

# HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

27 January 2006

## LIFELONG LEARNING - BACKGROUND REPORT FOR A PRESENTATION BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION (NIACE)

### Report by the Director

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#### RECOMMENDATION

That Member Authorities recognise the importance of developing lifelong learning in their corporate and community plans.

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#### INTRODUCTION

1. The Association has previously recognised the importance of lifelong learning. Workforce development is vital for the economy. Personal development is vital for individuals and the community.
2. The National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has offered this presentation because of changes in the way local authorities are now working, particularly:
  - development of LSPs
  - establishment of children's services following "Every Child Matters".

The implicit question is: what about "Every Adult Matters"?

3. Key partners in adult education are the Universities/Colleges, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), employers' organisations and local authorities. This background report brings together input from NIACE, the LSC, and two of our member authorities (Portsmouth and Southampton).
4. Mark Ravenhall of NIACE will give the main presentation. Rob Munson of the LSC will be present, along with the NIACE Regional Officer, Jenny Williams, and Adult Learning staff from HIOW authorities.

#### THE CHANGING ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES

5. Adult education services run by the County and Unitary authorities are having to adapt. The Learning and Skills Council is becoming a purchaser of services, and there are no preferred provider models. Adult education services will increasingly have to diversify from being straightforward providers of adult education and to engage in new partnerships. In Hampshire and other "two-tier" areas there are important opportunities for involving district councils within this remit.

6. The development of children's services demands new thinking and NIACE recommends that County and Unitary authorities devise a corporate adult learning plan. This should be seen as an integral part of the community planning process.

#### INPUT FROM THE UNITARY AUTHORITIES

7. Southampton and Portsmouth City Councils have produced the following briefing for members at this meeting. From their perspective the key national issues affecting local delivery are set out below.

- (1) **Learning and Skills Council Funding**

In the last two years budgets for Adult Learning have been frozen at 2003/4 levels with no cost of living increase. The proposal for 2006/7 is to cut the budget to all providers nationally by 10%. This presents challenges in terms of the level of funding Southampton pays providers to deliver its programmes.

- (2) **Learning and Skills Council Funding of Further Education**

Adult vocational learning programmes have been cut in Further Education colleges in Southampton and Portsmouth. This means that many of the Adult Learning first steps programmes run by the City Councils have fewer progression programmes run by the colleges at the next level.

- (3) **Family Learning a major success**

Both Portsmouth and Southampton have been very effective in delivering Family Learning programmes. The unique link with schools, communities and the voluntary sector has had a discernable impact upon parents, their children and communities. Family Learning and parenting have a key role to play within Children's Services.

- (4) **The Learner Pays approach**

The reduction in subsidy means that learners have to pay more towards the cost of tuition. This is a managed process and Southampton has worked to encourage a full-cost approach, using public monies to support low income learners.

The Portsmouth team implemented a Fees and Remissions policy in 2005-06 for the first time. This has increased the learners' contribution to the cost of tuition. The team continues to work towards a full-cost approach in a manageable timescale, and against the background of attempting to sustain and improve learner support with progressively reducing resources.

(5) **The shape and emphasis of the programme**

Southampton has placed a strong emphasis upon encouraging learners from Priority Neighbourhoods (50% of learners by 2007/8) recognising the importance of learning in community regeneration.

Portsmouth has had an emphasis on widening participation in learning for some time, through an increased focus on targeted participation of traditionally under-represented groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, elders, males and adults with learning disabilities and difficulties) through its contracting process. This differs from the emphasis on priority neighbourhoods. The process is underpinned by our ward based community learning profiles which are a significant, locally produced, resource.

(6) **Basic Skills agenda**

In 2006/7 both Southampton and Portsmouth are planning to develop new programmes around basic skills awareness. These programmes will be run for City Council staff and partner agency staff who work with vulnerable adults to enable them to run basic skills, confidence and motivation training.

(7) **Learning and Skills Council Local Support**

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council does work with the Local Authorities in a supportive way and there is a positive relationship with officers. Southampton's three year development plans have always been approved unequivocally.

(8) **Key role of Local Authorities with the Adult Learning Agenda**

The Southampton/Portsmouth experience shows that Local Authorities are uniquely placed to provide learning opportunities to vulnerable adults, disadvantaged groups and targeted communities. However Adult Learning funding for vulnerable groups via first steps learning appears to be in jeopardy.

The recent reorganisation in Portsmouth together with the imminent report of the Best Value Review into non-formal lifelong learning should enable and encourage the City Council to invest more effectively in both developing the Council as a learning organisation (n.b. circa 9,000 employees/learners), exploring new methods of jointly commissioning learning opportunities City-wide.

THE ROLE AND PERSPECTIVE OF THE LSC

8. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight LSC has produced the following briefing:

- (1) The LSC responsibility for planning and funding post 16 education and training is a major influence on adult (19+) provision. Across Hampshire and Isle of Wight, the 19+ public funding through Further Education colleges, work based learning providers and local authorities is roughly £55m pa.

- (2) The LSC's priorities, especially for 19+ are drawn from Government and are described in the Skills White Paper. This put public funding for skills firmly in place as an engine of economic growth and the pursuit of competitive advantage.
- (3) Given a finite budget for public funding, policy follows two key strands:
  - Encouraging employers and individuals to take an increasing share of the cost of their education and training
  - Re-balancing the use of available public funds to deliver priority types of learning or support priority learners.
- (4) The first is a planned increase over a number of years to raise the level of fee contribution towards 50% of costs.
- (5) The second will increasingly see the focus of public funds directed towards learners without a full level 2 qualification or with basic skills needs. Some measure of funding will also support priority economic sectors for the South East where specific skills needs have a high significance for economic prosperity.
- (6) To meet these challenges the LSC is working with providers and employers to develop a well planned and responsive supply structure that can meet employer and individual needs. In the South East this will be seen in practice as a network of colleges accredited as Action for Business Colleges that can demonstrate they are high quality, responsive suppliers to employers.
- (7) These colleges will be at the heart of delivering the National Employer Training Programme (branded Train to Gain) that launches in August 2006 in Hampshire and Isle of Wight.
- (8) Further, the LSC is committed to the "safeguard" of the funding of Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) which in Hampshire and Isle of Wight is closely associated with local authority adult activity. Much of the debate of course is about what constitutes PCDL and exactly how the "safeguard" is interpreted.
- (9) The LSC acknowledges that adult learning is a complex subject with many facets. It is keen to contribute to the debate to advance its ambition of working as closely as possible with local authorities to align its objectives and use of budgets in the interests of the learners.

#### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT - THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS

9. Despite the best of intentions, skill shortages continue to provide a brake on economic development. Tapping into employers' skill requirements is the initial link necessary to ensure the world of training and adult education is in tune with workforce development. A new "Skills for Productivity Alliance" is trying to achieve this. For example 10,000 new jobs are expected to be created in the South East in tourism/hospitality by 2011, and colleges are responding. Jobs in construction are set to reduce but skill levels need to increase. Yet only 35% of construction companies have training plans. So this subject

needs wholehearted input from employers and their representative bodies. The LSC, the South East Economic Development Agency and the Hampshire Economic Partnership are trying to achieve this. Local authorities can also play their part as employers.

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