A number of respondents challenged the view that there are no skills gaps in London, and suggested a much more fine-grained sector analysis is required. A number of respondents, particularly from Sector Skills Councils challenged the assumption that London did not face skills gaps or shortages and many

provided specific examples. A number of responses also noted that the current scenario, where migrants fill gaps and shortages, is not sustainable. The final document could also set out the benefits of achieving the goals of the Strategy in terms of reducing poverty, improving life chances and improving quality of life. Other submissions suggested that the Strategy should not lose sight of equality as a key outcome, many welcoming the target to close the gap for those who currently have a low employment rate.

A number of submissions noted that there is not sufficient mention of 're-skilling' and informal learning was not addressed. There was insufficient emphasis on lifelong learning, particularly to enable second chances for older workers. There were a number of calls for a clear statement on re-training especially at level 4 (degree level) and above and whether it should or should not be funded from the public purse. Further responses noted that services should be available to people at all ages, for example IAG for older workers, and that reference to 'working age' should be changed to 'adult population' in the document.

Other gaps identified included the important opportunity volunteering provides to gain new skills and work experience. Many respondents also highlighted the importance of engaging some key stakeholder groups in developing and implementing the Strategy including the voluntary sector, unions and local authorities. Respondents from the college sector, said that the strategic role of colleges should also be recognised.

A number of respondents felt that sustainability was not sufficiently 'built into' the draft Strategy. Employers and individuals are adequately covered in the document but the environment needs to be considered alongside these and the employment and skills system built around all three. Areas that could be covered in more detail include; the carbon benefits of employing local people, ensuring that all training 'offers' include resource efficiency training and ensuring that London has the skills required for adapting to climate change.

Several organisations, from across sectors, cautioned against 'change for the sake of change' and 'wheel re-invention'. Others requested a period of stability and consistency. Many respondents gave examples of existing activities that work well and suggested that these could be rolled out across London.

Do you agree with the Board's ambition? Are these the right supporting targets? If not what alternative targets would you suggest?

There was overwhelming support for the Board's ambition.

Most respondents agreed that the targets were right and welcomed the focus on a small number of targets. In developing the performance management framework one respondent suggested that the final Strategy could identify the organisation or organisations responsible for delivering

each target. Many commented on the need for targets to incentivise sustainable employment outcomes. It was noted that the acquisition of skills would usually be an outcome of sustained employment.

Many respondents noted that the target for employed workforce engaged in training is not sufficiently ambitious, given that the target is lower than that being achieved a few years ago in the capital.

A clear target needs to be set for reducing the number of people without qualifications.

Respondents offered views on whether the targets are measurable (e.g. for example London's mobile population might make it difficult to measure) and cost effective, with reluctance in particular to impose further bureaucratic and time/cost burdens, especially on employers.

Respondents offered a range of other targets that might be considered by the Board in finalising the Strategy:

- Targets for the performance of the services e.g. provision of personalised, sustained support, individual and employer satisfaction with the responsiveness and flexibility of learning providers and in particular areas of provision e.g. ESOL;
- Employer targets - Increase the number of employers engaged in training; sector based targets, change in employer behaviour e.g. no of employers with a training plan not public sector qualifications; improvement in job performance, employer involvement in provision;
- Refining the targets - closing the employment gap between particular groups e.g. lone parents in London and nationally, employment rate targets for known disadvantaged groups or those with the lowest employment rates; numbers from key groups attracted into employment;
- Functional literacy and numeracy and employability skills targets given the importance to London employers;
- Sustainability and progression in employment should be measured, including through means other than qualifications;
- The targets should be related to those for Local Area Agreements;
- Targets for 19 year olds at levels 2 and 3 (as in PSA targets);
- % of people progressing into Higher Education rather than number with HE level qualifications;
- Structure of employment - number of people in more occupations requiring higher level skills in line with forecast economic structure;

- Targets that reflect self-employment options and entrepreneurial activities.

Do you agree with the priorities and actions in this chapter for improving the support and services available to individuals to improve their skills and employment opportunities? What further priorities and actions would you suggest?

Respondents broadly supported the priorities and actions in this chapter, in particular the focus on better quality more personalised pre and post employment support.

Responses from individuals highlighted the range of barriers faced and the 'lottery' that can be experienced in trying to access training and support, for example the criteria that individuals need to fulfil to receive free training and the difficulties experienced by older people trying to access training.

Several organisations called for more explicit coverage of other policies and areas that impact on skills and employment outcomes and recognition of the potential for integration of activities in other areas e.g. housing and employment services.

A significant number of comments focused on the range of barriers faced by individuals and the need for a plan of action to remove barriers to employment such as lack of affordable or accessible transport and childcare, and high housing costs. London also lacks part time and flexible employment opportunities.

Living wage/minimum wage should be given more prominence to ensure there are incentives for people to enter the labour market. Some noted that the success of the Board would rely on whether the tax and benefit system enables parents to take up opportunities to enter employment through ensuring financial gain.

Many respondents, especially those working with vulnerable adults, noted the significant barriers faced by particular groups in accessing employment, for example people with mental health problems, homeless people or former and current problematic drug and alcohol users. Others noted that an increase in the London employment rate will not be possible without impact on the employment rate of disabled Londoners.

To make an impact on child poverty, parental employment and progression needs to be addressed, given that job exit rates are twice as high for this group than the rest of the population.

There were calls for the Strategy to recognise the targeted, intensive and specialist support often required to move people into employment. Depending on distance from the labour market, and especially for those who

have not engaged in the progress of gaining skills before, learning might not have an immediate job outcome but progress people towards employment through the development of life skills, soft skills, confidence and motivation.

Groups representing Black and Minority Ethnic groups called for the Strategy to be sensitive to the different participation and employment rates of groups within global ethnic classifications.

Details would be welcomed on how the proposed system will dedicate more time and energy to vulnerable adults. A range of settings, approaches and partners might be required to successfully re-engage people into mainstream provision. Another response called for a recognised informal learning programme that encourages learning in communities, working with quality assured voluntary and community organisations.

Some respondents identified particular groups that should receive targeted support given their particular performance in the labour market.

Many respondents across sectors noted a lack of reference to the voluntary sector and the role that the sector plays as employers, providers of training and employment support and as advocates for those using accessing skills and employment services. Some respondents also called for the Strategy to identify a clear role for Trade Unions in the delivery of the Strategy.

All submissions commenting on this chapter recognised the challenge of combining jobs, skills and careers advice in an integrated way. Many mentioned careers advice needs to be high quality, and employers identified this as a high priority. Some noted the need for this to be informed by sector knowledge. Respondents noted the complex array of government policies in this area and the need for the LSEB to add value. A number of respondents noted the need for more information on the Adult Advancement and Careers Service, in particular how it relates to other activities such as Learndirect and Next Steps and how well it will be resourced. Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) needs to be intensive, personalised and able to provide a range of advice e.g. debt, accommodation. For advice services respondents across sectors focused on the need for quality. Some noted the challenge of providing a universal service, tailored to individual needs. Other respondents noted that specific brokerage services for particular client groups with particular needs are required e.g. disabled people.

A number of representative organisations across sectors provided suggestions, some in detail, for the principles that the Board might wish to adopt for IAG. These included:

- Impartial;
- Timeliness: guaranteed at 11, 14 and 16, some respondents suggested that the service should be available throughout life, others noted that the service would be crucial for people at particular times, for example when people leave prison;
- Experienced advisors;

- Related to the world of work;
- Individual needs being core not just employer needs.

Some suggested that it might be more effective and cost effective to scale up existing local provision and therefore has the local reach, provided there is clear evidence that it works. Data sharing on benefits and housing would support a seamless service. One organisation suggested that in their experience interventions targeted at particular groups and sectors have proved more successful than general advice services.

Many colleges suggested that they were well placed to deliver integrated careers, IAG and learning support. There was some mention of the role that employer-led IAG can play, for example the Skills Passport for the tourism sector.

There was support for pre employment activity and for employer engagement in this. Currently employers do not invest significantly on activities before people join their organisation. Respondents from all sectors noted that employers are usually keen to stress the importance of employability skills not qualifications, which do not necessarily equate to skills. IT and English language skills are also crucial. Many noted the opportunity that volunteering provides to develop experience and the need to ensure that the benefits regime does not disincentivise participating in volunteering opportunities.

Unions have a crucial role in supporting workforce development, helping people manage the transition to work, and embedding equality and diversity. The Strategy could acknowledge some examples such as Learning Agreements.

There was strong support for the promotion of Apprenticeships; much more needs to be done to stimulate supply and demand. One suggestion was to look at examples from other countries where group apprentice schemes operate.

Employer respondents stressed the need for basic literacy, numeracy and employability skills. In some instances employers are providing basic skills and employability training. Employers view the lack of basic and general employability skills as a major problem, with too many young people leaving school without the skills they will need to succeed in life and in work. Respondents also suggested that the Strategy should note the 14-19 developments in London, in particular the introduction of specialised diplomas with their emphasis on work based learning and job readiness. Some respondents commented on the possibility of introducing a London Diploma: they were concerned to ensure any new certificate did not duplicate existing qualifications.

Training as well as employment opportunities needs to be accessible e.g. for carers and disabled people. The views of service users need to be recognised in the development of services.

Job brokerage needs to join up with in work support to ensure pathways from worklessness to employment, continuing appropriate support such as ensuring that people have access to a back to work co-ordinator or advocate to help to ensure the individual continues to receive information, advice and support in relation to barriers they might experience.

The term 'health problems' does not adequately cover people with a disability; there is a need to separate out defining people with a disability and people with health problems.

Businesses stated that changing the aspirations of young people is vital. There is a need to 'join up' the range of existing initiatives and campaigns designed to motivate individuals. One suggestion was to focus on people's entitlements to learning; another was to include role models. A number noted that changing aspirations would be linked to receiving good advice and guidance. One organisation noted the need for an engagement strategy.

Do you agree with the priorities and actions in this chapter for involving more employers in London's employment and skills challenges? What further priorities and actions would you suggest?

There is widespread support for the ambitions set out in this chapter and recognition of employer engagement as absolutely critical to achieving the Board's mission.

Employers noted that they would welcome an integrated offer and find the public offer complex and confusing. A streamlining of multiple initiatives would be welcomed.

Overwhelmingly respondents requested further information on the planned Employer offer and how the Board intends to galvanise businesses. There was agreement that the Strategy should set out the clear and unambiguous case for employers to engage in long-term strategy skills and employment programmes.

Responses from across sectors noted that the 'business case' needs to be made for employer engagement, especially in pre employment support. Businesses need to know the benefits of employing local people. Others mentioned the importance of promoting the benefits to employers derived from creating a healthy workplace, a learning environment and providing flexible and part time work opportunities. , Businesses should also be encouraged to work with public and private skills providers to ensure that provision meets their needs and keeps up to date with business changes, but also to view public providers as potential suppliers. Case studies were suggested and proposed by a number of respondents as a way of conveying the business case, it was noted that relying on altruism or Corporate Social Responsibility policies would not achieve the desired results.

The 'definition' of employment should be extended to include self-employment within the strategy. Furthermore, enterprise skills and employability skills overlap and enterprising workplaces are vital. The flexibility and autonomy provided by self-employment might also help to re-engage some young people who face particular barriers for example young offenders. Growing employment and training opportunities in small local enterprises and social enterprises could also be more in line with sustainable development objectives.

The current financial and non-financial incentives for business engagement need to be clear e.g. access to publicly funded programmes to upskill their workforce. A number of submissions suggested the Board review incentives in more detail and the Strategy could make the case for the Mayor's powers to be extended to pilot fiscal incentives.

Employers also noted they would need support and expert advice from the public sector to help broaden their recruitment practices, develop their workforces and to retain vulnerable people in the workforce. This might include for example advice on reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people do not face barriers to taking up employment opportunities.

Employers noted that there are barriers to the take up of training that might need to be addressed in order for them to engage, for example ensuring that training and qualifications are suited to business needs and ensuring that public funding can be used flexibly to fund the most business relevant qualifications.

Suggestions for where employer commitments could be gained included: providing Apprenticeships, addressing poor employment practices including reinforcing respect for equality legislation, work that pays including the London Living Wage, workforce welfare e.g. union representation, part time and flexible work, support for those with caring responsibilities, in work mentoring and sustainable and healthy work environments.

Some responses proposed the use of a statutory basis for training, which would ensure that employers offered opportunities for employees. There was a view that access to public funding/support for employers should be conditional on employers achieving standards in recruitment and skills. Others noted that a partnership between the public and private sectors is required to ensure candidates have the right skills.

The proposal for a top-notch brokerage generated diverse views. Brokerage is currently a crowded field and intermediary activity potentially adds an extra layer of bureaucracy. The value added must be clear and any brokerage should have the capacity and expertise to deliver.

Respondents suggested that London employers do not feel they can get the advice they require from a generic service; brokers need to be expert in their sector. Market differentiation by sector is key to a brokerage meeting the needs of businesses of different sizes, sectors and locations. The

'business case' for engaging in skills and employment will also vary across these business characteristics. There is no such thing as a homogenous 'employer voice'. Sector Skills Councils provide a good route into employers in their sector and Sector Skills Agreements provide vital sources of information on specific sector needs.

An example is the construction sector which will be key to delivering strategic London projects but the sector is significantly comprised SMEs which would not be covered by the proposed 'top 1,200 company' service.

The offer for SMEs, the majority of London employers and the market facing the most challenges with skills, is not clearly articulated. Many respondents felt that the strategy's approach to SMEs should be strengthened. Some noted that the focus on the top 1,200 businesses might not achieve the desired effect. Options could include encouraging SMEs to achieve Investors in People status. It is believed that the Top 1,200 are well placed to determine their own learning and development programmes but could be tasked with spreading the message with their procurement and ambassadorial roles.

Businesses and Sector Skills Councils were keen to stress that brokerage will have to be related to sector needs. This should be underpinned in the Sector Skills Agreements. Many commented that working to address sector needs would be more effective, one option might be sector based 'one stop brokerages'. The Train to Gain service could enhance its sectoral offer.

Some felt that the Strategy pays insufficient attention to the skills gaps and shortages experienced by employers, particularly in some sectors/occupations.

A significant number of respondents across sectors see the Strategy as an opportunity to identify the role of the public sector as both a significant employer (therefore having the potential to act as an exemplar) and procurer of goods and services. Public sector supply chains should be used to support skills and employment objectives for example Apprenticeships in London.

Do you agree with priorities and actions in this chapter for creating an education and skills system for the future? What further actions would you suggest?

Respondents agreed with the proposed priorities but diverse views were expressed in response to the questions posed.

The majority of respondents agreed on the focus on employability in the delivery of adult learning but this should not be at the expense of knowledge based programmes and a good level of general education. A number of respondents mentioned that the shift in funding for adult education from non qualification bearing 'pre employment' training, to

qualification/workforce training would potentially impact the ability to deliver for London's most vulnerable groups, particularly those needing first steps provision e.g. to improve confidence. They also expressed concerns about the reduced role of Further Education in delivering learning for personal development and recreation purposes.

There was widespread support for the Board to have a strategic role in relation to 14-19, although not in relation to funding and delivery. This would support a seamless transition from 14-19 onwards for example supporting consistent employer engagement and addressing the concern that there might be fragmented provision or different offer depending on where people live. Representatives of London Local Authorities said they would not welcome a wider role for the Board in this area.

A significant proportion of respondents reiterated the point that performance at school is vital and transition from 14-19 to adult provision is key. One suggestion was that there should be an entitlement to free training through Train to Gain for all low skilled individuals who have accessed employment through Job Centre Plus.

There was disappointment that the commitment and achievements of the Further Education sector to date is not recognised by the draft Strategy, especially given the radical reform over recent years. There have been significant strides in the development of a personalised curriculum and greater specialisation within the sector.

Colleges said that it was important that their wider strategic role in relation to economic development and regeneration was recognised. They had the potential to serve as public service assets offering some important characteristics: local hubs, breadth provision across all levels, coverage of London, embedded in communities, part of local regeneration initiatives and close links with local employers. Colleges also have business leaders in their Governing Bodies.

There was support for employer partnership with colleges and examples of numerous current arrangements where this is working well. Colleges emphasised their role as broker between employers and people seeking work, providing impartial advice and guidance.

A range of views was expressed on the effect of opening up the market to more providers. In particular respondents noted that there is no evidence that opening up the market will improve provision, more providers might risk increasing employer confusion and radical changes might destabilise the FE sector, limiting the ability to deliver the Strategy. Another provider suggested that the Strategy should ensure that training providers, particularly small ones, are not disadvantaged by the complex procurement and commissioning processes.

On the other hand, other comments were that the Board should be neutral and recognise the role of all providers, including the private and voluntary

sector in delivery within a demand led system. A further comment was that the role of LSEB in this context should be to support all providers to increase their capacity and to raise the quality and accessibility of their offer.

Providers noted they required the flexibility to offer the provision demanded by employers, it was suggested that SMEs in particular prefer short or 'bite sized' courses. Currently funding is provided, and success is measured, in terms of completion of whole qualifications rather than modules, which makes it more difficult for colleges to be responsive. Colleges noted that to deliver the Board's aspirations funding needs to be coherent and flexible and a unitised qualifications framework has to be in place.

Whilst specialisation has merits, below level 3 learners will often not travel to attend courses. This suggests colleges and other providers in a locality need to be able to respond to community needs with a range of provision.

Colleges noted their role working with Higher Education institutions to ensure the needs of employers are met by the best on offer within the two sectors. Higher Education institutions noted that many relationships with employers already exist. Higher Education institutions and colleges also said they worked closely to support the progression for students between sectors. The valuable work of Aim Higher and Lifelong Learning Networks should be included.

The Board should look at whether guaranteed childcare can be made available for people wishing to access Level 3 skills.

The motivation, rewards and status of employees in the further education sector was mentioned in a number of stakeholder responses. It was recommended that the Board look to promote the parity of esteem and pay with schools and Higher Education employees.

London is highly connected through information technology and Londoners can access learning resources from across the globe, there was a call for a stronger focus on the potential of e-learning as well as accessing career advice online as a possible future model.

Do you agree with the priorities and actions in this chapter for integrating employment and skills delivery systems? What further priorities and actions would you suggest?

There is widespread support for the proposals outlined in this part of the draft Strategy.

Employers groups recommended a focus on simplicity and looking at outcomes rather than processes.

Integration should include joining up pre-employment and in work support and re-training if necessary. This requires a multi agency approach.

There was strong support for a joint planning and commissioning process. Key funding agencies welcomed the joint investment approach and noted their commitment to co-ordination through sharing the single aim of sustainable employment outcomes and concentrating on a seamless service. In designing joint working, integration and coordination arrangements that work for London, the following were highlighted a number of times:

- Targets need to ensure that organisations are not just incentivised to work with those that require the least support, for example IAG could be assessed by the quality of outcomes rather than the number of participants.
- The ability to work flexibly and pool resources
- Scaling up activity is vital
- Longer-term contracts are required - one year not enough.
- There are higher costs of training providers delivering in London
- Funding systems needs to be clearer and more responsive.
- Sharing of client management systems will underpin integration

Integration should also include working with other organisations. Many mentioned the range of partners that the strategy needs to work with to deliver effectively e.g. health and social care providers, Local Authorities, housing associations, alcohol and drug treatment service providers, probation service etc.

Many locally based organisations from across sectors stressed the need to build on existing activities and good practice in local areas where local training and support services exist. One employer noted that locally based specialist training and brokerage provision allows brokers to develop specialist knowledge and networks and can support workforce development to existing businesses. Others emphasised the need for bespoke local solutions.

Local Authorities stressed the role of Local Strategic Partnerships as the only geographically based partnerships, well placed to identify and target the needs of communities. Many noted that the Strategy could adopt a bottom up approach, building on and joining up best practice. Others mentioned the progress made through the co-ordinated efforts underpinning the City Strategy Pilots in London.

Respondents across sectors wanted more information on how these proposals join up locally. The Strategy should set out how it will work with, support and strengthen the effort of Local Authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Local Authority based respondents made the point that they are strategic commissioners of many local services, have strategic alliances with other areas and employers and can provide community advocacy and leadership, they are also significant employers in their own right. Several stakeholders would like to see the

Government Office for London embed the strategy in its guidelines for LAAs to ensure consistency of goals and targets. There was also a call for coordination of funding streams at the local level and cross sector engagement e.g. with colleges at the local level.

There were a number of suggestions in respect of the proposal for a Skills Observatory. Many welcomed the opportunity to put labour market and employment information in one place and some suggested a wider remit to cover a range of workplace and skills best practice. There were calls for greater clarity on its role and recognition of the important role that Sector Skills Councils play in understanding their sectors. There was a suggestion to bolster existing provision or partnering with established research providers.

Do you support the priorities and actions in this chapter for making the public sector system work for London? What further priorities and actions would you suggest?

Many noted the challenge of developing an effective skills and employment system with the right incentives. Business respondents in particular noted the need to 'keep it simple'.

Respondents agreed on the need for targets to incentive sustainable employment outcomes. It was noted that the acquisition of skills would usually be an outcome of sustained employment.

There was very strong support across respondent organisations for increased flexibility in funding and in qualifications e.g. for Apprenticeships funding rules should be the same for young people and adults and higher level skills funding would encourage much more employer take up. The OU open learning model where individuals can move to Level 4 without Level 2 or 3 could be a model.

Respondents from across sectors noted the importance of ESOL funding for London, some suggested that this should be expressed as an entitlement. London offers the opportunity to test out and accelerate key national reforms. It was also noted that the Board has the opportunity to influence national departments.

Consultation responses also contained:

- Messages of support for the work of the Board;
- Offers to support the Board;
- A number of requests for review of the Board membership, for example to be more representative of London's sectors and structure (SMEs) as well as diverse communities;
- A call for more ongoing examination of innovative approaches, understanding 'what works and why' and international experience;
- A wealth of best practice case study materials of programmes and initiatives from across all the themes covered in the draft Strategy.

London Skills and Employment Board Stakeholder Workshop: Transcript Report

Institute of Directors, 116 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5ED
10 January 2008

This report has been prepared by Dialogue by Design, independent facilitators of the workshop, from the flip charts written during plenary and small group sessions.

The workshop process is described in grey boxes such as this.

The transcript has been lightly edited to improve readability, but no substantive changes have been made to recorded comments. [Square brackets] indicate where the record is incomplete or words have been added.

Agenda

9.30 Registration and coffee

10.00 Welcome - Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London

10.45 Session 1: LSEB's Learning and Employment Strategy

Introducing the LSEB's proposed Strategy to transform learning and employment in London

11.15 Break

11.30 Session 2: Engaging with the draft Strategy

Participants review specific elements within the draft Strategy

1.00 Lunch

1.45 Session 2 continues

2.30 Break

2.45 Session 3: Plenary review

Sharing the results of discussions and emphasising key points and common issues

3.30 Session 4: Way forward

3.45 End

Welcome

Following the Mayor's introductory presentation the lead facilitator, Andrew Acland of Dialogue by Design, outlined the purposes of the workshop, the agenda and the ground rules for participants.

Purposes

- To listen to key stakeholders' concerns and priorities
- To enable stakeholders to hear the views of other stakeholders

Agenda

- Introduction of proposed strategy
- Breakout groups
- Plenary review and way forward

Ground rules

- Genuine consultation – please be honest!
- No attribution in recording
- Board members and researchers are present
- Mobiles off!

Session 1: LSEB's Learning and Employment Strategy

The workshop began with a presentation by Harvey McGrath, LSEB's Vice Chair, of LSEB's Learning and Employment Strategy. There was then a plenary question and answer session.

Question: Is the LSEB feeding into current consultation on LSCs etc?

Answer: Board has had ongoing communication with DIUS on this topic. LSEB's view is that more effective coordinated, seamless delivery [...]

Question: How will today's consultation be used?

Answer: Contributions from today and the online consultation will be reviewed by the Board and a further version of the strategy will be published, hopefully before purdah.

Board creates framework, it is not a delivery agency. Board is aware of "change fatigue" in this area. There's an opportunity for significant and lasting change to the framework.

(To "making this real") The LSC team has been helpful and involved.

Budget discussions have already begun to be influenced by LSEB's work.

Question: Importance of joining up provision for young people with that for adults.

Answer: Board's remit is adult education, but we favour joined-up working. We have views on this which we communicate to Government and other players.

Question: Importance of public sector as employers shouldn't be underestimated.
Answer: LSEB includes employers from public sector too. We recognise this importance.

Question: What focus is there on older people, and what use is made of demographic data?

Answer: We focus on those not in work and those whose skills need improving from whatever age group.

Session 2: Engaging with the draft Strategy

Over the next two hours workshop participants has the opportunity to join three out of six possible small group sessions (A to F). The facilitators reported the comments of each of the three sessions, and also summarised key points to report to the afternoon plenary review session.

A: Employment and skills targets

Questions:

1. Are these the right targets to enable the Board to track progress against the strategy?
2. Will they create the right balance of incentives?
3. If not, what alternative measures would you suggest?

Group 1:

- General discussion of targets
 - Concern about how any LSEB targets fit together with e.g. LDA, DWP, LSC etc targets
 - Would like to see integration of targets
 - This fragmentation runs through schemes, funding etc too.
 - Should there be a high level target around integration?
 - Concern that this is hard to measure
 - Concern that nomenclature of targets need to be aligned with national conceptual framework otherwise it's not clear and need to compare London with other areas
 - E.g. "no qualification" means...? Should it be "no formal qualification" or "not having Level 1"
 - Preference for indicators which are already measured
 - It would be good to link the targets to outcomes as indicators of progress.
 - Whose outcome?
 - Employability
 - London's economy
- Are these the right targets?
 - Some support for "employability" rather than formal qualifications per se
 - "Employability" doesn't have a fixed definition
 - What would an employability target look like?
 - Capturing "distance travelled"
 - "Staying in" a job
 - Outcome = reduction in unemployment rate. NB recession might mean revising targets
 - Employers should define what employability means

- Need for clear pathways for the people who need help
- The right balance of incentives?
 - Concern about SMEs and other SM organisations not being able to invest in development
 - Do they help us drive progress in the right area?
 - Nothing directly about joining up, integration
 - Do individuals perceive it as clearer over time, in addition to the qualitative target for employers
 - Difficulty of setting metrics for this
 - Target on % of people in training – should include “publicly funded training”, as a way of measuring integration and ease of accessing training
 - Disagree, many employers don't need to access publicly funded training
 - Many employers have lots of informal or “grey” training
 - If that target needs to reflect increased coherence and ease of access to training, by employers
 - It's different in different sectors. NB in some sectors, many people are freelance, so who is the “employer”? And how are measurements made?
 - Concern about blanket targets

Group 2:

- Concern that targets for employment rate and obtaining qualifications might be in conflict, if people leave training for employment
 - A concern as training provider may not get paid
 - Some employers don't value qualifications...
- Are skills targets to do with people in employment or not?
 - Important point is ultimately about people being able to do jobs that London employers are offering, moving away from two-tier society.
 - Employment targets are about moving economically “inactive” people into work, and the first step is often skills/qualification provision
 - It's about progression
- Two parallel sets of targets i.e. skills (in and out of work) and social element – which isn't necessary for employers they are separate
 - Board has had these debates
 - Social outcomes
 - London's economy / people already in work – to move people “up” the escalator
 - Which are most important, what's the relationship between them, how easy/ hard is it to do something...
 - As people are skilled up for entry level jobs, vacancies in this area will decrease... so need to encourage those people to continue to train, progress, have dynamic jobs
- Levels of pay matter too, to provide incentives for people to take up employment
- There are various reasons why people “fall out” of work – the longer you're out, the harder to return
 - So need to help reconnect, and keep connected during these periods
 - Strategy currently doesn't address barriers to work other than skills, rather than complexity of people's actual circumstances
 - Joined up thinking and advice
- Overall 75% employment target – ensure this doesn't lead to cherry picking those who are easy to help
 - Maybe a need for priority categories, maybe with their own targets

- Holistic approach to the individual – sometimes it's not skills which are the issue... how important is collaboration around the individuals/ families, rather than lots of agencies dealing separately with small number of clients?
 - How do you engage a family? Some of them don't want to engage for a variety of reasons
 - Other people may be in work now, but are vulnerable to becoming unemployed. Earlier intervention can help: "maintaining workability" in Finland
- Perhaps a target on staying in a job, perhaps targets around not "falling out" of work
 - Targets relate to tick-boxing, related to funding for providers
 - Some data is available on multiply-unemployed, people who don't stay in jobs for long
 - This may allow identification of priorities and targets

Group 3:

- Mindful of different definitions of "economically active"
- How are we defining "engaged in training" for people who are in employment?
 - Does it include training already happening, e.g. to what extent does it mean added value?
 - Can evolve this definition sector by sector, including input from Sector Skills Councils
- Training carried out may not be the whole story
 - Outcomes – changed skills, behaviours, knowledge
 - Outcomes for the employer
 - Attitudes of organisations to skills
 - R.O.I for training is hard to measure for many kinds of training
 - Yet it's important to demonstrate value to employers – could be needs analysis – has the problem been solved
- Implications for the targets?
 - Will vary sector by sector, through sector-specific conversations, agreements etc.
 - Usefulness of asking sector skills councils for their input
- Appropriate that there should be headline targets, and interested in "unaccredited" training too – in-house, mentoring-led etc [i.e. led by a mentor]
 - Not sure how to capture
 - Importance of matching things delivered to what employers need
- Focus on disadvantaged areas – we wouldn't want to meet the overall target without improving situation in disadvantaged areas
 - Also data is lacking, e.g. finer categorisation by borough and e.g. by specific ethnic minority.
 - Would need to sell the benefits of having the data
- Interest in targets or monitoring of how long people stay in jobs...?
 - Some interest, agreement with this
- Support for keeping people in work once they get a job... target related to this?
 - Provision of support programmes to employees and employers
 - Implication for targets – track people through over time
- Evaluation
 - Concern that we don't learn enough from evaluations and reviews – chasing of targets doesn't allow time for that reflection.
- Build sharing / learning into the system
- Incentives
 - Who are we trying to incentivise?
 - Everyone

- Individuals
 - Employers etc
- LSEB needs to be clearer about who owns the targets and that those bodies genuinely share them
- Need to articulate what implications are for different kinds of stakeholders
- Obligation is on LSCs, for everyone else it's a choice
- Concern about lack of integration between e.g. funding agency schemes with LSP priorities etc.
 - Some / desire for / recognition of need for more integration at local level, whilst recognising local nuances
 - Danger of assuming that employers see London as an entity in the same way LSEB does
 - Danger of having Borough targets which don't recognise reality of travelling beyond Borough boundaries
- Targets can be a massive source of frustration – they need to be “intelligent”
 - Hierarchy of primary and secondary
 - Common targets aid integration, especially in the delivery agencies
- Employers attitudes to training... link to experience of the “quality” of the training, usefulness to the individual and the employer
 - Need to involve employers in evaluating providers and quality of training
- Skills observatory
 - In early planning stages
 - A central information source and evidence base – need to agree what we want to measure and how
 - Sharing learning about best / poor practice could be a useful role.

Key points:

- Definitions and terminology should be clear and consistent
- It's not just lack of skills which stop people getting and keeping a job: there are people with multiple disadvantages
- Importance of integration of core agencies delivering the strategy, and measuring impact of doing so.

Additional comments:

- Employability skills was discussed – and the need to consult employers. For the 14-19 diploma the SSCs have already done this research. It would be good to think there is some joined-up thinking in all of this, so no need to do this research again (if it was adequate initially).

B: Improving support and services for individuals

Questions:

1. If the proposals in the draft Strategy are successfully implemented, how will the world be different for Londoners?
2. What other priorities for action would you want the Board to adopt to ensure that the employment and skills system better supported Londoners?
3. What are the key barriers faced by Londoners in a) accessing jobs, b) accessing training and development. How can they be overcome?

Group 1:

- Confusion about range of services. Need for coordination
- Issue of reluctance (to move from unemployment to employment because of effect on income). Need to address all issues for individuals e.g. health, impact on income
- Need to focus on those with lower income?
- Issue of marginal tax rates, credit system in London has less impact than outside London
 - Delays in benefit processing
 - Move away from one size fits all
- How to make transition to work more attractive?
 - E.g. "in work" credits awareness
- Help people feel confident that income won't be reduced in transition to work. Need awareness raising of options re: credits, benefits in work
- Is the incentive to go into work big enough?
- Does welfare to work system need to be tougher?
- Also consider non-financial issues e.g. confidence, caring issues
- Not just going into work from unemployment... also training opportunities etc
- Structured changes will impact e.g. reduction in age of children where lone parents don't need to claim JSA
- Transition from training to work needs looking at
- Are schemes related to employers... perhaps more successful if training connected to work routine and employers
- Public sector workers often local from necessity
- Incentives / capacity of local employers
- Need system to client trade and enable better targeting
- People need support all through system from out of work, training, employment
 - This needs coordinating. Too many information systems
 - Give people an adviser all through their journey
- Issue of scaling up good practice at local levels (e.g. borough initiatives)
- Also people in low income families who don't have support or opportunity for support
 - 'After care' service
- How do you find / engage people in process?
- How to approach a diagnostic process to look at all elements of people's needs?
- Analogy with how people used health service?
 - But if I don't recognise I have an issue?
 - Incentives are key
 - Tailored to individual needs
- Good that strategy talks about life long learning
- Pathways for progression / careers
 - Is this done in work?
 - Recognising escalating income and skills
- Large number of employers are small, so progression opportunities are slim
- Aspiration and people moving on are inevitable. Need to support employers to avoid fears around training employees
- Structured problem of 'high' earners, 'low' earners and few mid-range earners
- Progression can be more than about income. Need access to training in work.
- Making more awareness of employment possibilities. Helping people recognise transferable skills.
- Work to help people understand the dynamic of functioning in the work place – needs to be education and employers responsibility
- Pre-screen / coach before placements – work trials

Group 2:

- Most people don't use Job Centre Plus
 - Many young people not in system
- Informal cultures of finding work
- Need to understand other systems of finding work.
 - What's appropriate for unemployed
- GP surgeries / housing organisation offering employment advice
- Information, advice and guidance accessible to all individuals using their needs as start point
 - Matching skills to aspirations and opportunities
- Match to 14-19 year olds' diplomas
- Also emphasis on lifelong learning
- System for people in work to get advice
 - Help people progress e.g. mentor system
- Sector skills agreements at regional level
- Civic and poverty engagement
 - Getting these people who are hardest to reach. They are not connected to system
 - Focus on those most marginalised from job market
- Impact of funding stream changes e.g. 'get an advisor' then funding cut...
- Colleges to give advice to all, not just students. Needs funding.
- Also capacity of tutors / employers to give IAG
- Community based mentor idea is good
 - Big concern about losing benefits
- Strategy seems focussed on employers needs
 - Also needs to match to aspirations.
- Employers don't see problem as vacancies can get filled
- But Londoners need the services to avoid polarisation, and exclusion from work.
- Housing and its impact on work and incomes
 - 16 hour rule has an impact? Under review
 - Also child care costs and wider structural impacts
- CSR obligations e.g. residents need to be included. Use procurement to address issues – specifically access to jobs
- LAA focus on long-term unemployed, but timescales e.g. housing 50/6 IB claimants for more than 5 years
- Haringey example: 6 weeks in work without losing benefits. Helps transition.
- Even glamorous jobs need Maths and English
- Issue of ambition
- Some industries are global and recruit this way: 'Tale of Two Cities'
- Need to avoid split between skills levels;
 - 43% jobs need level 4 qualifications but three unskilled in London for each unskilled vacancy
- How to make escalator of skills happen?
- Deal with issue of failure / success
 - Instant gratification

Group 3:

- How support individuals?
 - Improving support?
 - Pathways?
- Mapping exercise. Knowledge of what's available
- Also consider ways into self-employment
- What is the 'one' point of contact a one stop shop

- Special provision for different groups. E.g. people with learning disabilities
- Connexions for adults
- Solutions are mainly supply level, not demand level
- How assist in a way that takes individual needs into account?
- Contradiction in funding
 - Person needs to feel their journey is worth the effort
 - Business also needs to have faith in system
 - As funding streams are not continual
- People working in system are demoralised by cuts and what people can do. Footfall more important than service
- Job Centre Plus not mandated to provide whole service
- Devolve responsibility and flexibility to people who are public facing
 - Need discretion to design individual programme
- Also consider experience in the centre and in work environment
- Need to consider individual and employer needs together
- Need to also consider people who are in work to transfer to new opportunities, as well as those out of work and people with other needs e.g. learning
- Aspirational approach. Marketing what's good about work and areas
- This work is a service industry – so needs to be enabled to provide good service, not just process
- Head office, Branch model for One Stop Shops
- Contracts / procurement can help by direction towards gathering a network of providers
- Communication / cooperation between providers
- Look at structure of contracts... just targets and limited time? Providers align with targets etc, not what's useful for individuals
- Not Job Start but Career Start
- Skills deficit and poverty also an issue in work. Employer barriers to training.
 - So need to look at Needs Asst (e.g. TVC model)
 - Need to also provide service to those in work. Up skills escalator
- Process for up-skilling?
- Different agencies dealing with pre-employment / post-employment. Funding not there for post employment support for agents like Job Centre Plus
- Contract incentives are for keeping people in work not necessarily to up-skill
- Do organisations that use lesser skilled workers have motivation / incentive to train up workers?
- People need access to long-term support. When is the right point to let go?
- How to deal with transitional effects of going into work – e.g. marginal income, improvements etc
- Incentives for employers to enable workers to upskill. E.g. tax breaks.
- Training often only assessed by immediate benefit rather than longer term benefits
- Support for legitimising occupation and skills development
- 80% of business employ four people or less – how to support these? E.g. liP funding only for organisations of 10+ people
- Career changers... how supported / advised? E.g. land-based sector average age of entry is 28
- Volunteer routes into employment – how support and enhance these? (Unpaid employment)
- IB / offenders may need support especially to self-employment
- Strategy needs to address self / employment and voluntary routes to work
- Also need to avoid putting all skills into a qualification

- FE sector – success measured by getting qualification, not getting a job. So if someone drops out to go to work, it's a failure!
 - Similar happens in land based work – people get taken on after work experience without finishing Level X qualification
- Funding for qualifications needs to be focused on employer needs, not necessity Government targets
- High level of qualification demand from employers – is it a perception issue or reality?
 - Need to think about continual learning and development
 - E.g. bars to recruitment, need 'A' levels, not focus on experience / ability
- Any modular system needs to have credits attached... level and volume.

C: Involving employers

Questions:

1. If these proposals in the draft Strategy are successfully implemented how will the world be different for London's employers?
2. What other priorities for action would you want the Board to adopt to ensure that employers help meet London's skills and employment needs?
3. What are the current barriers/ disincentives and how can they be overcome?

Group 1:

- Employers wouldn't be faced with employees not ready for work – e.g. punctual, soft skills
- Employers know where to go to solve a problem
- Speed – data up to date and faster speed of response
- Earlier involvement and commitment of employers
- Simplification of structure
- Increased flexibility around provision of training etc.
- Getting balance between simplicity and tailoring – but can this be done through a single point of contact?
- Q: How are SSCs going to respond?
 - Occupational standards should be based on what employers say they need
 - Some but not all of London's employers will benefit – lack of content on higher level skills (danger of focusing too much on lower level)
 - Freelancers and sole traders face huge barriers – more thought needed on how to lock them in
 - Promise fatigue: expectations need to be managed
 - London needs higher proportion of people with higher level skills
- Encouraging employers to invest in employees' workability and relating it to the jobs they are doing and extending working lives
 - Board's focus on lower level skills is right – but focus should not be limited to pre-employment
 - Need to recognise the complexity of the situation and people's ability to respond flexibly to each situation
 - Action which widens the market of available employees
 - Deals with problems that the market can't deal with
 - Identifying businesses where market cannot meet needs
 - Employers are more interested in bespoke than standardised programmes and is outcome funded
 - Go out to employers and account manage them

Group 2:

- Clarity about what employers can and can't expect from public funding
- Easier recruitment
- More customer focused and ending mis-match between what is funded and what employers want
- Strategy needs to recognise needs of very small businesses and SMEs – need for one-stop-shop that can meet needs swiftly and directly. (FSB and Enterprise Agencies could help with this)
- Need to manage expectations and not use public funding to cover up market failure
- Reduction of reliance on migrant labour
- Needs to be business case from each sector
- Priorities
 - Not a top notch brokerage! – need fewer points of contact
 - Need action on self-employment and social enterprise – e.g. 'experiment fund' and support for innovation
 - Articulating benefits for business in taking on long-term unemployed and offenders
 - Use large employers' supply chains to supply employees
 - As long as top-notch brokerage has good access to data it will work – but may present E.O. challenges in terms of accessibility
 - Main barrier is capacity for all employers to respond to demands for work – related learning and experience from a range of sources
 - Disincentive is employers' ability to recruit from elsewhere so providing funding to help recruit Londoners is essential
 - Too much focus on Level 4 skills – not enough on Level 2
 - Employers' inability to identify own skill needs and discover employees' abilities
 - Main barrier is complexity and lack of knowledge of what is available

Group 3:

- Strategy needs to articulate clear business case to employers to be involved
- Olympics and big projects like CrossRail could provide an incentive to employers if contracts stipulated training and skills requirements
- Supply train contracts could also stipulate employing locals
- Public sector leverage may be best way to involve SMEs
- Might it be worth segmenting employers in terms of where they are in the business lifecycle rather than by more conventional sectors?
- LSEB could do more work with private sector networks such as BITC in involving employers, by, e.g. showcasing good practise
- These kinds of initiatives can be promoted by unions and other social partners
- Public sector needs to become a preferred source of employees who provide employers with what they need – i.e. more customer orientated
- Sector-based workforce planning could be in strategy – e.g. BBC switchover.
- Use vehicles such as Metro etc. to raise aspirations of target people

Key points:

- Simplification: treating employers as customers; being fast and flexible in responding to needs
- Public sector leverage: using big contracts (Olympics, CrossRail) to help leverage recruitment especially through the supply chain – also involve SMEs
- Articulate business case for employers being more involved through using, for example, private sector networks such as BITC

Additional comments:

- There needs to be a recognition on the part of both employees and employers of the importance of training. 11P and other programmes must be made to work flexibly for both employer and employee to achieve the best value
- Supply chain – Large contractors developers coming into the borough help them purchase locally (lists of local firms and their capability). At some time train local business how to get onto tender lists. Additionally, a diversity worker linked to social / community enterprise assisting new companies and self-employment make/ create introductions – meet buyer events etc
- Linking to employment – When relationship established introduce ‘we will still help you recruit’ and we will pre-screen applications against your specification. Introduce to workplace coordinator (sector-specific) or a job brokerage account manager who will look after them and be their contact (then not bothered by other organisations)
- Give employers ‘one’ person to liaise with who will link to business support, education business partnership, 14-19 partnership, training providers and job brokers etc.
- In order to deliver this Strategy needs to segment the market through a sectors approach – via SSCs. SSCs have Sector Skills Agreements that outline the sectors of play
- How would things be different for London employers? They would have a greater appreciation of the importance and business benefits of retaining disadvantaged workers such as carers in the workforce.

D: Creating an education and skills system for the future**Questions:**

1. If these proposals in the draft Strategy are successfully implemented how will the world be different for London’s providers?
2. What other priorities for action would you want the Board to adopt to ensure that training and employment services providers meet London’s skills and employment needs?
3. What are the current barriers / disincentives and how can they be overcome?

Group 1:

- Better match between employers’ needs and what courses are on offer
- Flexible, modularised approach to training – personalised learning programme
- Learners will end up with a broader range of experience/skills/learning
- Potential barrier – if there is a loss of focus on life skills
- Potential barrier: the large number of people who could be missed out as they are already beyond the target age range of the strategy
- Need to use/learn from best examples of skills focused courses
- Long term (5 year) contracts with providers/employers
- Stability in sector overall is essential
- Need to invest in staff in the delivery agencies/organisations – create an overall London staff / co-ordination between them
- It’ll be hard working with hard to reach groups – very different partnerships in 5 years – with different types of organisations (smaller, local orgs)
- Is there a way to account for skills gained by people while out of ‘formal’ work e.g. carers at home?
- The focus must be on people rather than schemes
- Focus should be long term, more than 5 years

Group 2:

- Need to try to have a focus on productivity for London and how people contribute to this (not solely employability)
- Need empowerment of employers and learners (people) and a focus over long term
- At the moment focus is either now or vague longer term – need to focus on the bit in the middle
- Skills system needs to be as comprehensive and understandable as London's transport system
- Focus needs to be on individuals' needs and employers' needs
- Recognise the complexities in the system and not try to portray it simplistically
- In 5 years the system will be more responsive and it will reward those who deliver what's needed
- Current barrier is a lack of trust so providers cannot plan and deliver and/or take risks
- In 5 years any targets will be more meaningful and more widely owned
- Should have a sector focus (at least for major sectors in London's economy)
- Need measurable achievements rather than target setting (on customer satisfaction, not comparisons with other countries)
- Would agree with LSEB having a role in 14-19 age group – board to decide their role in this age group
- Information and guidance for 14-19 year olds
- Could be more focus on independent providers in the strategy and recognise their flexibility – recognise current quality providers with e.g. longer contracts
- Strategy could give more focus on people with disabilities and learning difficulties, in particular mental health
- Need to keep continually reviewing what's needed 5 years in the future
- Shouldn't lose our 'softer' skills e.g. creativity as they give us an advantage over e.g. China
- Could be more work on national occupational standards
- Need to connect info and advice services for 14-19 group with other age groups
- Need a cultural shift to create a lifelong learning culture: incentives for businesses

Group 3:

- 5 years from now more people will have generic employability skills
- Ideally these skills should be part of the compulsory education system
- In 5 years there would be more Londoners with higher level skills
- Someone could be at Level 5 but has e.g. a literacy gap – strategy should not miss these people
- In 5 years there would be a much closer interaction between FE and HE establishments
- One barrier: knowing how to unlock funding streams
- Reach out to young people and others out of employment e.g. knock on their doors
- Help people to be able to tap into mentors, support networks – needs to be consistent over longer periods of time
- Could try to help wider family to understand the system and what offers/advantages are
- Focus should also be on vocational skills
- Need to line up need and demand
- Barrier: businesses not being able to express what they need
- Barrier: SMEs in particular not in touch with/aware of sector skills councils
- Need to be more sharing between the 5 LLNs

- Concerned that strategy puts a lot of focus on SSC. Do they have the capacity/ability?
- Need to make the SSCs links with small businesses work better
- To enable funding to flow there needs to be more flexibility over what's fundable e.g. non-accredited courses (if they are what is needed by employers)
- More flexibility in funding to allow re-training within a level
- If colleges are going to provide bespoke courses, employers need to contribute funding

Key points:

- Needs of individuals and needs of employers
- Flexibility to deliver on those needs
- Recognise and build on "softer" employability skills
- Take a longer term view on these issues
 - Long term problem
 - Long term / stable framework e.g. funding of providers

E: Integrating employment and skills delivery systems

Questions:

1. If these proposals in the draft strategy are successfully implemented how will the world be different?
2. What other priorities for action would you want the Board to adopt to ensure that skills and employment systems meet London's skills and employment needs?
3. What are the current barriers / disincentives and how can they be overcome?

Group 1:

- Business process simplification
- Need to be aligned
- Change at departmental level needed
- No representation of the micro-businesses (SMEs) – not enough skills currently
- Need one point of contact in each borough/town
- Self-employment not considered in strategy and needs to be
- Process is not customer-focused (is targets focused)
- Training is needed
- FE colleges can be flexible to meet needs
- Demand-led
- Grant systems need to be available
- Strategy of how to link everything into the hubs
- Research strand is missing
- London is a creative hub – engage young people to consider this aspect
- If economy wasn't so strong would workers disappear?
- Greater focus on housing – unemployment
- Welfare to work representation on Board – should it be stronger?
- Wider education is key not just at 19+

Group 2:

- Have pre and post employment organisations so not linked up. Should be one organisation
- Rationalise the number of organisations involved with close set of objectives
- One funding body
- Don't think strategy will succeed

- What would happen in interim if this doesn't happen for 5-10 years
- Momentum for change is very strong
- Role of LA needs to be better integrated
- Need to engage with employers, deliverers, not just key stakeholders
- How do you collect demand?
- How can providers change what they provide (training), needs to be responsive (public sector)
 - Believe there are ways to do this
- Integration around the individual – all the way through the process
- System doesn't pick up everyone
 - If you want to provide serviced to them then big responsibility
- What incentive is there for employers?
- Need some priority in the strategy
 - 25-30 year view
- Need to provide opportunities such as apprenticeships
- Focusing on individual isn't whole solution
- Level of self-esteem and confidence can be a big barrier

Group 3:

- Need to be joined up
- Involve communities and providers in design of system
- Would like to see single stream of funding
- Is it 'making sense of skills and delivery' rather than 'integration'
- It is complicated, shouldn't say it isn't
- Funding is always changing, so difficult to keep up to date
- If single-funding body then who would influence it? Would it be big industry?
- Some areas need simplification and others don't
- Need to be clear as to what the Board are aiming to do?
 - What is the end point?
- More people getting enough of an education to get a job and more people would be back in work
- Need to get people into the lower jobs then they will percolate upwards
- Need culture change to ensure children don't feel like failures – needs to be built into education system

F: Making the public sector system work

Questions:

1. If these proposals in the draft strategy are successfully implemented how will the world be different?
2. What other priorities for action would you want the Board to adopt to ensure that public funding meets London's skills and employment needs?
3. What are the current barriers and how can they be overcome?

Group 1:

- How would the world be different?
 - Cycle of response for needs being met would be shortened
 - Structural stability – provider/funds will empower and encourage involvement
- It's important to build on strengths of existing structure important – not scrap everything and start again
- Need buy-in and commitment from private sector, leadership from public sector/learning and skills culture and stable funding vital

- Other Priorities
 - Delivery targets for public sector
 - Public sector needs to show examples of best practise and integrate into system
 - Needs to specify detailed targets
 - Consult with local skills sectors councils, see what works, run trials
 - More programmes of in-work support
 - Integrate the support long and medium term
 - Need a change of language
 - Look at current key industries/opportunities in London and develop strategic ties and initiatives
 - Need a sense of realism about the degree of effort it takes for different groups to gain employment
 - Also need to take into account variability – current postcode lottery.
 - Perhaps introduce a more regional approach (not borough by borough)
 - Re-enforce the need for the strategic overview, based on research/experience/piloting and possibly a mapping of good practice
 - Flexibility of system - important to identify pathways to employment
 - Very important for people not to feel they've been 'written off' because the effort it takes to get them back into employment is too great
- Barriers
 - Contracts too small
 - Lack of joined up services
 - Borough boundaries – not always getting the appropriate support for people (especially 14-19 year old age group). Should be regional – although still need a local focus

Group 2:

- How would the world be different?
 - More security – longer cycles of funding – less change of employment/skills strategy
 - Joined up/synergy (via a specified Government office?) all tendering/projects would use the same criteria and come through the same channels
 - Reconsider the idea of competition from private sector providers?
- Other priorities
 - There is a difference between a. individuals' experience and b. lines of reporting results to 'authorities' and the measures of success are not necessarily the same for either
 - Accountability needs to be addressed
 - Funding – needs to be a change in the approach so can have access to the whole funding stream –open it up
 - A more collaborative approach from the system to enable private/public sector to work together
- Barriers
 - Higher education authority doesn't fund regionally – therefore doesn't recognise London as a separate issue but it very much is. Central government has to acknowledge and allow London to be different.
 - Lack of stability and rate of change is a barrier
 - Having London only qualifications is dangerous – employment/labour is mobile
 - Capacity issue – just isn't enough delivery of training – not enough funding or not sufficiently directed

Group 3:

- **Barriers**
 - Funding system is complex – there must be a simpler way
 - Ofsted don't recognise modular qualifications which industry find useful in bridging skills gap
 - Aligning targets – does this happen in public sector and how are people counted?
 - Accountability of targets. I.e. modular completion, employer satisfaction
 - Difficult to measure some things due to problems with sharing data
 - Clarity on responsibility of referral
 - Understanding possibilities
 - Cost of living in London
 - Funding and incentives issue (not just on organisations but on individuals as well)
 - Is there a way around the barriers related to individual incentives?
 - How much policy autonomy do you give to London?
 - What levers can the board use?
 - Need to convince politicians
 - Clarity of expectations – public vs. employer vs. individual
 - Continuation of the Leitch Report theme
 - Expectation that employer will pay for training
 - This is not necessarily the case
 - Working poor
- **Benefits**
 - Means tested
 - Work tested
 - Tax credits
 - These don't necessarily mean that you get access to free further training. (Relate to incentives for the individual)
- **Priorities for Action**
 - Want more flexibility
 - Co-ordinator committee but with timeframes
 - Better links between agencies
 - Board needs the power to make a London-centric system work.
 - Funding regime
 - Consider national level impacts along with various sectors
 - Encourage partnerships and joint investment strategies
 - Joint investment – identifying sectoral needs among agencies
 - Must include private sector
- **Funding flexibilities?**
 - Look at industry demand vs. National Skills Register
 - Opportunities to work and study
 - Need an added weighting for being based in London.
 - Global market
 - Need higher level skills to sustain market
 - People already in workplace will need these skills not just undergrads

Key points:

- Need for stability and collaborative approach within the system and synergy of purpose across public agencies
- Frequency and complexity of tendering contracts – need simpler tendering and longer duration
- Incentives from Central Government on individuals need to align with Strategy
- Board needs power to make London-centric system work

Session 3: Plenary review

Following the small group sessions the facilitators and LSEB staff agreed the key points to feed back to all participants in plenary. There were no comments on the first four reports, but some responses to the reports of groups E and F.

E: Integrating employment and skills delivery systems

- Integrating skills and employment – what do you mean by ‘big bang’ approach?
 - Want to bring jobs and qualification sectors together
- SMEs – need to provide skills for the owners as well as employees

F: Making the public sector system work

- LSEB need influence in the 14-19 area
 - Map targets where it's relevant

Session 4: Way forward

In the closing plenary session the lead facilitator first asked participants for any final pieces of advice for LSEB. This was followed by comments and thanks from LSEB before the workshop ended and participants were asked to complete evaluation forms.

Advice to LSEB

- Should look at SSC work that has already been done (Sector Skills Agreements)
- Need to continue the dialogue and build into the Strategy a forum such as this
- Should identify where it is already working and why. Some does need to be re-built though
- Would it be possible to get someone from completely outside the sector to read the Strategy with a fresh eye?
- Look for some things that you can do here and now to gain credibility.

List of Respondents by organisation (excluding responses received from Individuals)

A4e
Age Concern London
Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network
Association for College Management
Association of Colleges London Region
ATL Association of Teachers and Lecturers
BAA Heathrow
Barking College
Barnet College
bexley council
BTEG
Business in the Community
businessREDBRIDGE
Canning & Clyde Road Residents Association
Capel Manor College
Capel Manor College
Carers UK
CBI
Central London Partnership
Choices 4 All
City and Islington College
City Fringe Partnership
City of London Corporation
City of Westminster College
City of Westminster College
Civil Engineering Contractors Association
Cogent Sector Skills Council
Cognitive Studies Trust
Connexions South London on behalf of London's Connexions Chief Executives
ConstructionSkills
ConstructionSkills Sector Skills Council
Council for Industry and HE
Crisis
East London Business Alliance
Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee
EEF South
Employers' Forum on Disability

Empower 2 Excel
Energy & Utility Skills
Enterprise Enfield
e-skills UK
Family Mosaic
Federation of Irish Societies
Film London
Financial Services Skills Councils
FreshMinds on Behalf of London Capital Colleges
GoSkills
Greater London Authority
Greenwich Council
Hackney Community College
Higgins Group PLC
Higher Education Funding Council for England
Homeless Link
Improve Ltd
International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance
Kingston Chamber of Commerce
Lantra SSC
Lewisham College
Lifelong Learning UK
Linking London Lifelong Learning Network
LLU+, London South Bank University
London Aimhigher
London Assembly Green Group
London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
London Borough of Islington
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Merton
London Borough of Redbridge
London Borough of Richmond
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
London Child Poverty Commission
London Civic Forum
London College Beauty Therapy
London Councils
London Development Agency
London Health Commission
London Higher

London Landbased and Related Greenskills
London LEA FEA Network
London Learning and Skills Council
London Mental Health and Employment Partnership
London Metropolitan University
London Parks and Green Spaces Forum
London Regional Floristry Skills Advisory Group
London Regional Offender Manager
London Strategic Unit for Learning and Skills Workforce
London Sustainable Development Commission
London Voluntary Service Council 3SA
London Work Based Learning Alliance
London's Green Party Member of the European Parliament
LSC
LSC
Made in London
Make Your Mark
Matrix
Media Trust
Moving Image Training Alliance (MITA)
Museums Libraries Archives London
National College of Technology
National Skills Academy for Manufacturing
Newham College of Further Education
NIACE
North London Chamber of Commerce
North London Strategic Alliance (NLSA)
Ofsted
OGUNTE Ltd
One Parent Families / Gingerbread
Open University in London
Orchard Hill College
People 1st
Policy Officer
Proskills
Prospects Services Ltd
Remploy Ltd
Retired Senior Lecturer in Electrical Engineering.
RLN London
RNIB London and South East
Scope

SEEDA
Semta
Shoreditch Trust
SIAS Building Services LLP
Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities
Skillfast-UK
Skills for Business Network
Skills for Care London
Skills for Health
Skills for Justice
Skills for Logistics
SkillsActive
SkillsActive Playwork London
Skillset, Sector Skills Council for Audio Visual Industry
Soloman - The Society of London Manufacturers
Sound Connections
South London Learning Partnership
South London Lifelong Learning Network
South London Partnership
South Thames College
Southern and Eastern Region TUC
Southwark Council
Special Designated Institutes
Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
Sustain
TBG Learning
Thames Gateway London Partnership
Thames Reach
The College of North East London
The Hub UK Limited
The Institute of the Motor Industry
THE JGA GROUP
The London Advice Partnership
The Music House for Children
The Open University in London
The Prince's Trust
Tower Hamlets College
Tower Hamlets College
Tower Hamlets Council and Tower Hamlets PCT
Transport for London
UCU - University and College Union

Ufi Ltd
UK online centres
UK Workforce Hub
UNISON London Region
University of the Arts London
VT Education & Skills
Wandsworth Council
West London Working
Westminster City Partnership
Westminster Kingsway College
White loop Ltd
Women Like Us
WorkDirections UK