

STUDENT CAMPAIGN FOR ADULT EDUCATION IN LONDON

Support Information

Government Policy on Further Education:

Extracts from:

White Paper: Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances. March 2006.

Overall Mission of Further Education:

“Our economic future depends on our productivity as a nation. That requires a labour force with skills to match the best in the world.” p1

“Our reforms will renew the mission of the Further Education system, and its central role in equipping young people and adults with the skills for productive, sustainable employment in a modern economy.” p1

“Purpose

1. Our future as a prosperous nation depends on our education and training system. We rely on that system to prepare young people fully for life, and to develop in both young people and adults the skills that are necessary for the productive and competitive economy that underpins our quality of life and many of our wider national ambitions.

2. We need to support people to develop skills in the broadest sense: enabling and equipping them to deploy to best effect their talent, knowledge, resourcefulness and creativity. That is the core purpose of the colleges and training providers that make up our Further Education (FE) system. The system serves many 16-19 year-olds – studying general and vocational qualifications, Apprenticeships and other forms of work based training. Some 4.6 million adults over the age of 19 study in FE every year, on a huge range of courses from basic skills through to Foundation Degrees.

3. The FE system must be the powerhouse for delivering the skills at all levels that are needed to sustain an advanced, competitive economy and make us a fairer society, offering equal opportunities for all based on talent and effort, not background.” p3

“As the Foster report said, this challenge means that we need to establish a clear mission for FE, focused on the employability and progression of learners. This is central to delivering the skills and qualifications which individuals, employers and the economy need.” p5

“In this White Paper, we set out a programme of change in FE to deliver this vision and meet the demands of the Leitch review and 14-19 reforms, in six key areas:

- strengthening the focus of the system as a whole on a core economic mission, with increasing specialisation in colleges, so that right across the sector all providers are developing distinctive specialist excellence;
- a greater focus within that mission on meeting the needs and demands of learners and employers;
- ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is uniformly excellent across the sector, with programmes that are well tailored to the needs of individual students;
- a more robust framework of intervention and support to tackle poor quality and promote a diverse range of good providers;
- a reconfiguration of the funding and organisation of the sector to meet these priorities; and
- a new relationship with colleges and other providers, so that they are freed from unnecessary burdens and supported to deliver.” p18 (para 1.16)

Focus on employability:

“We agree with Sir Andrew Foster that the key strategic role for the sector – the role in which the contribution of FE to learners’ lives, to society and the economy can exceed that of any other part of the education and training system – is to help people gain the skills and qualifications for employability, so that they are equipped for productive, sustainable and fulfilling employment in a modern economy. The qualifications learners gain in FE should be beneficial in themselves and should support individuals to enter, and progress in, the labour market...” p21 (para 2.4)

Funding Priorities

“Funding will be targeted on our priorities

6.18 In support of the new mission of the FE system, we will ensure that our national funding priorities are clear. It is strongly in the collective national interest for all young people to gain a good foundation of education and training to prepare them for adult and working life. Therefore, public funds will continue to pay for all education and training for young people through to the age of 19, without charging any fees to students – and the new Level 3 entitlement for 19-25 year-olds will extend that principle. But for older adults the arguments are different. The state cannot and should not pay for all education and training for adults. Adults and their employers receive substantial direct benefits from many forms of training and qualifications, in the form of higher wages and higher productivity. It is only fair that they should contribute to the cost.

We will continue to fund our existing priorities

6.19 In the 21st Century Skills White Paper of July 2003, we set out our priorities for public funding of adult learning. They remain:

- Skills for Life programmes, to enable adults to improve their basic skills of literacy and numeracy;
- first full Level 2 qualifications to enable adults to achieve the platform of skills they need for employment, progression and success in further learning and work;
- supporting the development of technician, advanced craft and associate professional skills (Level 3), particularly where those meet sectoral and regional skills priorities;
- supporting those who are re-skilling for new careers, and those preparing to return to the labour market, again particularly where that meets sectoral and regional skills priorities; and
- safeguarding a varied range of learning opportunities for personal fulfilment, community development and active citizenship.

6.20 Between 2003-04 and 2005-06, an extra £200 million was directed from other provision to these priorities. Many of these priorities will help adults disadvantaged in the labour market to get back into productive, sustainable work, particularly those who are receiving welfare benefits. At the same time, we have introduced higher fees, to raise a larger contribution from employers and learners for other types of programme, while retaining the national fee remission arrangements to make sure that the least well off are not excluded from learning.

6.21 In *Priorities for Success*, we said that our intention was that the national fee assumption should rise further over time to around 50%, while continuing to protect groups of priority learners through fee remission, and to invest public funds in the priority areas of learning. We are now confirming that the national fee assumption for adult learners will rise to around 50% in the 2010/11 academic year. In addition, we have signalled the intention to cease funding some types of provision which the public purse should not support: for example, health and safety qualifications for employees for which employers should cover the full cost, and very short courses normally taken by better qualified learners.” p 70 (para 6.18 to 6.21)

Fees Policies

“6.28 By 2010, the assumed national fee contribution for learners not covered by the national entitlements will rise to around 50%, wherever they are following courses that lead to credit based units or qualifications within the Framework for Achievement and designated by the relevant SSC (or other recognised body) as valued by employers in promoting employability, or developing higher level vocational skills. Our approach will be guided by our wider strategy to raise the level of contributions from employers and learners who can afford to pay, in order to redirect funds to support growth in priority areas of learning.

6.29 The level of fees and subsidy for PCDL programmes will depend on local choice about how to use the allocated resources, except family learning which will remain free. All other adult learning, including company specific training and training which is

used by employers to meet their statutory obligations (whether included in the Framework for Achievement or not) will have no public subsidy.

6.30 To support this general change in approach, the LSC has introduced a system of fee income targets in 2005-06. These are negotiated individually with each college and take into account their particular mix of learners and the mix of learning programmes they offer. They provide the essential basis for ensuring that fee income is raised rather than learning opportunities cut or simply under funded.” p72 (para 6.28 – 6.30)

Beyond “narrow vocationalism”

“This economic mission does not mean narrow vocationalism. It includes for instance the general education that employers value and the stepping stone provision that helps prepare people for success in life and work as well as provision at Levels 2 and 3.” p20.

“This mission is not narrowly about occupationally-specific training, nor only about training people to Level 2, as the threshold for employability, centrally important though both of these are. It also extends to broad vocational and general qualifications, often valued most of all by employers. It includes fostering an enterprise culture and, for young people in particular, it must extend to inculcating the values, attitudes and knowledge that society seeks from its citizens. It extends from supporting learners to acquire basic skills right through to degree-level education and training to develop very high-level skills, and includes the needs of the self-employed.” p27 (para 2.8)

Learning for Personal Fulfilment:

“The economic mission will not be the sector’s sole purpose. Education and training for personal fulfilment, community development and the love of learning all have an important place and will be sustained, though the pattern of institutions specialising in such programmes is likely to change. As general FE colleges increasingly focus on the core economic mission, local authority and voluntary providers may focus on wider personal fulfilment and community programmes, with funding targeted on securing high quality provision which meets local community priorities.” p7 (para 20)

“A clear focus on employability does not mean we will stop all other activity. Alongside the core economic mission, we remain strongly committed to learning for personal fulfilment, civic participation and community development, and are taking steps to strengthen the range and quality of such provision. We have allocated £210 million in 2006-07 for personal and community development learning (PCDL), and we will maintain this level of funding in 2007-08. But there will increasingly be an expectation that individuals should pay for this kind of provision where they can afford to do so.” p31 (para 2.45)

“We will reinvigorate this type of learning through local LSC Partnerships, which look beyond just LSC funded learning and include a wide range of recreational, Healthrelated and cultural learning funded through other sources. We want representatives of learners, including voluntary and community groups, as well as providers, to plan provision in a co-ordinated and cost effective way in line with local community priorities.” p32 (para 2.46)

“The pattern of institutions providing these opportunities may change as funding is directed to those most capable of delivering effectively. We would expect the balance to continue to shift away from general FE colleges as they focus more sharply on their core mission. We expect that, in time, some providers, often in the voluntary and community sectors, will want to specialise in this type of provision. We would also expect that the principles of contestability would apply equally to LSC funded PCDL. There should be opportunities for new providers, for example from the voluntary and community sector, to assist with the revitalisation of this type of learning.” p32 (para 2.48)

Quality Control:

“There is now much less failing and unsatisfactory provision in FE than in the recent past. We are now raising the bar to ensure that all provision is good or improving. Any provider or provision judged to be failing or coasting will be subject to an improvement notice. Colleges and other providers will receive support to address the problems immediately. If the problems are not addressed within a year, the LSC will be able to act decisively – changing governors, changing the leadership of the college, opening up the provision to competition or seeking merger with or help from a strong provider.” p8 (para 30)

“There will be a robust intervention strategy to address inadequate, barely satisfactory and coasting (satisfactory, but not improving) colleges and provision, linked to the new funding method and new arrangements for college trusts, federations and mergers. Cases requiring intervention will be identified through inspection, other existing evidence, and new performance indicators described below. The precise nature of intervention will vary according to the circumstances: whether it involves the whole college or provider or just one area or department, and whether it is failing outright or coasting.

In all cases the LSC will issue a formal notice with a specified short period in which to see improvement (in most cases, one year). In the case of a failing college or provider the LSC will be able to withhold some or all of the commissioned element of its funding, and in other cases the LSC will judge what part of this funding to withhold. The college or provider will be allocated an improvement adviser from a national network to be established by the QIA from April 2006. The adviser will be an accredited expert with senior management experience in the sector. The QIA will also establish, with the LSC and the CEL, a cadre of high quality senior managers who can reinforce an existing management team as it works through the improvement plan, or replace the management on a temporary or permanent basis.

If, at the end of the period, there is not sufficient improvement, the LSC will implement one of a set of intervention options. There are four key types of intervention: change of leadership; change of governance; opening provision up to competition; and help from, or merger with, a stronger provider. Where a college or provider is failing outright, the strongest measures will apply. The LSC may hold a competition to find an alternative provider to take over responsibility from the existing provider, replace the governors or secure a merger with a highly performing college.” p 56 (para 5.3 – 5.5)

“Proposed Key Performance Indicators for Further Education and Skills

A. Responsiveness

1. Delivery against plan
2. Providers’ responsiveness to employers (including employer satisfaction)
3. Providers’ responsiveness to learners (including learner views/satisfaction and learner progression/destinations)

B. Quality

1. Learner (qualification) success rates
2. Quality of provision (via provider self-assessment validated by inspection and annual assessment visits)

C. Finance

1. Financial health
2. Financial control” extract from table p59

Reducing Bureaucracy:

“A central finding of the Foster report was that the FE system is over-regulated and too complex. We agree. If colleges and training providers are to meet the challenge we are setting, they must have the space and freedom to do so.

We will implement a simplified system for planning and funding provision, which will make clearer the links between national priorities and local action, and enable colleges to play more fully to their strengths. A single named strategic partner will lead for the LSC in its relationship with each college or provider. There will be improved communications between Government and its agencies and the FE system: there will be a single gateway process for all publications and data returns, which will ensure that only relevant, clear and important communications are sent as a matter of course to providers. Improved arrangements for data collection will ensure that data is collected once and used many times. There will be new freedoms from the planning infrastructure for the most effective providers.

There will be clarity of roles and less bureaucracy at every level. The DfES will in the future focus on its core purpose of strategic leadership and policy formulation. By withdrawing from operational activity and making savings, it will reduce its staff working on the learning and skills sector by some 325 between 2004 and 2008. The LSC will remain the key body responsible for planning and funding the FE system, ensuring the right pattern of colleges and providers are delivering high quality programmes. The LSC has already committed to reduce staffing by 1,100 by the end of 2007. To ensure that the FE system is fit for purpose to meet the 14-19 and adults skills challenges, the LSC will need to continue to reform in line with the direction of travel that it set out in agenda for change.” p10 (para 37 to 39).

“Our aim is a system where colleges and other providers are able to focus fully on their own improvement and on delivering ever more effectively to learners, rather than on unnecessarily complex requirements from other organisations. We will continue to reform the external planning, accountability and support systems, so that the burden they impose decreases and so that providers find these systems coherent and effective in supporting them to make the improvements they seek.” p 77 (para 7.3)

Role of Government Bodies: (table on p 83)

Department for Education and Skills	Sets overall policy framework for sector. No operational role in quality improvement. Operational work of DfES Standards and Skills for Life Units transfers to partners.
Learning and Skills Council	Applies evidence and data on quality to inform planning and funding decisions. No operational involvement in inspection or quality improvement services.
Quality Improvement Agency	Formed from part of the Learning and Skills Development Agency. Leads development and implementation of single, integrated quality improvement strategy for FE sector. Commissions services to support quality improvement action by colleges and providers.
Ofsted and Adult Learning Inspectorate	New single inspectorate from April 2007 will provide inspection services. No operational role in working with individual institutions to improve quality.
Centre for Excellence in Leadership	Provides programme of leadership and management development training and sector leadership strategies. Integrated within QIS.
Lifelong Learning UK	The SSC which defines skills standards needed for staff working in post-16 education and training, as basis for design of staff training programmes. Integrated within QIS. Manages the collection, and interpretation, of staff data.

Federation and Collaboration:

“Federations can provide a powerful mechanism for quality improvement, with one strong college taking the lead in working with one or more others to share expertise and drive up standards. Federations involve the creation of formal, shared arrangements between two or more colleges within their governance structures – such as joint committees responsible for particular aspects of the two colleges’ business. Over time, that may lead to merger, but there is no presumption that it must. In the new, more specialised system we are developing, federation can be particularly powerful in bringing together colleges with complementary strengths to improve opportunity for learners in both institutions. Over the next year, we will work

with colleges and providers to invite proposals for pathfinder projects and to support them to be developed and implemented.” p 60 (para 5.21)

“Collaborating to share services such as finance, personnel, procurement and estate management between providers can improve efficiency and release money for teaching and learning. The Foster report noted that administrative services could be rationalised to reduce duplication and waste. The LSC will lead the development of a shared services strategy, and will consider the need for financial incentives to establish provider networks.” p 61 (para 5.25)

Specialisation vs Breadth:

“We also recognise that this mission for the system will mean different things to different providers. We believe that greater specialisation will be an important means of delivering the mission. Some colleges are of course already specialist – such as those focusing on agriculture or art and design. And a general FE college which is one amongst several in a city faces different choices to one which is the sole provider in a medium-sized town. It will still be for each governing body to determine its own direction.” p22 (para 2.9)

“We are clear that within the new mission of the system and the new focus on specialisation, we need to retain breadth of provision. This applies to the system as a whole and, where appropriate, to individual institutions.” p28 (para 2.33)

Social Inclusion & Equality of Opportunity:

“This strong focus on economic impact does not come at the expense of social inclusion and equality of opportunity – the two reinforce one another. The sector as a whole is uniquely well-placed to provide opportunities for second-chance learning and personal development. These opportunities are often the essential precursors to success in adult and working life, and to career development. We must sustain and strengthen stepping stone programmes, to encourage re-entry to learning. We describe in this White Paper how we will improve opportunity in this area through creating the Foundation Learning Tier. Many colleges and providers do excellent work to provide access to learning for young people in difficult circumstances. DfES will work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to improve support for this group. Colleges also play an invaluable role in promoting community cohesion and integration, providing settings where young people and adults from every ethnic, faith and social group can come together. Many colleges are exemplars in the diversity of their students and staff, serving as a resource that is available to, and valued by, all sections of their community. We will continue to support colleges in this vital work, and will continue to work with the Home Office on our shared agenda of community renewal, including through the Active Learning for Active Citizens network.” p29 (para 2.35)

“FE has a good record of reaching out to those who are difficult to engage. Nonetheless, if we are to meet the skill demands of future economic growth and employment, then we need to increase the demand from employers and potential learners and address the cultural, social and economic factors which can limit aspiration and participation. We have to engage not only those learners and employers who already see how skills and qualifications can help them, but the millions who regard education and training as having nothing of value to offer them.” p34 (para 3.2)

“In his report, Sir Andrew Foster highlighted the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD). He welcomed *Through Inclusion to Excellence* – the review, led by Peter Little, of provision for this group of learners – and the overarching recommendation that the LSC should develop a national strategy for the collaborative delivery of provision.” p49 (para 4.17)

“For adult learners in FE, by 2007-08 the LSC will be providing £145 million of financial support including an additional £11 million allocated in Budget 2006. The main component is the Learner Support Funds which are disbursed at the discretion of colleges. They are targeted at learners who would otherwise face financial difficulties in starting or completing courses, and will continue to offer a safety net to the most disadvantaged learners.” p 73 (para 6.32)

Impact of Reforms on Learners:

- “Learner success is the top priority: the system focuses on giving learners the preparation they need to achieve their ambitions and progress in life and at work.
- Learning programmes are tailored to each individual’s needs and aspirations. 14-19 year-olds are supported and encouraged to choose the combination of programmes best able to prepare them for success in life; adults to get the skills they need for employment and progression.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance. It helps them to choose the programme and institution best meeting their needs, overcome stereotyping, and make good choices about progression to employment or further learning.
- Learners are valued and respected as customers, and their views and requirements are used to shape provision.
- Learners are taught by staff who are expert, highly motivated, well-trained professionals, working in attractive, well-equipped premises.
- The qualifications system enables learners to gain recognition for their achievements and show employers what they have learnt and so supports their employment prospects.
- Learners are provided with fair access to learning opportunities. Barriers to learning faced by some groups are tackled by effective systems to ensure equality of treatment and availability of support.”

p89 (para 8.2)

Learner Involvement:

“We know that when learners participate in decisions affecting their learning experience, they are likely to play a more active role in the provider’s quality improvement process. Equally, the involvement of some learners can directly improve the responsiveness of the system to the concerns of learners more generally. We will encourage more learner representation in all aspects of the system – from national policymaking to course content and delivery.

A National Learner Panel and the direct involvement of learners in national and local agencies will increase their influence in key policy decisions. Colleges and training providers will be expected to develop and implement strategies for involving learners and parents/carers of younger learners. We expect learners to play a key role in institutional governance, with each governing body including at least two learner governors. Based on the LSC national learner satisfaction survey, there should be regular opportunities for learners to feed back their levels of satisfaction so that colleges and providers can make improvements. And there should be effective mechanisms for engaging with learners collectively, including through student committees. We will work with the LSC and Ofsted to ensure that these mechanisms are reflected in development plans.” p36 (para 3.11 and 3.12)

Learning & Skills Council Policy Statements for 2007/08

Extracts From LSC Publication: *Raising our game. Our Annual Statement of Priorities. October 2006.*

Type of Adult Education	LSC plans for 2007/08
Assessed courses or schemes that lead to formal qualifications	
Train to Gain - training aimed at skills for work, including completion of appropriate Level 2 (GCSE standard) qualifications	"The Train to Gain budget will grow by 62 per cent to £460 million in 2007-08, enabling us to make substantial progress towards our target of helping 500,000 adults achieve a Level 2 qualification in the workplace by 2010." ASP p23
Level 2 – formal, assessed courses that lead to qualifications equivalent to GCSE level difficulty.	"...we will direct a further £29 million towards this provision in 2007-08. This will support the additional 127,000 first full Level 2 adult achievements we expect to deliver in 2007/8 compared to 2006/7."
Level 3 entitlement for 19-25s – courses equivalent to AS/A level difficulty	"The Government announced in its 2006 budget and FE White Paper that from 2007/08 it would make £25 million available to provide free tuition for 19-25s working for their first full Level 2 qualification."
Skills for Life – courses aimed at raising the level of literacy and numeracy amongst adults	"From 2007/08, only approved literacy, language and numeracy qualifications at Levels 1 and 2 will be eligible for funding as basic skills provision."
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	<p>"...we must focus public investment on provision for those most at risk of disadvantage; and we should not support large-scale demand from those who can pay for their language learning."</p> <p>"From 2007/08, ESOL learning will no longer attract automatic fee remission. Free tuition will only be available to priority groups..."</p>
Non-assessed courses that do not lead to formal qualifications	
Personal and community development learning (PCDL) - Personal and community development learning (PCDL) includes a diverse range of community-based and outreach learning opportunities. The most popular areas of learning for PCDL were Visual and Performing Arts and Media (28%) and Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and Travel	<p>"...we are managing a major change to the way we plan and fund PCDL."</p> <p>"...those who have benefited least from the education system, or who are in most financial need, should have the greatest access to public</p>

<p>(22%) (Government statistics from Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances. Technical Supplement to the White Paper. March 2006; http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/furthereducation/docs/TA.pdf).</p>	<p>funding for PCDL.”</p> <p>“In 2006/07 and 2007/08 we will be asking the new PCDL partnerships to map all the adult provision available in their area to determine the best focus for LSC-funded provision. Wherever possible, they should aim to combine LSC funding with funds from other sources to ensure best use of public money...”</p>
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Forecast LSC expenditure 2006/07 and 2007/08 (Table 5 from LSC Annual Statement of Priorities 2006).

Budget Line £000s/Financial Year	Planned Allocations 2006/07 £000s	Anticipated Grant 2007/08 £000s	% Change year on year 2006/07 £000s	% Change year on year 2007/08 £000s
19+ Work-based Learning	£256,880	273,580	-5%	7%
19+ FE (includes local authority non-PCDL activity)	£1,910,108	1,896,753	-5%	-1%
Train to Gain/ETP	£283,497	460,608	76%	62%
Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL)	£210,415	210,000	0%	0%
Adult Total	£2,660,900	2,840,941	0%	7%

Quotes from LSC Annual Statement of Priorities October 2006:

Attitude towards education:

“For us, learning is more than an end in itself...., our overriding concern is with its impact on productivity, employability and social cohesion.” p4

“The White Paper (*Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances, 2006*) set out a new economic mission for the further education (FE) system – equipping young people and adults with the skills, competencies and qualifications that employers want and that prepare them for productive, rewarding, high value employment in a modern economy.” p5

“As set out in *Priorities for Success*, public funding for adult learning has been redirected towards key priorities – Skills for Life, first full Level 2 and Train to Gain – while safeguarding learning for personal and community development, continuing to prioritise provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and encouraging increased contributions from employers and individuals.” p19

LSC targets:

The LSC is responsible for meeting two Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets:

“...Increase the proportion of 19 year olds who achieve at least a Level 2 by three percentage points between 2004 and 2006, and a further two percentage points between 2006 and 2008; and improve attainment at Level 3.” p6

“...Reduce by at least 40 per cent the number of adults in the workforce who lack an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualifications by 2010. Working towards this, one million adults in the workforce to achieve Level 2 by 2006.” p6

Adult Learning:

“The steps taken in 2006/07 to redirect adult funding towards government priorities will continue in 2007/08. Public funds will support more Skills for Life and full Level 2 learning, and the new White Paper entitlement to free tuition for a first full Level 3 for 19-25 year olds. Ensuring that good quality provision is available for adults with learning difficulties will remain a key priority. Although employers and individuals will increase their contributions to the cost of other adult learning public funds will continue to meet around two thirds of the cost.” p23

PCDL Provision:

“To increase the choice for individuals we will....safeguard funding for personal and community development learning (PCDL) to the same levels as we did last year.” p10

“We also recognize the importance of personal learning and learning for its own sake. We will:

- maintain our commitment to PCDL, and
- guide our investment by giving local communities a greater say in what is offered and how it is delivered.” p16

Provisions for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:

“For adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, we will focus our investment to enable learners to participate as fully as they can in their communities. In taking this forward, we will: challenge the continuation of courses that merely recycle or occupy learners and instead actively support programmes that enable individuals to progress to meet their aims and aspirations.” p11

“Each college and provider will be expected to maintain the proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within its adult learner numbers.” p28

Standard of Provision:

“We are intent on excellent provision, for the benefit of employers and learners alike. As a route to excellence:

- we will seek to expand excellent provision where this is the choice of learners and employers
- we will demand improved success rates from colleges and providers where they are satisfactory or coasting
- we will discuss specialization with all our providers – and expect them to start working towards at least one area of specialization in 2007/08
- providers may consider dropping areas where performance is only satisfactory, if learners and employers can already find excellent provision locally
- we will publish minimum levels of performance and issue notices to improve where provision is unsatisfactory
- we will intervene swiftly and robustly to tackle underperformance, and
- we will work with the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) in taking forward the improvement strategy.” p12

“...we will intervene swiftly and robustly to protect the interests of learners and employers and through due process remove funding from poor quality provision.” p32

“Research tells us that the main factor in most learners’ choice of place to study is proximity. This means that all provision, everywhere, must be of good or excellent quality.” p4

Priorities for Shorter Courses:

“...the number of publicly funded places on shorter courses that do not offer progression and contribute less directly to our targets will fall, but many colleges and providers will still offer them on a full cost basis.”

Impact of Full Fees

“For 2007/08 the fee assumption will rise to 37.5 per cent of the base rate, as stated in Priorities for Success.” p26

“We will want to gather a fuller picture of changes in private investment in education and training and will discuss this with colleges and providers. As part of our dialogue with providers we will:

- agree fee income measures, including a measure of fees earned through full cost courses
- evaluate the impact of fee charges on individuals and the provision that is offered, to help guide future policy and investment priorities, and
- test fee levels for higher level learning through Level 3 trials” p13

“Surveys conducted by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and DfES indicate that colleges and providers are responding positively to the increases in the fee assumption in 2005/06 and 2006/07. They are setting higher fee levels and plan to increase the amount of teaching charged at full cost. In particular, some institutions have successfully transferred courses that are no longer eligible for LSC funding (such as short courses designed to meet employers’ statutory obligations) to their full cost offer.” p 26

“Mori polling suggests the majority of adults think that taking a further education course is a good investment. When asked about who should pay for courses, around half of all adults thought that they or their employer should pay at least 50 per cent of the cost of vocational courses, a proportion that rises significantly for leisure courses. So we believe that learners will understand and accept the approach to fees, especially if they are better informed about how much the public purse contributes to their learning.” p26

Specialist Designated Institutions (SDIs)

“Specialist Designated Institutions (SDIs) also deliver PCDL. For 2007/08 we will ensure that the volume of PCDL they deliver is similar to the volume delivered in 2006/07. This arrangement is separate from the safeguard for PCDL, but aligned with it. It should secure a range of PCDL for adults that cuts across local and regional LSC boundaries, and maintain a range of residential provision for adults. We will work in partnership with the SDIs to develop a shared vision of their contribution to learning and skills in the longer term.” p26

Short Courses:

“We are still maintaining the overall volume of supported adult learning as our investment in provision for adults continues to increase. However, the shift in planned provision towards longer and more expensive courses for adults seeking the skills they need for employability and further progression into learning will continue. This means that the number of publicly funded places on shorter courses that do not offer progression and contribute less directly to our targets will fall, but many colleges and providers will still offer them on a full cost basis.” p28

News about Adult Education in England:

22/1/2007

From: Government response to the select committee report on FE

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/education_and_skills_committee.cfm

26. During its first term in office, the Government published “The Learning Age”, which emphasised the benefits—and the necessity for public funding of—provision for older learners. We recommend that the Government, working with the Learning and Skills Council, comes forward with more concrete information on how it expects local authorities, working with the LSC, to fund and plan this sort of provision. (Paragraph 97)

We recognise that people access education and training for a number of reasons and that what people value is driven by more than skills or economic objectives. The Government remains committed to learning for its own intrinsic value, including for learning for older people. This is why we have safeguarded a budget for learning for personal and community development at £210m pa in 2006/7 and 2007/8. But we want to reinvigorate this type of learning. Too much is poor quality which does not meet the changing needs of local communities. This is why we have asked the LSC to convene local partnerships to plan and co-ordinate this type of learning. Crucially the partnerships will include a wide range of partners including local authorities, and cover the range of related learning not funded through LSC but funded by local authority sports, recreation and cultural budgets, and also local health budgets, ESF, etc. The partnerships will also include representatives of local communities and learners.

Local authorities have long experience in delivering this type of learning and will be crucial to the success of the reforms. An external Task Group including representatives of local authority providers has been established to help steer the reforms.

27. We recommend that the Government base its decisions on the targeting of funding [for adults] on much more solid and extensive research than is currently available. This research needs to provide a thorough analysis of the relative benefits of different types of learning—particularly, what the likely returns of public investment in different types of learning are, and for whom. Only in this way can the Government substantiate its claim that funding is being targeted where it is most needed. (Paragraph 97)

The Government is confident that the broad thrust of its skills strategy is right, and is supported by the evidence published alongside its White Paper, 21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential. Focusing more public funding on tackling the acute lack of basic skills in the workforce and on securing a minimum platform of broader employability skills for the lowest skilled is the right approach. However, we know that we need to do more work to make sure that this is targeted more precisely on the specific skills and qualifications that will make the most difference to the employment and future prospects of individuals and the productivity and professionalism of businesses. We have asked employers, via their Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), to develop qualifications strategies for each industry sector and to identify the qualifications that are most relevant. We intend to use that intelligence to target

public support for skills much more accurately. We will at the same time continue to work with key partners to improve the evidence base on returns to public investment in learning (particularly to vocational learning where the evidence is less strong), for example, 11 through co-ordinated research programmes between DfES, LSC and the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), drawing on expertise such as that in the Centre for Economics of Education.

28. We are concerned that valuable provision could certainly be lost and learners who could benefit from education will not do so. We recommend that the DfES and LSC need to negotiate a contingency plan to deal with this situation, should it arise. (Paragraph 101)

Government does not want to see learning that is valued lost. We do expect that where provision is in areas that are primarily the responsibility of employers, such as first aid, health and safety and food hygiene, then we would not expect to fund those courses. Providers that can deliver that provision cost effectively will continue to do so with employers paying the market rate. Similarly where learners value high quality learning and are prepared to pay more for courses than colleges can continue to provide provision on a full cost recovery basis. We are seeing evidence this is happening.

29. We recommend that in Autumn 2006, the DfES or one of its agencies should undertake an impact assessment of how the new fees regime is affecting the overall socio-economic profile of adult learners. Monitoring should continue as the increase to the fee assumption is rolled out, and the Government and LSC should be prepared to take action if the findings suggest problems in this area. (Paragraph 102)

We are monitoring closely the impact of our fees policies. The LSC has already commissioned research looking the impact of fee assumption increases on provider practices and learner volumes. The LSC is also planning further work looking at learner perceptions of fee changes. Our initial assessment of fee increases in 2005/06 and 2006/07 is that colleges are successfully increasing fees. We will continue to protect those on low incomes and who lack the basic skills for employability.

4/1/2007

From: The Voluntary Arts Network

Number of adults in further education drops. Figures released by the Department for Education and Skills show that the number of adults aged over 19 in further education fell by 16.9 per cent in 2005, the equivalent of almost 600,000 fewer adults on courses in FE colleges. There was a further fall of almost 10 per cent in the number of adults on Adult and Community Learning courses, amounting to 85,000 fewer people taking day and evening classes run by local councils. This was offset by a small increase in the number of 16-19 year olds in further education, a reflection of recent government spending priorities. Statistics do not take account of the wide range of informal learning in, for example, voluntary and community sector arts groups.”

30/11/2006

From: Press Release from National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)

"IMPACT OF CUTS IN ADULT EDUCATION - FINDINGS PUBLISHED BY NIACE

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) today (Thursday 30th November 2006) publishes evidence of the widespread concern across the country that cuts in adult education diminish economic opportunity and impoverish the lives of thousands of people, particularly pensioners.

The report - The case for adult learning: access all areas - has been compiled from evidence gathered over the past 6 months through NIACE's Big Conversation. Adult learners, providers and organisations submitted evidence; attended events and debates; and contacted the media and MPs to voice their overwhelming concerns for the future of adult learning.

The case for adult learning: access all areas describes the purpose, roll-out and impact of the Big Conversation; provides a snapshot of local news coverage about the cuts in adult learning provision; offers a flavour of the responses received from learners and practitioners on a range of topics; cites an array of evidence received at NIACE's Big Conversation Enquiry; and concludes with NIACE's view and recommendations.

Alan Tuckett, Director of NIACE, said, "A wider range of high-quality learning opportunities will help to transform the lives of adults, their families, neighbourhoods and communities, as well as society as a whole. However, this report illustrates, that there is a distinct risk - through the narrowing of priorities - of limiting access to the wider range of opportunities to those with the deepest pockets. The evidence of NIACE's Big Conversation is that we need more, not less, adult learning. To secure it will mean increased levels of investment from government, employers and from learners who can afford to pay more."

He concluded, "Overall, there are many challenges but what is clear is that NIACE's Big Conversation alone cannot score a quick win against real cuts. What needs to happen now is the process of winning hearts and minds to better appreciate the public value of a wide range of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Otherwise there is the very real danger of the destruction of a much-valued and essential public service."

<http://www.niace.org.uk/Organisation/advocacy/bigconversation/Case-for-adult-learning.pdf>

Useful Links:

Department of Education and Skills www.dfes.gov.uk

Voluntary Arts Network www.voluntaryarts.org

Source Documents:

Education White Paper March 2006

Further Education: Raising Skills, improving Life Chances.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/furthereducation/docs/6514-FE%20White%20Paper.pdf>

Raising our Game: Our Annual Statement of Priorities. October 2006. LSC Publication.

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/Aboutus/LSCStrategy/AnnualStatementofPriorities/>

Government response to the select committee report on FE

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/education_and_skills_committee.cfm

NIACE Access all areas. The case for Adult Learning.

<http://www.niace.org.uk/Organisation/advocacy/bigconversation/Case-for-adult-learning.pdf>

Priorities for Success. 2006-2008. Published October 2005.

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2005/funding/streams/priorities-for-success-2006-08.pdf>

The London Learning and Skills Plan. Our regional commissioning plan for London 2007-08. LSC Publication.

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/London/The_London_Learning_and_Skills_Plan_-_Our_regional_commissioning_plan_for_London_2007-08.pdf

National Learner Satisfaction Survey: Highlights from 2004/05. LSC. June 2006.

<http://research.lsc.gov.uk/LSC+Research/published/learner-satisfaction/2005highlights.htm>

The Foster Report: Department for Education & Skills

[Realising the Potential - A review of the future role of further education colleges](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/REALISING06.pdf)

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/furthereducation/uploads/documents/REALISING06.pdf>

Leitch Review of Skills, Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills. December 2006.

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/523/43/leitch_finalreport051206.pdf