

Your Guide 2...

Engaging employers: Policy and strategy

August 2005

Government statistics show that small firms with fewer than 50 employees account for an astonishing 99 per cent of the UK's businesses. The Government's 2003 Skills Strategy and 2005 Strategy are pushing for greater employer engagement, seen as critical to driving up the nation's skills base. Put these two factors together and it adds up to providers increasingly having to encourage small employers to make workforce training and development a business priority.

But what exactly do we mean by employer engagement? What are the Government's targets, and how is it helping providers meet them? This Guide 2 gives an overview of employer engagement and outlines the main policy issues providers need to know about.

What is the definition of engaging employers?

Bringing more employers on board is simply the biggest challenge providers face: it means far more than simply increasing the consumption of work-based training by employers. A 2002 Strategy Unit report set out a strategic approach for getting employers involved at all levels – from 14 19 full-time education and Apprenticeships to 16 19 FE and higher education.

The 2005 Skills Strategy says that, for this to happen, employers will need to be at the centre of programme planning. In each of area of learning, employers are expected to contribute to:

- funding
- work placements
- standard-setting
- course design
- assessment

- releasing staff for training and funding.

Employers will be expected to engage more actively in raising national productivity and growth, receiving in return more focused government support for workforce training.

Providers need to form strategic partnerships with employers and industry to encourage collaboration in these areas and to develop a fuller understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.

What are the key facts and figures about engaging employers?

UK businesses invest £23 billion a year in training, according to DTI figures.

Losses to industry owing to poor literacy and numeracy skills are estimated at £4.8 billion a year, according to a report by the Department of Work and Pensions.

A survey by the Institute of Directors (IoD) indicates that 60 per cent of its members are involved with secondary schools – that compares with only 39 per cent who had links with FE colleges.

The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) strategic plan says that increasing training by just 5 percentage points could raise the UK's productivity by 4 per cent, boosting GDP by £40 billion. That's equivalent to increasing the earnings of every worker by £1,000, and increasing the profits of UK companies by £10 billion.

An LSC survey of employers found that one in six firms encountered skill shortages among applicants for all vacancies.

The same survey found that the proportion of vacancies affected by skills shortages is much higher for businesses with fewer than 25 employees than larger businesses (with 500-plus employees). Three in five (56 per cent) of all skill-shortage vacancies occurred in these smaller firms.

What are the key national policies on engaging employers?

In 2003, the Skills Strategy White Paper set out plans to reform the supply of training provision so that employers' needs are centre-stage.

The 2005 Skills Strategy puts flesh on these bones. It outlines the following major steps for employer support, investment and engagement:

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- introduction of the National Employer Training Programme (NETP), which will extend the work of the Employer Training Pilots nationally, with £65 million of investment to support the national roll-out
- stronger emphasis on Level 3 training in technician, advanced craft, skilled trade and associate professional areas. Brokerage services will push Level 3 training to employers, who will be expected to make a significant financial contribution to it in recognition of the higher returns such advanced training brings
- the introduction of sector skills agreements (SSAs) through the 23 sector skills councils (SSCs) and regional skills partnerships (RSPs) to engage employers at the highest level in systematic analysis and action planning to address the skills deficiencies
- government funding for all adult basic skills training in the workplace up to Level 1
- a new national entitlement to free learning for everyone studying for their first Level 2 qualification
- establishment of the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) which, along with other quality improvement responsibilities, will be monitoring the sector's responsiveness to employer needs, for example through the LSC's annual employer surveys and the national learner satisfaction survey
- the introduction of a national network of Skills Academies, one for each of 12 major sections of the economy. The academies may be developed from existing Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). The prospectus for Skills Academies invites expressions of interest from training providers up to 9 September 2005.

Impact on provider organisation

A joint protocol between the Association of Learning Providers (ALP), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has interpreted employer engagement as requiring an expansion in the supply chain. This will see a greater variety of training providers entering the sector, particularly from the industry-training sector but also the voluntary and community sector.

Trade unions are also likely to have greater involvement in training, with a planned increase of 14,000 additional union learning representatives and proposals for a Union Academy. Along with this is a commitment to bring trade unions into the Skills for Business network so that they can work within the new sector skills agreements.

Providers hoping to build employer engagement must rely on industry-specific knowledge, supported by reliable sectoral and regional data on skills demand and supply. That is increasingly being provided through publications such as the annual four-volume Skills in England and the National employers skills survey.

There are also dedicated websites such as Trends in Education and Skills, which are supplemented by increasingly refined data that the growing network of Sector Skills Councils is providing.

Agenda for change

In tandem with the developments of the Skills Strategy, the LSC has launched its Agenda for Change programme. This has five strands:

1. data
2. efficiency
3. funding
4. quality
5. employer engagement.

As part of the agenda for change, the LSC's priorities for 2005/06 include the determination to make responsiveness to employer needs a core part of FE colleges' business.

The LSC wants to see colleges playing a central role in developing the National Skills Academies and the National Employer Training Programme. Providers' three-year development plans, the Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESAs) and local strategic area reviews (StARs) will all be essential to planning provision that meets employers' needs.

Measuring responsiveness

The LSC now sees the concept of employer engagement in terms of 'provider responsiveness'. This comes following the sector's feedback on its consultation on measuring success, and particularly the LSDA's response.

Now, as part of Success for All, the LSC, ALI, Ofsted, and the DfES are developing a performance indicator of provider responsiveness. This will form part of the New Measures of Success programme.

The LSC's briefing note on provider responsiveness says that, for 2005/06, providers and local LSCs will continue to develop appropriate regional and local measures of responsiveness in their three-year development plans. They will be working with Regional Skills Partnerships and Sector Skills Councils to develop employer engagement strategies that suit the particular needs of their areas and the sectors represented there. The LSC hopes to begin a phased implementation of a range of national measures of provider responsiveness in 2006/07.

What are the targets related to employer engagement?

There are currently no national targets for employer engagement. For 2005/06, providers will continue to agree a target for employer engagement with their local LSC as part of their three-year development plans. These targets reflect providers' contribution to meeting employers' needs and priorities in the local area.

However, following its consultation on measuring success, the LSC is developing a phased implementation of a range of national measures of provider responsiveness for 2006/07.

Vocational learning targets

The Government's targets for vocational learning are:

- by 2010, increase participation in higher education towards 50 per cent of those aged 18 to 30
 - improve the basic skill levels of 1.5m adults from 2001 to 2007
 - by 2010, reduce by 40 per cent the number of adults in the workforce who lack an NVQ at Level 2 or equivalent
 - achievement of NVQ at Level 2 by 1 million people already in the workforce between 2003 and 2006.
 - the number of trained union learning representatives to rise from 8,000 to 22,000 by 2010
 - four new National Skills Academies open for business by September 2006.
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Where is the evidence?

A government action plan for small business

Workforce training is one of three essential keys to growing a business, according to this action plan from the Government. In setting out how it will help small businesses to grow, it stresses the importance of Regional Skills Partnerships and Sector Skills Councils in

integrating knowledge of skills needs by region and sector, and linking training, business support and labour market activity.

Read **A government action plan for small business: making the UK the best place in the world to start and grow a business**, DTI, 2004 at

<http://www.sbs.gov.uk/sbsgov/action/layer?r.s=sl&topicId=7000011923>

21st Century Skills: Realising our potential

Employers' needs are centre-stage in the Government's Skills Strategy, which puts more emphasis on the links between skills and economic activity. That in turn means providers need to be more aware of local employers' training needs. Yet the Skills Strategy White Paper reports that there is too often a mismatch between what employers want and the learning opportunities available to them. One ambition is to give providers greater freedom in deciding what training to offer, and how to provide it.

Read **21st century skills: realising our potential**, DfES, 2003 at

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/_pdfs/whitePaper_PDFID4.pdf

Getting on in business, getting on at work

The threat of emerging global economies is fuelling the Government's big push on skills for business. This 2005 Skills Strategy underlines the importance of getting employers to both provoke and respond to increased demand for workforce training. Only then can we make inroads into the UK's chronic skill gaps, particularly in basic skills and technical, IT and craft skills. Proposals include a new National Employer Training Programme (NETP), £40 million of investment for pilot provision at higher technician level, and the introduction of National Skills Academies catering for the training needs of individual sectors of the economy through formal Sector Skills Agreements.

Read **Getting on in business, getting on at work**, CM 6483-I HMSO, 2005 at

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/skillsgettingon>

In demand: adult skills in the 21st century

The Government's vision is that by 2010, the UK will be a society where Government, employers and individuals engage in skills development to deliver sustainable economic success for all. To achieve this, a more demand-led system for workforce development is needed.

Read **In demand: adult skills in the 21st century: part 2**, Strategy Unit, 2002 at

http://www.number-10.gov.uk/su/wfd_2/report/downloads/su-adult-skills.pdf

Skills for success: what the Skills Strategy means for business

This booklet summarises the Skills Strategy from the perspective of business - employers and employees. The list includes expanding training opportunities for apprentices, technicians, higher craftspeople and tradespeople, and associate professionals. It also includes information on the expanding network of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), which are giving business sectors a stronger voice with Government.

Read **Skills for success: what the Skills Strategy means for business**, DfES and DTI, 2003 at http://www.niace.org.uk/bpln/downloadable_documents/skills_strategy.pdf

Towards full employment

This Green Paper discusses the need for increased investment in education and training in the interests of the dual aims of supporting the economy and delivering the agenda for social justice and equality of opportunity. Chapter 4 deals specifically with engaging employers. It stresses the importance of providers developing their understanding of employer and sectoral needs. There is also a requirement for better labour market intelligence so that the vocational training offer reflects the skills gaps and hard-to-fill vacancies that currently hamper economic development in some sectors.

Read **Towards full employment in a modern society**, CM5084, DWP and DfES, 2001. Not currently available online.

SSDA strategic plan 2005/08

One of the priorities of the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) is to increase by 10 per cent the number of organisations that have introduced higher performance working practices, (known as 'smarter working') by 2008. Also by 2008, working with partners, it aims to reduce skill gaps by 30 per cent and skills shortages by 25 per cent. This plan is full of facts and figures about UK skills and explains how the SSDA will work with partners to improve the UK's performance in productivity.

Read **Sector Skills Development Agency strategic plan 2005/08**, undated at <http://www.ssda.org.uk/ssda/pdf/Strategic%20Plan%200508.pdf>

National Employers Skills Survey 2004

This is the second survey the LSC has conducted of employers in relation to skills in the workforce. It is the largest survey of its kind in England, with over 72,000 interviews with a

representative sample of businesses. The survey (published as key findings and the main report) provides detailed information about employers' recruitment problems, their experience of skills gaps within the workforce, and their attitudes to and engagement in training.

Read **National Employers Skills Survey 2004: Key Findings**, Coventry, LSC 2004 at <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2005/research/commissioned/national-employers-skills-survey-key-findings-2004.pdf>

Skills: transforming business

An acute lack of skilled workers is jeopardising the competitiveness of UK businesses in every sector of the economy, from engineering and construction to healthcare and IT. Skills shortages and gaps are also apparent at all levels of employment, from shopfloor workers to senior management.

How is Government helping businesses who are adversely affected by these statistics? This Director's Guide has been produced jointly by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Institute of Directors (IoD). It addresses employers' concerns about skills gaps directly. Packed with case studies and good advice, it is insightful reading for providers to see how employers really view education and training institutions.

Read **Skills: transforming business - Towards a better skilled and more competitive workforce: Director's Guide Series**, LSC and IoD, November 2004 at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/eixqkwqj4m4oszk26er7fffabh3aaeg6vwrzrbclfqsmi4dsdvktveyw2mfrweynsuhlrbeccvise/IoDskillsguidefinal.pdf>

National Learner Satisfaction Survey

Learners undertaking education and training in an FE, adult and community or work-based learning context are the subject of this series of research reports. It says that, while 90 per cent of learners express satisfaction with work-based training, just over half felt that some training time is wasted. The survey also suggests that continuity between the workplace and the training provider is poor in some cases – the most satisfied trainees were those who were either wholly work based, or wholly provider based.

Read **National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03**, Coventry, LSC at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/ImprovingQuality/QualityPerformanceandAchievement/LearnerSatisfaction/nationallearnerssatisfactionsurvey.htm>

National Skills Academies Prospectus 2005/6

Employers will be in the driving seat for the new National Skills Academies. These new facilities will focus on meeting the priorities of 12 major industry sectors. They will contribute to the bottom line, helping companies to stay profitable and stay ahead of the competition.

Representing a strong partnership between local public bodies, private business and training providers, Skills Academies are an opportunity for Government and employers to achieve the common goals of raising productivity, enterprise and opportunity.

Read **National Skills Academies Prospectus 2005/6**, DfES July 2005 at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/nsaprospectus/>

ALP, DfES and LSC protocol

Over recent years, there has been a growing realisation that the key to achieving a properly skilled UK economy lies in the extent to which employers are properly engaged – through self-interest – in developing the workforce. One barrier to meeting this aspiration lies in the confidence, or lack of it, that employers have in the ability of providers to meet their needs flexibly and in a timely manner. This document pulls no punches in looking at the way that work-based learning providers offer a more informed and effective service for employers than the FE sector has thus far. It says the market must open up, with work-based training provided directly rather than through franchised provision.

Opening up the market: ALP, DfES and LSC protocol, Association of Learning Providers, April 2004. Not currently available online.

A union academy

This proposal from the TUC follows on the back of the introduction of the Union Learning Fund and the statutory recognition of the role of union learning representatives in promoting learning in the workplace. The aim of the academy would be to increase unions' capacity to help their members get high-quality, relevant training by developing union-branded progression routes.

Read **A Union Academy: Adding value to the union card: a proposal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills**, TUC 2005 at <http://www.learningservices.org.uk/extras/publications/uavalue.pdf>

Skills in England 2004

The annual Skills in England report is based on the most up-to-date data available. The overwhelming message from the report is that the failure to succeed at the most basic educational level now carries severe penalties in the labour market. It calls for greater integration of vocational training with other key government policies on compulsory

education, tackling poverty and deprivation, and equality of opportunity. Volumes 2 to 4 contain analysis, and sectoral and regional data respectively.

Read **Skills in England 2004**, LSC, 2005 at

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/Keyinitiatives/NationalSkillsStrategy/skills-in-england-2004.htm>

Agenda for change

Details of the five themes of the LSC's Agenda for Change are described in this newsletter. The employer engagement theme will look at how colleges can better help employers to develop a skilled workforce that will contribute to high-performance workplaces and growth in the economy.

Read **LSC Update: Issue 4**, November 2004, Coventry, LSC at

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/eavfxui7e4tbwbaa6ugurbzcvf2hofb22zds mwje5harjr4hocb26yv4g2y7bem2k2eynoce6mrwpm/3099UpdateNewsletter401f.pdf>

LSC priorities

The LSC's annual statement of priorities focuses on six key areas. Relevant to employer engagement are the commitments to raising demand for learning and transforming the FE sector so that it stimulates business investment in training and skills development.

Read **The skills we need: our annual statement of priorities**, LSC, December 2004 at

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/eni3yxqaj7aw2mbnat6xtwj3k4z4wk5ub6tomb6qbmjviu23bzj3bjchj4p3hemrbq32rgiofqmvad/ASPFinal.pdf>

Measuring success in the learning and skills sector

Over 150 organisations responded to this Learning and Skills Council (LSC) consultation, which included a proposal to set headline targets for employer engagement as part of providers' three-year development plans. This discussion document sets out the rationale behind such targets and the aim to introduce new measures from 2005/06.

Read **Measuring success in the learning and skills sector: a consultation and discussion document on new measures of success for further education colleges, work-based learning providers, adult learning providers and school sixth forms from 2005**, LSC, 2003 at

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/ejzmwm5o3hbad5azya5655vz4rkesod2gcrgpsnpqwtp4m ggmqh6y2kjjf575vesku7u2ezpbcuhb/Measuringsuccessinthelearningandskillssector.pdf>

LSDA responds: measuring success in the learning and skills sector

Greater scope in measuring success could mean more bureaucracy for providers, according to the LSDA. In its response to proposals for new measures of success, it broadly supports the changes but notes the lack of an explicit link between the measures proposed and indicators relating to widening participation. Its response calls for measures of success at qualification level to be extended to work-based learning, and for the proposals to take into account increasing collaboration between providers to deliver shared priorities.

Read **LSDA responds: measuring success in the learning and skills sector**, LSDA, 2004 at <http://www.lsda.org.uk/files/PDF/Respmeasursuclsc.pdf>

Success for All

This document sets out the Government's strategy for reform, including improving the quality and responsiveness of provision, developing leadership and setting up the Standards Unit to disseminate good practice.

Read **Success for All: Reforming Further Education and Training – Our Vision for the Future**, DfES November 2002 at <http://www.successforall.gov.uk/downloads/ourvisionforthefuture-76-109.pdf>

Provider responsiveness to employers

This document explains in brief why measures of employer engagement (called provider responsiveness) are being introduced. When a range of national measures is introduced in 2006/07, providers will be encouraged to compare their performance with national benchmarks.

Read **Provider responsiveness to employers**, Briefing Note, April 2005, LSC at <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2005/quality/performanceachievement/provider-responsiveness-to-employers-briefing.pdf>

New measures of success

In their 2003 three-year development plans, colleges and other further education providers agreed 'headline' employer engagement targets with their local LSCs. But the LSC now sees a need for providers to view such targets in a wider context, rather than as a result of an

isolated dialogue with their local LSC. For future planning, providers will agree provider responsiveness measures in the light of the provider's contribution to meeting employer needs and priorities in the local area.

Read **New measures of success: priorities for development and work plan for 2004/05**, LSC, DfES, ALI and Ofsted, 2004 at <http://docs.ali.gov.uk/publications/MeasuresOfSuccess.pdf>

Where do I go next?

Success for All

The Success for All website, developed jointly by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has links to key documents and websites. The e-newsletter and What's New? facility are useful for providers needing to keep in touch with developments in the Success for All agenda.

<http://www.successforall.gov.uk/>

Skills for Productivity

The Skills for Productivity subsite has an area dedicated to training providers. It holds information on key awards, qualifications, courses and funding to help providers gauge and meet the needs of UK businesses.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/employers>

Learning and Skills Council

Information on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), Employer Training Pilots (ETPs) and employer engagement more generally is available from the Employers and Partners subsites of the LSC's main website. Local initiatives are accessible by selecting Local view.

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/>

Sector Skills Development Agency

The new network of UK-wide Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) is leading the skills and productivity drive in industry and business sectors. The lead body is the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), which has been established to underpin the SSC network and promote effective working between sectors.

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

New Measures of Success

You can find key documents (including the original consultation and FAQs) relating to the agenda for change and the New Measures for Success on this website which the LSC, DfES, ALI and Ofsted are running jointly.

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/AdultandCommunity/nms.htm>

Skills and Education Network

The Skills and Education Network is a web-based information and knowledge sharing service for providers, managed by the Learning and Skills Council. The website contains features, news, events, and services that are specially designed to meet providers' needs.

<http://senet.lsc.gov.uk>

Additional information

The Skills and Education Network team are constantly updating the content of Guides 2. This title was published in August 2005 – please check the website periodically to see if this title has been updated [http://senet.lsc.gov.uk/guide2/employerengagement_policy/index.cfm]. If you have any suggestions for this, or other Guides 2, please send us an email at senet@lsc.gov.uk

Glossary...

Engaging employers: Policy and strategy

Date this glossary was generated: August 2005

High performance work organisations (HPWOs)

High performance work organisations (HPWOs), also known as high performance workplaces, are organisations that encourage best practice in human resources, work organisation and employee relations.

HPWOs get the best from every aspect of the workplace, creating a valued, involved and diverse workforce. They typically have more motivated staff and increased productivity.

Source: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/bestpractice/assets/hpw.pdf>

Updated: June 2005

High performance work practices (HPWPs)

High performance work practices are ways of working that can be deliberately introduced to improve a company's performance. They are typically 'common sense' practices, such as appraisals and flexible working.

High performance work practices are a set of complementary practices that cover three broad areas. The three areas are high employee involvement practices, human resource practices, and reward and commitment practices. Companies that introduce HPWPs are called high performance work organisations (HPWOs).

Source: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/0364EF28-96FA-4188-91D4-6B6BC42E716F/0/dtihpwprac.pdf>

Updated: June 2005

Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)

The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) was set up by the Government to improve the quality of post-16 education and training in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. To do this it supports organisations that deliver post-16 education and training, carries out research to inform policy and practice, and supports in communicating and writing education policies.

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Leading learning and skills

The LSDA provides training on strategic, operational and curriculum issues for governors, managers and practitioners in the further education sector. It also conducts research, both alone and with further education colleges, and produces a variety of publications.

Source: <http://www.lsda.org.uk/>

Updated: June 2005

National Employer Training Programme (NETP)

The National Employment Training Programme (NETP) was announced as part of the Chancellor's 2004 Pre-Budget Report. The programme gives grants directly to employers for them to invest in improving the skills of their low and semi-skilled employees. The employers can then choose providers that are best suited to their firm's needs. This introduces a demand-led approach where local training providers must compete and adapt quickly to the changing needs of the local environment.

The programme builds on the success of the Employer Training Pilots and will be supported with £197 million of funding between 2006 and 2008.

Source:

<http://www.nationalemploymentpanel.org.uk/publications/nep/2005/epeppdf/chapthree.pdf>

Updated: July 2005

National Skills Academies

In the Skills White Paper, the Government gave a commitment to creating national centres of excellence for all major sectors of the economy. These are called National Skills Academies. The academies will offer modern learning environments, first class teaching and high quality training. They will be flexible, work closely with employers, and develop and re-shape training programmes to meet the sectors' needs.

The academies will run in partnership with the state education system, but will be sponsored by employers. The employers will play an important role in giving a clear vision and strategic leadership, and in investing funds. The Government intends to have an initial network of 12 National Skills Academies in place by 2008.

Source: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/nsapropectus/>

Updated: August 2005

Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs)

In the Skills Strategy White Paper, the Government outlines the need for stronger partnerships between those who deliver services (regionally and locally) relating to adult

skills and training, business support, employment and productivity. These are Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs). The RSPs consider and address the skills and employment needs of employers and individuals within a region. They aim to get their members to work more effectively in the pursuit of shared objectives, and to allow responses to local conditions and needs.

The key members of the RSPs are the Regional Development Agencies, who lead discussions, the Skills for Business Network, the Learning and Skills Council, the Small Business Service and Jobcentre Plus. (There may also be other members, decided on a regional basis.)

The progress and collaboration of the RSPs is monitored by a Skills Alliance of key departments, such as the Department for Education and Skills.

Source: <http://download.southwestrda.org.uk/file.asp?File=/skills/fresa/specification-and-chart.pdf>

Updated: October 2004

Sector Skills Agreements (SSA)

Sector Skills Agreements were announced in the '21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential' White Paper. They outline long-term plans to address skills needs and priorities in different sectors.

The agreements offer the opportunity for groups representing demand (employers) and supply (training providers) to work together to identify skills and productivity needs, and to agree what action will be taken to meet those needs.

Source: <http://www.cic.org.uk/activities/lifeConstructionSkills.shtml>

Updated: June 2005

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of different industry and business sectors which are economically or strategically significant. These industry-wide bodies are developed by groups of influential employers. They also actively involve trade unions, professional bodies and other stakeholders in their sectors.

Licensed by the Department for Skills and Education each SSC aims to set targets and priorities to address four key areas. These are:

- reducing skills gaps and shortages
- improving productivity, business and public service performance

- increasing opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce; and
- improving learning supply, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards.

Source: <http://www.ssda.org.uk/ssda/default.aspx?page=2>

Updated: September 2004

Three-year development plans

The purpose of three-year development plans is to improve the experience and success rates of learners. At the same time, the plans also help to develop planning processes that are more effective in helping to identify learner needs and making sure that participation and skills priorities are met.

The plans are an important part of a provider's strategic planning and make sure that provision is suitable for learners, employers and local communities, and meeting national, regional and local priorities for participation and skills. The plans also support the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) commitment to cut bureaucracy and to develop a more strategic, trust-based relationship with its partners.

It is a condition of funding that all colleges with LSC-funded learners have in place a three-year development plan.

Source:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/em4t3hsu7sdwurxqnr3rwel3cqfo76ztf5jnvhjjpgvy6ermijel6xfvp4c3kztjclnalgx6el5lzp/SpecialistCollegesforLearnerswithLearningDifficult.pdf>

Updated: July 2005

Trades Union Congress (TUC)

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) is the national organisation that represents trade unions in Britain. It was founded in 1868 and is made up of 70 unions, representing nearly seven million people.

Its role includes lobbying Government, campaigning on employment issues and carrying out research. The TUC website has details of its education and training activities, publications and events.

Source: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/>

Updated: February 2005
