

Skills and Employer Engagement Final Report

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1.0 MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

This report examines the skills priorities and employer engagement activities of agencies in Leicester Shire. The findings of the report are intended to help inform and define the priorities of the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership (LSEP) and its core partners in taking forward the skills agenda in the sub region over the next three years.

The LSEP board has identified skills as a key driver for sustainable economic growth but recognises that LSEP has a relatively limited budget to invest in this area. However, LSEP does have an important influencing role in working with the main skills agencies in the area to ensure that resources available are targeted to tackling the key sub regional priorities.

This study reviews the skills priorities of the LSEP's main partners and highlights those areas where LSEP resources could add most value, and also where LSEP might wish to focus its strategic priorities in engaging with and influencing the main skills agencies in the sub region.

The report explores a broad agenda but attempts, where possible, to offer specific recommendations to LSEP in taking forward its skills and employer engagement activities. These recommendations have been determined on the basis of an understanding of the strategic priorities of the main skills agencies and through consultation with a wide range of agencies operating in this area in the sub region.

1.2 Scope of study

The scope of this study is broadly defined, with the aim of informing the future planning of skills and employer engagement activity within the sub region. To achieve this, the study has focused its review on the strategic priorities of the key skills agencies with statutory or strategic responsibility for the management and planning of skills provision.

In addition, however, consideration has been given to the activities of the wider network of agencies and partnerships involved in the delivery of skills in order to try to establish a comprehensive understanding of the skills infrastructure and the relationship with employers. However, the detailed implementation plans of these agencies and partnerships have not been recorded in this report but reference made where appropriate. As described above the emphasis has been on the strategic objectives and priorities of organisations involved to try to maintain a focus on the detail provided.

The findings and recommendations have also been informed by the views of employers through a number of local representative organisations including the Chamber of Commerce, Institute of Directors and Leicester Business Voice.

The recommendations of the study are twofold:

- Firstly, recommendations specifically to LSEP to help determine the priorities for the People and Skills Theme over the next 3 years;
- Secondly, more broadly to LSEP and its core partners to inform future debate in taking forward the skills and employer engagement agenda within Leicester Shire.

The section below presents the key findings from the study, which is then followed by the specific recommendations.

It is important to note that at the time of writing this study a number of significant policy developments regarding the future priorities and funding of the main skills agencies are being announced. These include the implications of the Learning and Skills Council Agenda for Change, proposed restructuring within Jobcentre Plus and new Business Link delivery arrangements. These are all likely to have implications for how these agencies determine and deliver their priorities at a local level.

1.3 Key Findings

Based on the documentation review and the discussions with a range of organisations involved in skills and employer engagement activity, the report highlights a number of key findings. In summary these are:

- **There is a broad correlation between the priorities identified by LSEP and its partners, and the Employment Skills and Productivity (esp) Partnership strategy.** Section 5 maps out this correlation in more detail and also highlights the lead and supporting agencies involved in the delivery of these priorities. There is a general consensus amongst partners that the priorities agreed in the response to the esp document **remain relevant and appropriate** along with a strong recognition of the need for partners to work collaboratively to deliver against the esp action plan at sub regional level.
- **The skills priorities of the main agencies involved, broadly match those set out in the esp document.** Appendix 4 maps out in more detail the priorities of the main skills agencies against the esp action plan priorities. This illustrates that there is 'coverage' of the esp priorities at strategic level by the main skills agencies operating within the sub region. It is argued that this is a result primarily of the commitment of these organisations at regional level to the esp priorities which is translated into local planning.
- The review, concentrating primarily at strategic level, **has not identified any significant gaps or shortfalls** between the objectives of the main sub regional agencies and the esp priorities. Each of the esp priorities has a lead agency which will be responsible for driving the achievement of the plans main objectives and actions. This will be delivered to a large degree

through the sub regional partners including the newly formed County Employer Engagement Groups.

- However a common view across a number of partners interviewed for this study is that **there is a lack of strategic collaboration on skills priorities**, which needs to be addressed in order to provide the framework and focus for future resource and activity planning in the area.
- The study identified that partners feel there is a **'gap' in relation to how the priorities are addressed**. The example of the pressures within the Construction sector was given a number of times and that without a shared response to addressing the skills and labour pressures facing the sector at present, partners feel that the opportunity for local people to take advantage of the significant infrastructure developments within the city and county will be lost.
- Further there is a **lack of focus as to what the key priorities** for the sub region should be and partners would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively to focus on concrete tasks that would have an immediate impact on the challenges facing the sub region.
- At the same time, partners are looking for **strategic leadership from the main statutory agencies on a core set of priorities** to provide an emphasis and focus for wider skills activities in the medium to longer term.
- However, partners recognise that there are a number of **immediate skills and labour market pressures facing the sub region particularly in the city**, and feel that time spent on preparing a joint strategy would divert resources away from the much needed focus on these immediate pressures.
- These immediate priorities relate primarily to the significant developments taking place in the sub region that will have considerable skills and labour demands in the short term. These include:
 - The physical regeneration and infrastructure developments, which have significant skills and labour supply implications for the construction sector
 - Supporting the growth of public services in particular the health service through the on going expansion of organisations operating in this sector
- Whilst there may be **general agreement as to what the broad range of priorities should be, it is felt by some that there are too many**, they aren't sufficiently specific, and that there can be tensions between funding and targets across the sector undermining the ability to collaborate on delivery of priorities.

- Consideration should be given to establishing a common agenda or master plan on skills, which **concentrates on a small number of significant priorities that all agencies can sign up to.**
- Whilst the **LSEP** has a relatively limited budget in comparison to the major skills agencies in the area, partners do feel that it has an **important role in facilitating collaboration** between the key agencies with the aim of maximising the impact of the resources available on the skills priorities and challenges for the sub region.
- As highlighted above, this study has identified **the lead agencies for each esp priority area, and also those organisations with a supporting or contributory role.** The lead agencies are defined as those with statutory or strategic funding or planning responsibilities for skills and the supporting or contributory organisations are those involved directly in delivery to individuals, communities or employers. This has illustrated the complexity of the skills infrastructure through the number involved, their own organisational priorities, and in some cases overlapping roles and responsibilities.
- The main skills agencies have significant resources for delivering skills provision within the sub region. However, these budgets are committed to the achievement of nationally driven targets and objectives with **limited local discretion.**
- With this limitation on the main public programme budgets, a number of partners feel that funding to stimulate more effective engagement of employers in the skills agenda is a **key priority.** Employer engagement is a central element to national, regional and local policies. However funding to effectively resource this activity is limited, particularly within the 'output driven' environment of funding.
- There is a view that **employers find the skills market complex, fragmented, and confusing.** The system needs simplifying in terms of the offer available to employers, how it can be accessed and what level of support is available.
- There is a wide range of **employer engagement activity** at strategic and operational level across the sub region, which takes a number of different forms. This report has focused on strategic issues relating to employer engagement activity. There are many other studies and reports that present good practice on implementing employer engagement activity, a number of which have been referenced in appendix 1 for further information.
- Section 6 of the report explores employer engagement in more detail and highlights the newly formed **County Employer Engagement Group** which will have a key role in delivering the priorities of the esp action plan. Engaging employers in skills activity is complex and partners feel that the

key challenge to be tackled is achieving the coherent and coordinated offer of support promised in the esp document.

- Partners also recognise that following on from this is a need to consider how the service providers will **most effectively communicate the offer and how to involve employers in supporting the delivery of this agenda.**
- There are many **barriers to engaging employers** in skills activity, which are explored in section 6 and these have been well researched and reported. The focus for LSEP and its partners will be to concentrate efforts and resource on identifying and tackling these barriers to achieve greater involvement of employers at all levels.
- However there are also examples of good practice, which LSEP must draw on in **driving forward the strategic relationship with employers** within the sub region.

1.4 Recommendations

The main report offers a number of recommendations to LSEP to take forward the debate with its core partners on skills and employer engagement activity in the sub region. This section presents a summary of these recommendations, firstly to LSEP to help determine the priorities for the People and Skills Theme over the next 3 years; and secondly more broadly to LSEP and its core partners to inform future debate in taking forward the skills and employer engagement agenda within Leicester Shire.

1.4.1 Priorities for LSEP 'People and Skills' Theme 2005/6-2007/8

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are presented to LSEP to inform planning of priorities for the People and Skills Theme over the next three years:

- **Invest LSEP resources to pump-prime collaborative initiatives, which focus on Leicester Shire priorities.** LSEP should look to invest in the development or testing of approaches that bring together employers and service providers in tackling key skills issues in the sub region.
- **Take a lead on encouraging collaboration between key partners to define the key skills challenges facing the sub region.** The emphasis should be on supporting key geographical or sectoral initiatives and aim to provide a framework for focusing mainstream resources and where possible attracting additional discretionary funding.
- **Identify and commit resource to fund activity** to take forward and implement agreed skills and employer engagement actions in collaboration with partners. This may include funding a project manager to manage day to day activity.

- **Establish a work programme and delivery framework with key partners to tackle these skills challenges over the three-year period.** High level task groups, led by an appropriate skills partner and involving key skills agencies should be established to provide the strategic focus for tackling each skills challenge. A project management/delivery plan should be developed with short, medium and long term objectives that fit into partners planning time frames and should be revisited on an annual basis for updating.

1.4.2 Priorities for the Partnership

The following recommendations are presented to LSEP and its core partners to inform future debate on skills and employer engagement activity within Leicester Shire.

- **Determine a 'Common Skills Agenda' with short, medium and long term objectives.** Establish a high level working group involving the main strategic and statutory planning agencies, to determine and agree a core set of action-oriented objectives and priorities which focus on the specific skills needs within Leicester Shire. This will build on work done by the January group. The working group should be a small strategic group with a common focus and could evolve from existing partnerships. The action plan should focus on the short to medium term of up to three years but should consider longer term objectives and be driven by the priorities of the esp action plan. Consider funding a resource to support the work of this group and the action orientated task groups described below.
- **Focus collaborative efforts.** The common agenda should secure commitment from the skills sector to focus collaborative efforts on delivering against an agreed set of tasks. In the short term these should focus on the immediate challenges facing the sub region – including developments within the Construction industry, the expanding service and hospitality sectors, and reinvigorating the engineering sector through innovation and technology.
- The **difficulties and challenges of collaborative working** need to be recognised. Appropriate resources and expertise should be identified to focus on specific collaborative activity – a model that has been successfully applied through the Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership and also by LSEP through Leicester Shire Intelligence
- **Clarify relationships.** The agreed priorities for the sub region set out in the 'common agenda', must be shared with all those involved in delivering the skills agenda. The aim will be to ensure that the actions and priorities of the various agencies work to supporting the sub regional objectives and not only the individual organisation or partnership priorities.
- **Focus on the immediate priorities.** Establish action-orientated task groups to focus on addressing and investing in the identified priorities for

the sub region. Each of these groups should be led by one of the main strategic or statutory planning and funding agencies – primarily Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, Local Education Authorities or LSEP.

The task groups must have clear terms of reference; priorities and actions to be delivered within relatively short timescales and be focused on coordinating the activities of the various agencies involved in support of the agreed set of core priorities. The task groups should be accountable to the strategic group described above.

- **Address the medium to long term priorities.** The agreement of a common agenda as recommended in section 4 will provide the medium to long term framework for addressing skills priorities. The common agenda should outline the strategic priorities for the sub region, which organisations will work toward achieving on a collaborative basis.

It is also important that the strategic partners establish leadership to drive resourcing and implementation in the medium to longer term.

1.4.3 Priorities for Employer Engagement

This report also explores the theme of employer engagement in relation to the skills agenda. The following recommendations are intended to support partners in developing a more effective and coordinated approach to employer engagement. The recommendations focus primarily on the work of the newly formed County Employer Engagement Group (CEEG), which will have responsibility for coordination and local delivery of several aspects of the regional employment and skills priorities.

- **Agree a shared strategy, through the CEEG, for improvement of service provision to employers within Leicester Shire.** The strategy of the CEEG should:
 - Be driven by the priorities of the esp action plan, in particular Priority 2 (providing an integrated and demand-led offer of business support)
 - Agree 'local branding' of regional priorities to secure commitment of partners to delivery of local strategy
 - Be demand-led by local employer needs
- **In the short term map employer engagement activity of the key public sector service providers,** in particular those who have face-to-face contact with employers. This should be used to establish a baseline of products and services currently being offered to employers. This could be expanded to include the activities of intermediaries from the private sector such as banks, solicitors and auditors. In the medium to longer term develop this information into a database of business support in Leicester Shire, which should be maintained and updated on a regular basis. Consider how the information contained in the database should be disseminated, possibly through the intermediary network.

- **Agree forward programme of activity**, which concentrates on focusing resources and activity on the key challenges and priorities of the sub region and achieving 'quick wins' to maintain private sector engagement in the delivery of the skills agenda. Focusing on one specific area of activity rather than trying to tackle the broad esp agenda could achieve this. A key priority emerging from the study is raising skill levels, employability and flexibility in the workplace.
- **Develop framework for collaborative actions** amongst the service providers which supports achievement of the 'Employer Single Offer' and the principle of 'no wrong door'.
- **Improve communication** between service providers about employer engagement through activities such as events, networking and publications to raise understanding and awareness of the range of products available and also to encourage joint activity and delivery. Include intermediaries such as banks, accountants etc in these activities.
- **Clarify approach to engaging with employers.** This should involve:
 - Setting out expectations of employers, what commitment this will involve and over what timescale
 - Establishing mechanisms that enable employers to participate, devote resources to brokerage, effective matching of skills supply to business needs
 - Recognising the resource that the business community can bring to economic development and skills, and support them in better articulating their needs
- **Establish clear parameters of the Brokerage model and how it will relate to the Delivery network.** The Brokerage model is still under development. However this report explores a number of key elements that partners feel need to be considered in establishing arrangements for brokerage within Leicester Shire.
- **Build on good practice in employer engagement**, including that developed by other Employer Engagement Groups within the East Midlands. Examples include a Jobcentre Plus project in Derbyshire to set up a 'Jobshop' on the construction site of the new PFI City Hospital to handle construction and Medirest recruitment. This initiative involves a range of partners to respond to skills development needs.
- Develop links with the **City Growth Strategy** and align skills priorities and employer engagement with **Local Area Agreements**.

2.0 Project Objectives, Methodology and Approach

2.1 Introduction

This section presents a summary of the project aim, objectives and methodology.

2.2 Project Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this study is to help define the research priorities for the LSEP and other partners in taking forward the skills agenda in Leicestershire and also to make recommendations about how local partners can develop a more effective and co-ordinated approach to employer engagement.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To review the priorities identified by Leicestershire partners in the response to the esp document and confirm that these are appropriate and relevant
- To review the current strategies/policy documents of the major agencies involved in the skills agenda to assess how well their objectives match against the priorities identified by Leicestershire partners and against the six priority areas identified in the esp document
- Following this review, to identify whether there are any gaps or shortfalls indicating that the objectives of the key agencies do not align with a particular priority
- To establish where possible the lead agency for each priority area, and to highlight those priority areas that have no clear lead agency
- To consider whether the 'lead' agencies identified above feel that they have adequate resources to fund the implementation of activity
- To identify where there are significant gaps in funding
- To make recommendations to the LSEP about how best to deploy its limited resources to help improve the skills base in Leicester Shire sub region
- To advise on how the strategies of the key agencies can be more closely aligned especially around economic development and skills
- To make broad recommendations to partners about the gaps that need to be filled, potential duplication, and where more collaboration is required and where possible identifying options for action
- To explore additional strategic employer engagement activity in areas other than skills
- To consider how successful the existing Leicestershire Employer Engagement group established through the FRESA has been in coordinating employer engagement activity in a strategic manner
- To consider whether other counties in the East Midlands have been more or less successful than Leicestershire in terms of strategic employer engagement activity and the reasons underlying this
- To identify barriers to employer engagement and how they can be overcome

- To identify good practice in terms of employer engagement with regard to skills brokerage so that this can be built into future arrangements
- To make recommendations to local partners about what is needed in Leicestershire to provide more effective, strategic and coordinated employer engagement
- To make recommendations about how we can better join up brokerage and delivery arrangements in the future

The scope of this study is broad in terms of the subject area covering both skills and employer engagement, and in its breadth in respect of the range of organisations involved.

Our approach has therefore been to establish a broad understanding of the skills priorities and employer engagement activity within Leicestershire, with a reflection on the regional perspective. This study does not attempt to analyse the priorities and objectives of individual organisations involved in the skills agenda, but to build a sub regional picture of skills and employer engagement activity, which will help inform discussion and debate amongst key partners in addressing the future skills needs of the Leicestershire.

2.3 Methodology and Approach

The study has been carried out using a combination of desk based research and primary research.

Drawing on relevant documentation (see Appendix 1) the desk-based research involved a review of the Skills priorities of the key agencies involved in the funding, planning and delivery of the Skills Agenda. These priorities were examined to see how they aligned with the six priorities of the Employment Skills and Productivity (esp) Partnership. This review identifies any gaps in priorities covered to support recommendations to LSEP and partners about future planning.

The desk-based review has been complemented by a programme of 15 interviews with the key agencies (see Appendix 2), which aimed to gather partner views on the current and future arrangements for delivery of the skills agenda. A discussion guide (see Appendix 3) was developed and agreed with the project manager, to ensure consistency during the interviews.

Through the research and interviews, this stage also sought to identify the resources committed to the delivery of the skills priorities and where there might be gaps in supporting the key priorities. Findings from this element of the study are intended to inform recommendations regarding future resource planning for LSEP.

A review of the infrastructure for employer engagement has also been undertaken. This has involved a desk-based review of employer engagement in Leicester Shire and enhanced through 11 interviews with key partners (see Appendix 2) to gather views on the strategic approach to coordinated

employer engagement activity. The discussion guide used in the skills agenda interviews was adapted (see Appendix 3).

An analysis of barriers to, and good practice in employer engagement in respect to Skills Brokerage was also undertaken. This involved a review of wider policy documentation relating to employer engagement (see Appendix 1).

This report presents the findings from this study and aims to deliver:

- A matrix (appendix 4) mapping the key agency objectives against priority areas, identifying gaps and shortfalls
- An understanding of who are the lead agencies, those contributing and where there are gaps in coverage
- An indication of the resource commitment to skills priorities identified and the key funding gaps
- An understanding of how effective the employer engagement strategy is in supporting the skills priorities and wider economic development activity, and what actions could be taken to strengthen the current arrangements

3.0 Context

3.1 Introduction

This study has been commissioned by LSEP to help define the priorities for LSEP and other partners in taking forward the skills agenda in Leicester Shire over the next three years.

In its Business Plan, LSEP recognises that “the knowledge, skills, aptitudes and motivation of people are the sub region’s greatest potential assets”. People and Skills, is one of the LSEP four key themes and is concerned with ‘raising the level of skills within the economy through education and training and creating an atmosphere in which attaining and using these skills is respected and matched by the demands of the economy”.

The priorities of the People and Skills theme are guided by regional priorities, set out in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and esp action plan, and by sub regional agendas and priorities. LSEP works with a range of organisations involved in the planning, funding and delivery of skills including the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Job Centre Plus (JCP), Connexions, the City and County Councils, and a range of education and training providers, and partnership organisations such as Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership (LLCLP).

The LSEP has a key role in seeking to influence and co-ordinate the skills activities of its partner organisations to address the priorities within the sub region. The skills challenges facing the sub region are complex and require the involvement and investment of a wide set of organisations in tackling the issues and priorities.

3.2 The Key Skills drivers

A key driver of the skills agenda for the sub region is the recently published **esp action plan** (June 2005). *emda*, working with the key strategic planning and funding bodies in the region has identified a number of priorities and actions against which resources will be targeted to address the employment, skills and productivity issues in the region. The priorities of the action plan include:

- To improve the productivity of businesses and organisations in the region through investment in management, innovation and enterprise
- To provide an integrated demand led offer of business support across the region
- To use public sector planning and procurement as a lever for improving employment, skills and productivity
- To increase participation and attainment of 14-19 year olds
- Develop adult skills at all levels to meet the needs of the regional economy
- To improve the infrastructure and effectiveness of skills supply and the co-ordination of provision

Key to the delivery of the esp action plan is the engagement of employers and wider stakeholders in supporting and investing in the identified actions and sector priorities. The newly formed County Employer Engagement groups (CEEG) involving a core membership of strategic agencies, will be responsible for coordinated and local delivery of several aspects of the regional employment and skills priorities. The key driver for these groups will be achieving demand-led responsive service provision for employers.

In addition to the esp action plan, there are a number of key national strategies and policy statements that will influence the future shape of the skills infrastructure and provision.

The framework for the regional strategy is the government's Skills White Paper "**Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work**", published in March 2005, which builds on the Skills Strategy of 2003. The central ambition of these strategies is ensuring that employers have the right skills to support the success of their business and for individuals to gain the skills they need to be employable and personally fulfilled.

The White Paper sets out a number of proposals, which will focus on putting 'employers' needs centre stage in the design and delivery of training'. These proposals include the roll out of the National Employer Training Programme aiming to raise basic skills in the workplace to Level 2. Sector Skills Councils (SSC) will have a key role in two further proposals around the expansion of the Sector Skills Agreements (SSA) and the development of national Skills Academies, which will aim to prepare young people and adults for successful employment in each major sector of the economy. For individuals the Skills White Paper outlines proposals to help individuals gain the skills and qualifications they need to achieve the quality of life they want. This will be supported through a national entitlement to free tuition for a first full Level 2 qualification.

The "**Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners**" brings together the government's plan for children's services, education and lifelong learning through to HE and the world of work. The emphasis is on structures and systems within secondary education but also draws in 14-19, adult skills and HE. The strategy outlines five key principles of reform: greater personalisation and choice, greater diversity of provision and providers, freedom and autonomy to the front line, and staff development and effective partnerships.

In February 2005, the government published its "**14-19 Education and Skills White Paper**" setting out set proposals for a radical reform of the system of 14-19 Education. The focus of the White Paper is raising participation in education, raising achievement of basic skills amongst young people, improving vocational routes to ensure young people have the skills and knowledge to progress to further learning and employment, and re-engaging the disaffected.

Building on Success for All strategy, in August 2005, the LSC published its **“Agenda for Change”** prospectus which sets out proposals ‘for a dynamic programme of change’ to the Further Education (FE) sector. The prospectus focuses on a number of priorities including ensuring the FE sector responds to the skills needs of employers, and offering quality learning provision – priorities that are reflected in and central to the regional esp Action Plan. The roll out of this Prospectus will take account of the findings of the review by Sir Andrew Foster of Further Education Colleges.

Looking forward to the future skills agenda, **The Leitch Review of Skills**, will report on future skill needs of the UK, based on an examination of a number of key areas including Skills in the UK, Future Challenges, Demand for Improved Skills, Education and Training, and Future Priorities. This report, expected in 2006, will have important implications and will focus on what skills profile the UK should aim to achieve in 2020 in order to support improvements in productivity, growth and social justice over the longer term.

Finally, it is important to reflect on skills within a wider local context. One of the key drivers for this will be the emerging **Local Area Agreements**. Within Leicestershire the Local Area Agreements will operate within the city and at county level and aim to achieve a focus on a shared local agenda delivered through an agreed set of outcomes and a simplified funding arrangement between central and local government. Economic regeneration and skills, particularly in deprived areas will be a core element of these agreements.

3.3 The Challenges for Leicestershire

The challenge for partners in Leicester Shire is to work together within the policy and strategy frameworks set out above to inform future planning of priorities and resources within the sub region to address the skills and economic development needs of individuals and the business community.

The sub region is facing a number of economic and social challenges, which have significant implications for the skills agenda, which have been well reported in documents such as the Leicester Shire Economic Baseline Study of 2004. Of particular note is the concentration in the city of core weaknesses in the labour market – a relatively low economic activity rate and relatively high unemployment which, as the report states, indicates a lack of engagement with the local labour market, the continued effects of industrial restructuring and a mismatch with new service sector jobs being created.

Also, it is important to reflect on the key challenges for the sub region that partners have emphasised through this study:

- The key physical infrastructure developments within the city with the expansion of the Shire’s retail centre, and wider regeneration initiatives with significant implications and opportunities for the construction sector, as well as the on going support sectors such as retail and service

- Continuing growth of the public sector through the hospital expansion plans, growth within the university sector, and potential relocation of government departments to the area

Underpinning these key developments are the on going changes to the economic sectors within the sub region including the need to reinvigorate the industry base of the sub region, i.e. investing in innovations and growth within traditional industry sectors such as manufacturing and engineering, and taking advantage of the expanding logistics and distribution sectors.

The following section examines the infrastructure in place to plan, manage and deliver the skills agenda within the sub region and in particular explores the strengths and weaknesses of the current structure and what actions could be taken in the future to take advantage of the opportunities facing the sub region.

4.0 The Skills Infrastructure

4.1 Introduction

This section of the report focuses on the skills infrastructure within Leicester Shire and aims in particular to identify the lead agencies with responsibility for each priority of the esp action plan along with the main contributory or supporting agencies.

4.2 Partner Infrastructure

The skills infrastructure is complex involving a wide range of organisations and agencies each with its own roles and responsibilities, and targets and budgets to deliver.

Addressing the skills needs of employers and individuals is not the responsibility of a single organisation and how the infrastructure works together is a key concern to government. Recent policy statements emphasise the need for the supply side to better organise itself to respond to the demands of employers and individuals in offering learning provision. The government's Skills White Paper – *Skills: getting on in business; getting on at work*; the Success for All strategy; and the LSC's Agenda for Change all focus on improving the responsiveness and quality of provision for the learner and employer. The Skills White Paper looks to Regional Development Agencies to work, through the Regional Skills Partnerships, with major agencies including the LSC, Jobcentre Plus (JCP), Sector Skills Councils and the Small Business Service (SBS), to establish a common agenda for skills development within each region.

These agencies have a key planning and funding role in influencing and shaping the future skills of the region and through the recently published esp strategy have identified a number of high level aims and actions for the region. One of these aims is to *improve the infrastructure and responsiveness of skills supply and co-ordination of provision*. Through this aim, the esp strategy is looking to better mobilise the resources of the key partners in the region to best effect in investing in skills development and also to establish a 'brand' for quality provision that employers will recognise.

For the purposes of this report, the following broad headings have been identified:

- Strategic planning and funding bodies
- Skills providers
- Employer led representative organisations
- Partnership bodies
- Other skills related agencies/providers

The table below summarises the organisations that fall within each of these headings and the role they play in delivering the skills agenda within the sub region. Each of the organisations has a different and important role to play in securing the improvements in skills required to achieve the ambitions set out

in the regional and national skills strategies. The groupings set out below is intended to help understand the relationship between these organisations and how they might interface with employers and individuals in investing in and delivering skills support.

Table 1 Structure of the Skills Sector in Leicester Shire

Grouping	Role in Skills agenda
Strategic planning and funding agencies , for example the LSC, JCP, SBS, LEAs	These organisations have significant planning and funding powers and responsibilities. Priorities are determined through national strategy and influenced through regional and local agendas. In Leicestershire, the combined resources of these organisations is around £?m per year with a significant proportion of this focused on investing in and raising skill levels
Skills providers such as FE Colleges, HE institutions, Work based learning providers, University for Industry, Schools, community based learning providers and commercial providers	Such organisations are critical in the skills supply chain and much of the current emphasis is on ensuring that provision is not only high quality but that it responds to the needs and demands of employers
Employer led representative organisations , including the Sector Skills Councils, Engineering Employers Federation.	These organisations have a responsibility to understand and represent the views of employers within the Skills arena
Partnership bodies including Leicester Shire Economic Partnership, Leicestershire Together, Leicester Partnership, Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership and Leicester Education and Skills Partnership.	Skills are a key issue for each of these partnerships but from different perspectives. For example the focus for Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership is post 16 publicly funded learning whereas Leicester Partnership is concerned primarily with community skills base through the Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) programme
Other related agencies/ providers , including Connexions, Leicestershire Education Business Consortium, Experience Works, Information Advice and Guidance Partnership.	These organisations have core responsibilities for particular client groups – for example Connexions focus on 13-19 year olds – or specific areas of responsibilities – for example Leicestershire Education Business Consortium promoting and supporting work experience and vocational activities within schools.

The organisations and partnerships described above overlap and are in some cases interrelated at various levels.

Within Leicester Shire, the Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership has played a key role in facilitating partnership between the wide range of organisations involved in skills issues – particularly relating to the Widening Participation agenda. The Partnership has focused on finding

collaborative ways to draw together specialists from across partner agencies, identify what can be best done collaboratively to meet agreed objectives and then to apply resources to achieving the agreed actions. As a result the Partnership has made substantial contributions in achieving key skills targets relating to Widening Participation, Basic Skills, Languages and other skills development. A significant outcome of this activity is that the investment in Basic Skills resulted in Leicestershire being the only LSC in the East Midlands to hit and exceed the 2000-2004 Skills for Life targets.

This study has also examined the role and responsibilities, and the main objectives of the various organisations involved and in particular whether they have a lead or contributory role in supporting the delivery of the esp strategy. Table 3 in section 5 illustrates these roles and responsibilities.

4.3 Future Arrangements

The infrastructure impacting on skills and economic development will undergo significant changes over the next few years, which will undoubtedly have an impact and influence on how priorities are resourced, managed and delivered. These changes include:

- The changes within LSC funded provision resulting from the implementation of the LSC's Agenda for Change, and the Foster Review of Further Education
- Implications for adult education as a result of the Skills White Paper and reform of LSC funding arrangements
- The growing regional agenda and prioritisation of Skills resources and activities at this level
- The implementation of the government's recent Skills White Paper with an increased focus on employer led provision
- Changes to Connexions and services for young people as announced in the recent Youth Matters Green Paper
- Within local authorities the development of Children's Trusts
- The evolution of Local Area Agreements which have economic regeneration and skills as part of their core agenda

4.4 Partner Views

The complexity of the skills infrastructure within Leicestershire has been a key issue highlighted through the partner interview part of this study and the list below summarises a number of these points:

- There is a strong view that greater coherence is needed across the supply side to bring clarity for employers and individuals as to what the key priorities and focus of activity and investment in skills should be.
- Whilst there may be general agreement as to what the range of priorities should be, it is felt by some that there are too many, they aren't sufficiently specific, and that there can be tensions between funding and targets

across the sector undermining the ability to collaborate on delivery of priorities.

- Consideration should be given to establishing a common agenda or master plan on skills, which concentrates on a small number of significant priorities that all agencies can sign up to.
- The major agencies in the statutory sector need to work together to develop and clearly articulate the 'common agenda' in order to give impetus and leadership to other organisations involved to focus on the shared priorities.
- For collaborative working to be successful there must be a 'will' and an investment from partners – strategic agencies and delivery organisations – to ensure realistic and achievable goals are set. Collaborative activity 'doesn't just happen'; it is a difficult and resource intensive process that requires agencies to 'think outside their remit' to achieve shared goals

On the 'demand-side'

- There is a view that employers find the skills market complex, fragmented, and confusing. The system needs simplifying in terms of the offer available to employers, how it can be accessed and what level of support is available.
- Employers are looking for expert advice and support on identifying and addressing their skills needs through a single access point.

4.5 Conclusions

There is significant resource and expertise across the supply network in understanding and articulating the skills priorities for the sub region, which are rehearsed through the various strategy and policy documents of the organisations involved. The challenge is how the key strategic agencies can work together to deliver against these priorities. At present, despite all the partnership structures that exist, there appears to be a 'strategic gap' in articulating a shared agenda of common priorities for Leicester Shire as opposed to the priorities for individual organisations.

The agencies and organisations involved in skills and economic development have a wide set of priorities determined through a number of different routes whether national government objectives and targets, member needs and demands, or community expectations. However there is a broad agreement to the key priorities for the sub region and through the 'common agenda' resources and expertise should be focused on addressing a concentrated number of priorities.

Finally, clarifying and communicating the relationships between organisations is important in ensuring the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the skills agenda are focused on working toward the agreed common agenda.

5.0 Skills Priorities

5.1 Introduction

This section of the report examines the skills priorities of the major agencies involved in the skills agenda. The aim of this section is to establish a 'map' of the skills priorities against the esp strategy to help inform future planning of activity within Leicester Shire.

Appendix 5 presents a detailed mapping exercise of the skills priorities of these agencies against the esp strategy. The analysis has been carried out for each priority and seeks to:

- Assess how well the objectives of the major agencies involved in the skills agenda match the priorities of the esp strategy and the priorities agreed by the Leicester Shire partners
- Identify whether there are any gaps or shortfalls which might indicate that the objectives of the key agencies do not align with a particular priority
- Establish where possible, the lead agency for each priority and highlight those priority areas that have no clear lead agency
- Identify the key delivery partners

For the purposes of this study the mapping exercise has focused on the strategies and plans of the major agencies involved in the skills agenda, i.e. those that have been identified within the esp strategy as having a strategic accountable lead and the major funding partners. This includes the LSC, Jobcentre Plus, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Sector Skills Councils and LSEP (as the primary route for *emda* strategy at local level).

The plans and priorities of other organisations and partnerships involved have also been reviewed to establish a broad understanding of the activities of those involved in the skills agenda. This includes Connexions, the City and County Councils, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP), FE colleges, the Education Business Consortium and the Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership.

A list of the strategies and policy documents reviewed within this study is at Appendix 1.

5.2 Correlation between East Midlands Learning and Skills Priorities and Leicestershire's Skills Priorities

In January 2005, the LSEP Board and a number of key partners met to consider the esp action plan and in response identified a number of priorities for the sub region relating to the six action plan priorities along with a number of key issues. The list below summarises these by matching the priorities agreed by the partnership against the esp Learning & Skills priorities:

Table 2: East Midlands Learning and Skills Priorities and Leicester Shire Skills Priorities

EM Learning & Skills Priorities	Leicester Shire Skills Priorities *
1.Raise demand for skills and employment by improving productivity of business in the region through investment in management and leadership, innovation and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grow employment in higher value added sectors by encouraging inward investment and assisting indigenous businesses to grow. The planned science parks and efforts to secure government department relocation are key to supporting this priority - This will help create a demand for higher level skills and support graduate retention - Encourage enterprise to help stimulate self employment and business starts ups particularly in deprived areas
2.Provide integrated business support that is driven by and responds to needs of customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a new approach to employer engagement through a co-ordinated service
3.Use public sector planning and procurement as a lever for improving employment, skills and business productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Link projects to improve employability with the significant local infrastructure developments, in particular the regeneration activity in Leicester city - Ensure planning processes help local businesses to develop, rather than hinder progress
4.Increase the involvement and achievement of people aged 14-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising aspirations, especially in the west of the city and other deprived areas of the sub region, by developing sustainable career options whilst building on initial motivations/interests - Improving the vocational offer available at age 14 including providing opportunities for enterprise
5.Target employment and skills support at all levels for adults in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priority on encouraging people into first rung learning through targeting more resources and support for successful initiatives such as Community Development Workers - Address the employability barriers faced by many individuals including those without formal recognised qualifications
6.Improve the infrastructure and responsiveness of skills supply and co-ordination of provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a new approach to employer engagement through a co-ordinated service

* based on the January discussion

The partners also identified a number of key issues to be addressed in supporting delivery of the above priorities, including:

- Aligning the strategies of LSEP, LSPs and LSC around economic development and skills

- Agreeing priority sectors for the sub region – the current priorities cover construction, engineering, health and care, and retail
- Promoting parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications and a more positive image for vocational routes to students, parents and employers
- Encouraging employers to invest in their workforce through supporting achievement of transferable skills, recognised by qualifications
- Addressing particular inter-related issues around social disadvantage within the most deprived areas of the sub region. These include low levels of employment, a lack of economic activity, low aspirations, low incomes, poor health, transport difficulties and a poor physical environment

Appendix 5 expresses in more detail, how the esp and Leicester Shire Partner priorities relate to the objectives of each of the strategic skills agencies and other supporting partners.

5.3 Matrix of Priorities, Lead Agencies and Supporting Partners

The table that follows maps the shared partner priorities for Leicester Shire against the esp priorities, identifies who are the lead partners, and the contributory / delivery partners. The final column is a summary of some of the key priority actions that partners involved in this study considered important in taking forward the sub regional skills agenda. Whilst this list is not exhaustive, it provides an indication of the types of actions that organisations are focusing on.

Skills and Employer Engagement

Table 3: Matrix of lead agencies, supporting partners and indicative actions

Shared partner priorities	Esp priority	Lead partners	Contributory / Delivery Partners	Key priority actions (see note above)
Raising Aspirations	4	LSC, Local Education Authorities (LEAs)	Connexions, Schools, education & training providers, Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS), HEIs SSCs, Education Business Link Organisations (EBLOs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More collaborative activity between schools and businesses to raise awareness of young people of employment opportunities and employer demands • Raise profile of apprenticeship programme and invest resources to engage more employers • Target specific geographical areas in particular west of city
Improving the vocational offer at age 14	4	LSC, LEAs	Connexions, Schools, education & training providers, VCS, HEIs SSCs, EBLOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in initiatives such as SETPOINT to encourage young people to enter priority sectors such as engineering and manufacturing
Focus on employability not just skills	5	JCP, LSC, SSCs, Skills4Business network, HEIs	Employers, Trade Unions, education & training providers, brokers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in innovative approaches to training workforce
Establish a construction academy	1,3	LSC, Skills4Business network, JCP, <i>emda</i> , LSEP	SSPs, SMEs, HEIs, regional innovation networks, Connexions, LEAs, Young Enterprise, VCS, Local Authorities, SSCs, LSC, SBS/BL, education & training providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring qualifications frameworks in construction enables the self employed to improve skills
Focus on other growth sectors	1,3	LSEP, LSC, Skills4Business network, JCP, <i>emda</i>	SSPs, Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs), HEIs, regional innovation networks, Connexions, LEAs, Young Enterprise, VCS, Local Authorities, SSCs, education & training providers, SBS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting new entrants to priority sectors to replace ageing workforce (Engineering) • Develop skills academy for service sector that would support number of industries through developing transferable skills, particularly in young people

Skills and Employer Engagement

Table 3: continued

Shared partner priorities	Esp priority	Lead partners	Contributory / Delivery Partners	Key priority actions
Grow employment in higher value added sectors	1	LSEP, LSC, Skills4Business, JCP	SSPs, SMEs, HEIs, regional innovation networks, connexions, LEAs, Young Enterprise, VCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support adult apprenticeships in priority sectors to raise skills levels of broader potential workforce • Invest in initiatives to support graduate retention, e.g. science parks, inward investment activity, incubation units, sector 'flagship' projects such as 'The Depot' for the creative industries • Strategic collaboration to achieve greater investment in sub region from government bodies such as emda to priority sector initiatives • Work collaboratively on inward investment strategy bringing together all aspects of support for potential investors including skills, land, other business support services
Encourage enterprise (in schools and deprived areas)	1	LEBC, LSC, Skills4Business,	SSPs, SMEs, HEIs, regional innovation networks, connexions, LEAs, VCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in collaborative projects between schools, business and public sector • Running Young Enterprise programme
Strengthen employer engagement	2	JCP, LSC, emda, LSEP, Chamber/Business Link	Brokers, intermediaries, business to business networks, Business Link, Skills4Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in employer engagement at all levels particularly with SME's • Have clearly defined 'offer' for employers • Support initiatives which link training to productivity • Supporting employer led initiatives such as the Skills Centre project at the airport

5.4 Analysis of Mapping Exercise

Based on the outcome of the mapping exercise (as set out in appendix 5) and the summary of the East Midlands and Leicester Shire priorities listed in tables 2 and 3, the following observations are made:

5.4.1 Complementarity of Priorities and Objectives

From tables 2 and 3 and the tables in appendix 5, it can be concluded that at a strategic level there is broad correlation between the shared priorities of Leicester Shire partners and the esp action plan.

However it could also be argued that this would be expected given the involvement and commitment of these agencies in agreeing the esp action plan and that the framework for regional and local plans is broadly set within national strategies such as the Skills White Paper.

This is also reflected in the findings from the interviews that all partners were broadly content with the priorities identified. However, there were a number of comments made about the priorities that are important to reflect in this report:

- There is a lack of focus as to what the key priorities for the sub region should be and partners would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively to focus on concrete tasks that would have an immediate impact on the challenges facing the sub region
- At the same time, partners are looking for strategic leadership from the main statutory agencies on a core set of priorities to provide an emphasis and focus for wider skills activities in the medium to longer term
- However, partners recognise that there are a number of immediate skills and labour market pressures facing the sub region particularly in the city, and feel that time spent on preparing a joint strategy would divert resources away the much needed focus on these immediate pressures
- Nevertheless, partners would welcome a move by the strategic agencies to establish a 'common agenda' which focused on a core set of sub regional priorities, effectively localising the esp action plan

5.4.2 Gaps / Shortfalls

The mapping exercise identifies that there is broad complementarity between the priorities of the main sub regional skills agencies and those set out in the esp action plan.

However, through the interviews, this study has identified that partners feel there is a 'gap' in relation to how these priorities are addressed. The example of the pressures within the Construction sector was given a number of times and that without a shared response to addressing the skills and labour pressures facing the sector at present, partners feel that the opportunity for

local people to take advantage of the significant infrastructure developments within the city and county will be lost.

More generally there is a degree of concern about a potential divergence between the skills agenda and the education/social inclusion agenda and the results this might have in certain groups 'falling through the gap'

5.4.3 Leadership

From table 3 above clear strategic leads against each of the esp priorities can be identified. Overall the lead agencies are those organisations with statutory or strategic responsibility for planning and funding national and regional priorities such as the LSC, Jobcentre Plus, Sector Skills Councils and Sub-regional Strategic Partnerships. The contributory partners identified against each of the priorities, illustrates the range of organisations involved in supporting the delivery of these key priorities.

The challenge however is mobilising the plans, resources and expertise of all these organisations to work collaboratively to address the sub regional priorities. Some partners feel that the absence of a joint approach to sub regional planning has resulted in a 'strategy vacuum' particularly with respect to identifying, agreeing, resourcing and implementing shared skills objectives.

Whilst partners recognise that employer engagement is a complex area of activity and that no single organisation or partnership of organisations has sole responsibility for engaging employers at strategic or operational level, there is a view that greater clarity is needed particularly from the service providers about what employer engagement is trying to achieve.

The view of the partners of the newly established County Employer Engagement Group is that it will need to focus on bringing together the strategic and statutory skills agencies to consider provision and how it impacts on employers, but at the same time will need to be clear in how it intends to involve and work with employers at all levels.

5.4.4 Resources

Whilst, overall, there is a substantial level of public sector investment across the main agencies in the skills agenda, the allocation of this resource is tied to the achievement and delivery of specific targets and outputs that relate to national programme objectives or PSA targets.

This study has not sought to identify the specific resources available to support the esp priorities at sub regional level but has focused on the main sources of public sector funding supporting skills activities. Table 4 provides an indication of what these resources are:

Table 4: Resources

Organisation	Budgets (£)	Period	Spending priorities
LSC	£160.5m £16.4m	2005/06 2004-2008	- FE (£89m) WBL (£10.5m) School Sixth Forms (£38m) Development Funding (£3m) Other programme funding (including ETP) (£20m) - ESF current tendering and already contracted
LSEP	3.3m	2005/06-2007/08	- Capital investment in training provision - Raising demand for higher level skills - Raising basic skills and developing ILMs - Encouraging graduate retention - Supporting city academies and other centres of excellence
JCP	Figures not provided		

A number of partners identified a key resource gap as the lack of funding available to support employer engagement. An example given was in the apprenticeship programme, where the implication of a lack of resources for employer engagement is that young people are at best unable to find appropriate placements and at worst disengage from the apprenticeship programme and follow alternative routes, which may not be the most appropriate match to their skills and interests.

5.5 Conclusions

A number of immediate challenges have been identified through this study that relate to the broad regional and sub regional priorities, but that require an urgent response at strategic level to ensure that needs are addressed and opportunities are not lost.

These relate primarily to the significant developments taking place in the sub region that will have considerable skills and labour demands in the short term. These include:

- The physical regeneration and infrastructure developments, which have significant skills and labour supply implications for the construction sector
- Supporting the growth of public services in particular the health service through the on going expansion of organisations operating in this sector

Partners also need to understand and establish a set of shared medium to longer term priorities for the sub region. These should be framed by the key

national and regional strategies outlined earlier in the report but delivered within the context of the needs of the sub region.

Employer engagement in skills is now a key priority across all government agendas. Given its wider economic development remit, LSEP must have a key role in acting as a catalyst to bring employers and the service sector together in addressing the sub regional skills priorities.

6.0 Employer Engagement in Skills

6.1 Introduction

This section of the report:

- Explores briefly the concept of employer engagement
- Examines the infrastructure supporting employer engagement activity
- Explores the various barriers to employer engagement and ways in which they can be overcome
- Offers some examples of good practice of employer engagement in skills brokerage

6.2 Employer Engagement

The importance of involving employers in skills and economic development activity is recognised at all levels. However, defining and putting this into practice is fraught with difficulties, tensions and contradictions. For example, current government policy places responsibility on the 'supply-side' to ensure that provision is responsive to employer needs and demands. However this assumes that employers are aware of and can effectively articulate their skills and development needs beyond immediate skill requirements. Also recent policy focuses on raising skills levels to support overall national objectives of increased productivity. However the priorities of the individual company are more likely to focus on business strategy and the 'bottom line'.

Within Government policy there is now significant emphasis on employer engagement in addressing the current and future skills needs and this is central to the recently published Skills White Paper, '*Skills Getting on in business, Getting on at work*' which places responsibility on regional skills partnerships, working with a range of statutory and strategic agencies, and delivery organisations, to ensure skills provision is demand led, coordinated, coherent and accessible to employers.

The core initiatives of the White Paper – the National Employer Training Programme, Sector Skills Agreements, and Skills Academies – all anticipate that employers will play a key role in determining and investing in future skills provision.

This national priority is translated within the East Midlands Employment Skills and Productivity action plan, which looks to the newly formed County Employer Engagement Groups to take responsibility for coordinating local delivery of several aspects of the action plan and to ensure services are accessible and flexible to employers.

The challenge to the 'supply-side' is how to involve and engage employers in all aspects of this agenda – strategy and planning, management and resourcing, expertise and delivery. Defining and understanding what 'employer engagement' is and what the expectations are on both sides will be

a key factor in this. However, there do appear to be a number of core elements:

- Driving up demand and employer commitment to skills development
- Integrating skills development within business strategies
- Maximising utilisation of current and potential skills within the workforce
- Raising awareness and understanding of future as well as current skill needs and changing labour market conditions

To meet this agenda it is important that the supply-side is able to:

- Help employers identify, understand and articulate their skills needs through robust labour market and economic intelligence
- Provide a focus and framework for effective and targeted investment of public sector and private resources
- Join up the skills and productivity agendas
- Make the business case for investment in skills
- Respond effectively to articulated and forecast demands

Across the supply-side sector there is already a significant investment of time and resources in encouraging employers to be involved at various levels in delivering the skills and economic development agenda. Approaches vary but seem to have a *common objective of encouraging employers to participate and invest their skills, expertise and resources in supporting the delivery of the skills and economic development agenda.*

However, this emphasis on employer engagement has also potentially added confusion within the system. Strategies for securing the involvement of employers varies across the different agencies involved and many employers find this multiplicity of agencies, funding, systems and priorities seeking their attention and investment, little more than confusing, inaccessible and ineffective.

6.3 Employer Engagement in Leicester Shire

Sustainable and effective employer engagement requires collaboration across a number of organisations from within the supply network and business community. Within Leicester Shire there are a variety of agencies and partnerships seeking the involvement of employers in the skills and wider economic development agenda. Achieving coordination and coherence of this infrastructure for employers is a significant challenge to the network.

There is a view from both within the public sector network and business community within Leicester Shire, that at present the infrastructure is fragmented, initiative led and duplicative of resource, expertise and time. The consequence of this is that employers find it difficult to access the support they need and ultimately become sceptical about the benefits to the business. In balance to this, the employer infrastructure is dynamic and complex.

The business community in Leicester Shire is dominated by SMEs with only a relatively small number of larger companies. Serving this customer base presents challenges to the supply side not least in terms of communication.

6.4 Employer Engagement Initiatives

There are many examples of employer engagement activity across the sub region and this operates at all levels – strategic involvement of employers in public sector programming and planning through to operational involvement in individual initiatives.

There are a number of key initiatives currently underway including the **City Growth Strategy** within Leicester. The aim of this initiative is to engage the private sector more effectively in the economic regeneration of the city with a focus on jobs, income and wealth opportunities. A key feature of the City Growth Strategy is the focus on geographic industry clusters which aim to raise competitive advantage to firms through increased expertise, economies of scale, better information, supporting infrastructure and stronger linkages.

The **Employer Training Pilot (ETP)** led by the LSC covering the whole of the sub region which aims to increase skills levels of the workforce to level 2 through providing investment and support to companies. Training needs of the individual and the company are identified and appropriate provision brokered through high quality providers. There are also sector led initiatives with key employers including the work of the **Engineering Employers Federation** with companies such as CAT, Plastic Omnium, and Brush, linked in with relevant Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVEs) in the area which aim to increase skills levels through apprenticeship and NVQ programmes.

The **Sector Skills Councils** have a key role in engaging employers in skills activities. GOSKILLS for example engage employers through consultative forums such as their Employer Group to consult with and coordinate employer views in response to key skills developments such as the esp action plan. The SSCs also encourage involvement of employers in key skills initiatives such as the ETP to raise skill levels within key sectors.

Education and Training Providers have a key role in engaging employers and through initiatives such as the **COVEs** and the work of Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership, there are a number of projects being developed which seek to increase the involvement of employers in a range of programmes including apprenticeships. **Research and sharing of good practice** is a key element of this. Two examples include the current research project by EBLO to explore the issue of employer engagement in

apprenticeship programmes and also the development of a good practice guide by the Centre for Enterprise on engaging employers in learning. Both of these are to be published later in the year.

Finally there are examples of where employers have taken the lead and initiative to address skills issues, for example the development of the **Skills Centre** at East Midlands airport to address the skills issues of the employers located in and around the airport.

6.5 Employer Engagement Groups

The Framework for Employment and Skills Action (FRESA) – the predecessor to the esp action plan, encouraged each sub region to establish an employer engagement group to implement the priorities of the FRESA strategy. However, the terms of reference and guidance for these groups was relatively loose which resulted in various approaches being adopted and little coordination of activity across the region. Each sub regional group appointed a lead organisation, for example in Leicestershire, Business Link took on this role, in Derbyshire it was Job Centre Plus and in others Government Office or the LSC had the lead.

In publishing the esp action plan partners have agreed a more robust framework for the new CEEGs. These groups will have a key role in the delivery of a collaborative and coherent service to employers within the sub region. A Framework Document setting out terms of reference and core membership for these groups has been agreed (see Appendix 5) and there will be a particular focus on ensuring employer demands are met at a local level and the priorities of the esp are delivered.

The work of these groups will be to bring together the ‘service providers’ within the sub region to develop an improved shared understanding of the range of services to employers provided by each organisation, how they interact with employers and how they can work more closely together in the future to achieve the priorities of the esp action plan.

The groups will concentrate primarily on Priority 2 of the action plan *“To provide integrated business support that is driven by and responds to the needs of customers”* and will also be involved in the future with the implementation of Priority 3, *“To use public sector procurement as a lever for improving employment, skills and productivity”*. The CEEG should also give consideration to the activities of priority 6 *“to improve the infrastructure and responsiveness of skill supply and the co-ordination of provision”*. The ability of providers to respond effectively to skills demands with high quality provision will be a key element of the success of the work of the CEEGs.

These groups will be a key driver in turning the regional priorities and plans into a reality for employers and it is important that in developing its role, the Groups look to existing practice of working with employers in the skills arena. To support this the CEEGs across the region will meet regularly to share good

practice to support local developments in each area. A number of activities have already been carried out by some of the CEEGs including:

- Reviewing who the skills providers are in the area and what they offer to employers
- Holding events involving the various service providers to share practice and experience of working with employers
- Preparation of materials outlining the range of services offered to employers amongst these organisations to help inform advisors of the products available

Within Leicester Shire the LSC chairs the CEEG. It is still in its formative stages but is expected to involve representatives from *emda*, LSEP, Business Link, Jobcentre Plus, and employer intermediary representatives including the Chamber, LABA and LACBA.

A key role of the group will be to agree employer targets by sector and geographic split and then seek to work together to organise the service provision that responds to the needs of employers within these groups.

The CEEG is not intended to be an organisation in its own right but to be a partnership mechanism to focus the work of the skills providers in the area on delivering the 'single offer' to employers and achieving the 'no wrong door' principle.

6.6 Engaging with Employers

A key focus of the CEEGs will be tackling the supply side issues of service provision. However, it is important that the process of communicating to and with employers on what the 'offer' is and what role employers will play in influencing the future skills agenda is also addressed. There are many different forms and levels of employer engagement and through this study the following have been identified:

Table 5: Examples of Employer Engagement Activity In Leicestershire

Forms of Employer Engagement	Examples of activity within Leicestershire
<i>The Strategic Partner</i> – organisations who seek to work with and involve employers in the strategic planning of skills activities	Statutory or strategic agencies, through employer representation at Board level, e.g. LSC, LSEP
<i>The Broker</i> – organisations who work with employers to help them identify their training needs and then broker funding and appropriate provision to meet this need.	SkillsPoint developed by South Leicestershire College The Engineering Employers Federation
<i>The Delivery Agency</i> – organisations who deliver training required by employers	Education and training providers including FE colleges, work based learning providers, other private sector providers, VCS organisations

<i>The Advisor</i> – organisations who work with employers to raise their awareness and involvement in the skills agenda	Education Business Link Consortium Sector Skills bodies
<i>The Development Partner</i> – organisations who work with companies on joint initiatives such as research, regeneration initiatives	HEIs, Local Authorities, education and training providers, Leicester City Growth Strategy

In practice, there is not necessarily a clear-cut distinction between the organisations falling within these definitions. There is an overlap of roles, which tends to result in multiple targeting of employers, i.e. employers receiving contact from more than one agency. However in mapping out the work of the CEEG it will be important to achieve a clearer understanding of who is working with employers, how and with what objective. With this knowledge, the CEEG will have an extensive communication network through which to market and promote services on a common ‘no wrong door’ basis.

6.7 Barriers/Challenges to Employer Engagement

However, the barriers and challenges to raising awareness and investment in skills are not of the supply side alone. There are many factors influencing the ability of an employer to becoming actively involved in skills and economic development activity, whether on an individual or collective basis. These factors are well documented and need to be considered in taking forward employer engagement activity within Leicester Shire. The table below summarises some of the barriers and challenges to engaging the business community in skills and economic development activity and also identifies actions to overcome such barriers:

Table 6: Barriers and Challenges to Engaging Business and Actions to Overcome Barriers

Barriers/Challenges to employer engagement	Strategies for overcoming barriers
Lack of a strong representation and involvement of business community at strategic level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve a partnership that gives businesses more influence, creates opportunities for joint marketing or purchasing, develops more commitment to local areas, and provides a vehicle for more proactive involvement of employers with public sector partners
Limited view of potential contribution of business community to skills and economic development agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build consensus amongst businesses about local challenges and opportunities • Bring interests together in ways which provide mutual advantage • Recognise that businesses are both a service provider and potential partner in projects to implement skills and economic development strategies.
Lack of coordination across the public sector and provider network in working with employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on particular concrete tasks, which might be project or initiative led
‘Employer offer’ is poorly defined, promoted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being business led and investing

by a fragmented and often competitive supplier network employers	sufficient resource in support structures to respond effectively
Delivery of learning provision to SMEs is expensive and many suppliers seek to work with larger employers where returns are greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest resource in innovative approach which encourages collaboration, sharing of expertise and resources
Lack of incentive to get involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concentrate on the business case – setting out arguments about how individual businesses will gain and providing relevant case studies about how others have benefited
Limited time, resource and expertise to look for and take up opportunities for skills development of workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer single access point to skills support Present the business case for skills development and identify case studies
Confusion about qualifications structure and frameworks and how these relate to individual business or industry needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear communication through representative bodies

6.8 Brokerage and Delivery

Developing and implementing a Skills Brokerage model is a key element of the regional esp action plan. This will be aligned to the Business Link brokerage model and will be a key mechanism for the delivery of the National Employer Training Programme from April 2006. The detail of how this model will operate at sub regional and regional level is still to be determined but it is expected that the CEEG will have responsibility for establishing the framework and strategy for the Skills Brokerage arrangements including targets, sector and geographic priorities.

The aim of the Skills Brokerage model will be to present a coordinated and credible 'Employer Offer', delivered through an organised supply side effort, which responds to and communicates with the business community.

Delivery forms a key part of the model and the relationship between brokerage and delivery has been explored with partners through this study, which has identified a number of features to be considered in the development of the model:

<p>Coordination and access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish single point of access for employers on skills - Coordinate marketing and promotion 	<p>Resourcing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest resources in employer engagement activity particularly within apprenticeship programme
<p>Expertise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure those with responsibility for contacting employers have expertise required to identify and articulate needs and skills to effectively broker most appropriate provision to meet the need 	<p>Strategic recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure brokerage role has strategic recognition amongst key agencies and has sufficient powers and responsibility to take forward brokerage role

<p>'Account management'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer account management service where demanded by employer to ensure interventions are followed through and desired impact secured 	<p>Clarity of 'offer'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be clear about what the brokerage service will offer – it can't be 'all things to all people'
<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have clear communication between supply side of key priorities and focus for investment - Work more collaboratively on sharing information and data on contact with employers – a shared contacts database? 	<p>Clarity of relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on the areas of engagement activity - Set targets and establish clear outcomes - Be clear about expectations of employers, the commitment required and timescales for activities

6.9 SWOT Analysis of Employer Engagement Activity in Leicester Shire

Employer Engagement activity in Leicester Shire is varied and has a number of strengths and weaknesses to build on and address if the opportunities are to be maximised and the threats addressed as summarised in the SWOT analysis below.

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High priority given to strengthening the involvement of employers in skills • Public sector and supplier focus on provision that meets needs of employers • A diverse SME base with, in some cases, strong community and cultural associations • Established employer led groups • Number of good examples of effective employer engagement activity at project level 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of large companies to provide direct representation of the needs of the business community • There are many barriers affecting ability and interest of business to be involved in skills activity • Lack of coordinated approach from public sector and providers on working with employers • Plethora of agencies seeking to offer support to businesses and signposting between organisations is weak • Lack of resources across public sector and supply network to fund employer engagement activity
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise interest of business community particularly skills, resources, ideas and perspectives which contribute to new and better solutions to community issues • Framework now in place for CEEG and mechanisms for sharing good practice across the region • Significant private sector investment planned within Leicester Shire particularly the city resulting in opportunities to involve employers in identifying needs and investing in skills development • Further develop private sector engagement achieved through City Growth Strategy 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability of 'supply side' to raise understanding and awareness of businesses as to the potential benefits and contribution they can make to economic development and skills • Employer engagement activity is insufficiently resourced • Employers become disengaged from provision and skills development and progression stagnates

6.10 Conclusions

Employer engagement in skills activity is a complex area and one which the strategic agencies in Leicester Shire need to work together on to provide a clear framework and strategy for engaging with and supporting the business community. There is currently a multitude of agencies offering support to employers and it is important that there is some structure and shape to this activity.

The relationship between the 'supply side' and the business community must be reflected at two levels – firstly at strategic level involving key companies for the sub region to understand the broad barriers and challenges faced by the business community and what services are needed to encourage companies to stay, grow and develop; and secondly at operational level, working with individual or groups or companies to identify more effectively what are the skills issues and how these can be addressed.

Partners need to work together to deliver 'quick wins' to engage the private sector in the skills agenda at both strategic and operational level, if longer term involvement is to be achieved and sustained.

There is a 'window of opportunity' in the sub region at present with the level of private and public sector investment being focused on key geographical and sector based initiatives. The challenge for the supply side is to mobilise its shared resources and expertise to respond to the skills opportunities arising from these developments.

Appendix 1
Documentation

This table is a list of the key documentation reviewed as part of this study.

Organisation	Document reference
DfES	Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work. March 2005
LSEP	Business Plan 2005-2008
Leicestershire LSC	Annual Plan 2005-06
Jobcentre Plus	2005-06 Business Plan, and 2004 Co-Financing Prospectus
Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership	Three year vision and Development Plan 2005-2008 Implementation Plan "The contribution of work led by the learning partnership to the economic development agenda in Leicester Shire"
Leicester City Council	Corporate Plan 2003-2006
Leicester College	Strategic Plan 2003-2006 – summary
Leicester 14-19 Action Plan	June 2004
Connexions	City and County Improvement Plans 2005/06
Leicestershire Education Business Company	Business Plan 2004/05
LSEP	Leicester Shire Economic Base Line Study 2004
LSC	Learning and Skills – the Agenda for Change Prospectus August 2005
DFES	Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners July 2004
HEFCE	Annual Review 2004/05

Appendix 2
Interviewees

Interviewees

Name	Organisation
Martin Traynor	Business Link Leicestershire and Leicestershire Chamber
Rosemary Beard	Connexions
Louise Artuch	<i>Emda</i>
Roy Botterill	Leicester Business Voice
Lowell Williams	South Leicester College
Peter Small	Institute of Directors
Keith Burn	Jobcentre Plus
Ray Arkless	LANTERN
Andrew Cozens	Leicester City Council
Alan Helliwell	Leicester Partnership
Martin Peters	Leicester Shire Promotions
Ray Flude	Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership
Kishor Tailor	Leicester Shire Economic Partnership
Barbara Chantrill	Leicestershire Education Business Consortium
David Nelson	Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council
Robert Watson	Engineering Employers Federation
Paul Fleming	Skills for Business
Professor Musa Mihsein	De Montfort University
Bob Burgess	University of Leicester
Richard Newbold	Loughborough University
Karen Fowlds	County Employer Engagement Group

Appendix 3
Discussion Guide

LSEP People & Skills and Employer Engagement study

Discussion Guide

Background

- The purpose of study is to help define the priorities for LSEP and other partners in taking forward the skills agenda in Leicestershire
- A mapping exercise is being undertaken to ascertain the extent to which policy frameworks complement each other, including how current activities that are being undertaken fit with each of the areas identified by LSEP board and against the six **esp** priorities
- The study will also make recommendations about how local partners can develop a more effective and co-ordinated approach to employer engagement
- MOF will carry out desk research and review strategic plans of agencies responsible for planning, funding, and delivering the People & Skills agenda

Context

- Provide an overview of the main remit of the organisation and how this relates to People & Skills and/or Employer Engagement

Partners response to esp priorities

- The regional **esp** has now been launched setting out the 6 priorities of the strategy. In January the LSEP board, with number of key partners, agreed a response to the strategy, which outlined a number of local priorities including:
 - Raising aspirations
 - Improve the vocational offer at the age of 14
 - Focus on employability rather than just skills
 - Establish a construction academy
 - Focus on other growth sectors including health, education, engineering, retail, business services, hotels and catering
 - Grow employment in the higher value added sectors
 - Encourage enterprise in schools and in deprived areas
 - Strengthen employer engagement and develop a coordinated service
 - Ensure planning process helps rather than hinders local progress
- Do you feel that the priorities set out in the response from partners is still appropriate and relevant in the context of the recently launched strategy?

Partner priorities

- Outline the key priorities of the organisation in respect to People & Skills
- How are these determined?
- What consideration is given to national and regional priorities, including the regional employment, skills and productivity plan?
- How do the organisations priorities relate to the six **esp** priorities and the identified local priorities?
- How does the organisation work with key partners and wider stakeholders to determine its priorities?
- Does the organisation take lead responsibility for these key priorities in terms of planning and funding?
- If not, does the organisation offer a supporting or contributory role to others taking a lead?
- How does the organisation achieve and/or deliver these priorities?

Gaps in Priorities

- What do you consider to be the key gaps in support for People & Skills in Leicestershire?
- Does the organisation seek to engage with employers in delivering its People & Skills priorities?
- If so what type of activity does this involve?

Good practice

- Can you give examples of activities funded or delivered by the organisation that have been successful in engaging employers in People & Skills activities?
- Has the organisation had any involvement in Leicestershire Employer Engagement Group set up to support FRESA?
- How do you feel this group performed and what in your view did it achieve? Can you identify any problems or reasons as to why it might not have been successful?

Barriers to Employer Engagement

- What are the barriers to engaging employers in this area of activity?
- How should or can these be overcome?
- What can partners in Leicestershire do to achieve more effective, strategic and co-ordinated employer engagement?
- What opportunities might there be for joining up brokerage and delivery arrangements in the future?

Appendix 4
Mapping Skills Priorities

Introduction

This section seeks to match the key priorities of the major skills strategic and funding bodies in the sub region, against each of the six esp priorities. This mapping exercise is based on a review of the strategies and plans of the five strategic accountable agencies identified within the esp as having a lead role in the delivery of the skills outputs and milestones set out in the strategy.

The tables in this appendix:

- Identify the key priorities of each of the main agencies against the six esp priorities
- Set out some of the key actions planned to support these priorities where available
- Outline some of the providers and actions of supporting or contributory partners where applicable – this list is not exhaustive but is intended to provide an illustration of the range of activities of the various skills agencies involved

Key priority sectors

The list below summarises the key priority sectors identified by partners in their plans:

Priority Sectors
-Key company clusters in financial and business services, high technology, food and drink, logistics and transport, creative industries, clothing and textiles and public sector services
-Construction; Engineering; Health and Care; Retail; Logistics and Distribution; Tourism, culture, leisure and hospitality; Food & Drink; Clothing and Textiles; Creative Industries; Medical, pharmaceutical and biotech; Environmental Technologies

Skills and Employer Engagement

Priority 1
To raise demand for skills and employment, by improving the productivity of business in the region through investment in management and leadership, innovation and enterprise

Leicester Shire's Common Priorities

- Need to grow employment in higher value added sectors by encouraging inward investment and by assisting indigenous business to grow. This will help create a demand for higher level skills and support graduate retention
- Encourage enterprise to help stimulate self employment and business starts ups particularly in deprived areas

	LSEP	LSC	JCP	SSCs	HEIs
KEY PRIORITIES	Raising demand for higher level skills Identifying those employment clusters that are important to the future sub regional economy	The LSC will make learning truly demand led so that it better meets the needs of employers, young people and adults by working with partners to drive up demand for skills and improve the responsiveness of supply in all of those sectors	Working with employers and partners to promote growth in the labour market	Improving productivity, business and public service performance	Enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society
Key actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for the Learning Chain -Supporting the Health Authority Workforce Confederation -Supporting city academies and other centres of excellence including a business enterprise school -Supporting more people to set up in business -Improving access to the universities' knowledgeable base -Enabling graduate placements within SME's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop the responsiveness of providers to the demands of employers focusing on the six local priority sectors -Improve the quality and volume of apprenticeship offers in priority sectors -Develop local employer led work based activity in priority sectors including encouraging new institutes and a private sector COVE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide high quality demand led services to employers which help fill job vacancies quickly and effectively with well prepared and motivated employees 		

Skills and Employer Engagement

Priorities / actions of supporting partners						
Connexions	Leicestershire County Council	Leicester City Council	Leicestershire Together	FE Colleges / CoVEs	Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership / LANTERN	EBLO
Support development of enterprising behaviour in young people				Delivery of skills at level 3 provision at 3 COVEs - South Leicestershire College COVE in Supervisory Management Skills Brooksby Melton College COVE in Land Based Service Engineering Stephenson College COVE in Motor Vehicles	Focus on economic development and skills shortages	Coordination and management of Young Enterprise programme

Skills and Employer Engagement

Priority 2
To provide an integrated, and demand led offer of business support across the region

Leicester Shire's Common Priorities
- Develop a new approach to employer engagement through a co-ordinated service

	LSEP	LSC	JCP	SSCs	HEIs
KEY PRIORITIES	Supporting the creation of one stop number for businesses and one stop facility for business support	Make learning truly demand led so that it better meets the needs of employers, young people and adults	Working with employers and partners to address market failure in the labour market		
Key actions	-Supporting development of enhanced start up, high growth and aftercare support to SME's	-Support the creation of a regional contract with emda to develop a regional workforce development service which target the key sectors and links business support to skills support -Develop brokerage arrangements to enable more involvement of employers in work based delivery	-Provide high quality demand led services to employers which help fill job vacancies quickly and effectively with well prepared and motivated employees	Support development of brokerage standards	

Priorities / actions of supporting partners						
Connexions	Leicestershire County Council	Leicester City Council	Leicestershire Together	FE Colleges / CoVEs	Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership / LANTERN	EBLO
						Coordination and management of Young Enterprise programme
						Organising & managing work experience including leading on an employer capacity building project

Skills and Employer Engagement

Priority 3
Use public sector planning and procurement as a lever for improving employment, skills and business productivity

Leicester Shire's Common Priorities

- Link projects to improve employability with the significant local infrastructure developments, in particular the regeneration activity in Leicester city
- Ensure planning processes help local businesses to develop, rather than hinder progress

	LSEP	LSC	JCP	SSCs	HEIs
KEY PRIORITIES	Work with mainstream providers to focus on employment clusters that are key to sub regional economy	Provide skills needed to help all individuals into jobs	Help people facing the greatest barriers to employment to compete effectively in the labour market and move into and remain in employment	Improving productivity, business and public service performance	Enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society
Key actions	Developing intermediate labour markets	Work with key partners to ensure that local people, particularly those unemployed and disadvantaged communities develop the necessary skills to benefit from new job opportunities in economic development 'hot spots'			

Priorities / actions of supporting partners						
Connexions	Leicestershire County Council	Leicester City Council	Leicestershire Together	FE Colleges / CoVEs	Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership / LANTERN	EBLO
					Focus on economic development and skills shortages	Organising & managing work experience including leading on an employer capacity building project

Skills and Employer Engagement

Priority 4
Increase the involvement and achievement of people aged 14-19

Leicester Shire's Common Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising aspirations, especially in the west of the city and other deprived areas of the sub region, by developing sustainable career options whilst building on initial motivations/interests - Improving the vocational offer available at age 14 including providing opportunities for enterprise

	LSEP	LSC	JCP	SSCs	HEIs
KEY PRIORITIE S	Help to raise aspirations and standards amongst vulnerable children in the city and those 'coasting' in the county	Ensure that all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality, relevant learning opportunities		Improving learning supply, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards	

Skills and Employer Engagement

Key actions	<p>-Supporting city academies and other centres of excellence including a business enterprise school through capital investment</p>	<p>-Implement the Strategic Area Review recommendations with respect to 14-19 proposals through zonal groups and area planning & partnership groups</p> <p>-Develop a new curriculum in schools & colleges that gives learners from 14 onwards the opportunity to progress in education, get a job where training is provided & return to full time learning as & when needed</p> <p>-Extend choice and participation in disadvantaged areas in particularly in west of city</p> <p>-Develop strategic approach to advice & guidance with partners across 14 to post 19 in Leicestershire so that more young people and adults can find training that meets their needs and those of the local economy</p> <p>-Target stereotypical choices particularly in work based learning</p>			
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Skills and Employer Engagement

Priorities / actions of supporting partners						
Connexions	Leicestershire County Council	Leicester City Council	Leicestershire Together	FE Colleges / CoVEs	Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership / LANTERN	EBLO
Support engagement of young people in further education, employment or training on leaving school	Raising achievement in Leicestershire Schools	Raise educational standards for all children and young people	Young people to have access to co-ordinated information, advice and support to enable them to make informed decisions at key points in their life for areas such as lifelong learning, employment and skills	Raise quality of learning experiences & increase levels of success, retention and achievement (LeicC)	Stimulate learning Provide excellent opportunities Improve advice and guidance	Organise and manage work experience both pre & post 16, Young Enterprise, SETPOINT education business links, building vocational programmes of learning for young people who have been excluded from school, coordination of young apprenticeship programme with year 10 students
		Improve outcomes for children, young people and families who are disadvantaged, socially excluded or otherwise at risk	Quality education & lifelong learning for young people, both in terms of academic results and practical skills up to 16 years and beyond	Develop a comprehensive curriculum offer that provides pathways and ladders of progression for different types of learner (LeicC)		

Skills and Employer Engagement

Priority 5
Target employment and skills support at all levels for adults in the region

Leicester Shire's Common Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priority on encouraging people into first rung learning through targeting more resources and support for successful initiatives such as Community Development Workers - Address the employability barriers faced by many individuals including those without formal recognised qualifications

	LSEP	LSC	JCP	SSCs	HEIs
KEY PRIORITIES	Contributing to raising basic skills and developing intermediate labour markets	Make learning truly demand led so that it better meets the needs ofadults	Help people facing the greatest barriers to employment to compete effectively in the labour market and move into and remain in work Increase the effective supply of labour by promoting work as the best form of welfare and helping unemployed and economically inactive people move into employment	Reducing skills gaps and shortages Increasing opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sectors workforce, including action on equal opportunities	Widening participation and fair access
Key actions	-Commitments to supporting construction training and employment access and, -with the Centre for Integrated Living in supporting new skills amongst disabled people which leads to employment	-Develop adult apprenticeship pilots in key sectors -Support a range of organisations including EBLOs, Connexions, Next Steps and Business Link to give priority to progressing adults in key sector			

Skills and Employer Engagement

Actions of supporting partners						
Connexions	Leicestershire County Council	Leicester City Council	Leicestershire Together	FE Colleges / CoVEs	Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership / LANTERN	EBLO
	Raise the level of Basic Skills in the adult population Widen participation in learning Develop and extend family learning Develop and extend learning provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities Support strategies for neighbourhood renewal, community capacity building and developing citizenship in a sustainable and environmentally aware fashion Promote continuous quality improvement through development and implementation of the self-assessment process To seek to develop the ACL curriculum, particularly in relation	Widen participation in and increase commitment to learning and community development		Priority on first full level 2; adult basic skills; delivery of employer training pilot and adult and community learning COVE priority on skills at level 3	Stimulate learning Provide excellent opportunities Improve advice and guidance	

Skills and Employer Engagement

	<p>to languages and skills for employment To seek to develop information technology as a tool for enhancing learning and teaching; "e-learning" To ensure that learners have a positive and rewarding learning experience</p>					
		<p>Help disadvantaged people into sustainable employment</p>				

Skills and Employer Engagement

Priority 6
Improve the infrastructure and responsiveness of skills supply and co-ordination of provision

Leicester Shire's Common Priorities
- Develop a new approach to employer engagement through a co-ordinated service

	LSEP	LSC	JCP	SSCs	HEIs
KEY PRIORITIES	Working with key educational, learning and skills organisations in developing a corporate long term vision and aspirations to guide programme planning Helping to raise awareness, develop engagement and a real and equal partnership between education and skills agencies and the business community	The LSC will transform FE so that it attracts and stimulates more business investment in training and skills development	Improve continuously the quality, accessibility and delivery of services to all customers	Improving learning supply including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards	Enhancing excellence in learning and teaching Excellence in delivery

Skills and Employer Engagement

Key actions	Directing resources selectively to fill gaps in mainstream provision with an emphasis on capital investment in support of training provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Build on Skills at Work model to improve training by all employers and ensure excellent skills brokerage -Prioritise skills for life provision focusing on meeting needs in the city of Leicester and the needs of key groups -Invest in modern provision through enhanced college accommodation and facilities -Enable a wider range of higher quality provision through the development of greater specialisation by providers -Provide specific developments in districts where gaps in provision have been identified through Strategic Area Review -Develop LSC structure to focus on partnership working and brokerage 			
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Skills and Employer Engagement

Priorities / actions of supporting partners						
Connexions	Leicestershire County Council	Leicester City Council	Leicestershire Together	FE Colleges / CoVEs	Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership / LANTERN	EBLO
<p>Work collaboratively with partners in the development of Children's Trusts</p> <p>Commitment to meeting national and local cross cutting service and performance targets</p>	<p>Working with others strategically and operationally to ensure learners benefit from high quality teaching combined with rich opportunities for personal development</p>	<p>Transform and modernise provision across the city</p>		<p>Priorities set out in LSC Agenda for Change with focus on employer led provision through colleges, and improved quality of provision</p> <p>Delivery of skills at level 3 provision at 3 COVEs - South Leicestershire College COVE in Supervisory Management Skills Brooksby Melton College COVE in Land Based Service Engineering Stephenson College COVE in Motor Vehicles</p> <p>Engage individuals and employers, including those who do not currently participate in learning, promoting equality of opportunity (LeicC)</p> <p>Continue and develop</p>	<p>Encourage collaboration and specialisation</p> <p>Continuous improvement and innovation</p> <p>Promote flexible and responsive supply</p> <p>Provide excellent opportunities</p>	

Skills and Employer Engagement

				strategic collaborative activity with partners across the city (LeicC)		
				Invest in the estate and in new technologies to provide a high quality & fit for purpose learning environment (LeicC)		

Appendix 5
County Employer Engagement Groups:
Framework Document

COUNTY EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT GROUPS: FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

Background

County Employer Engagement Groups have been identified by the Employment Skills and Productivity partnership (ESP) as the groups responsible for coordinated and local delivery of several aspects of the regional employment and skills priorities.

In order to deliver in support of the regional agenda, the County Employer Engagement Groups will have standard agreed elements, which will be deployed consistently across the region. Within this framework however the flexibility will be maintained for local groups to respond to specific local demands and reflect the differing partnership arrangements in each county.

Terms of Reference

County Employer Engagement Groups will coordinate the work of publicly funded and other appropriate employer-facing organisations within each county; specifically with the aim of ensuring employer demands are met at a local level and that the priorities of the Employment, Skills and Productivity partnership are delivered.

They will be the key driver in turning the regional priorities and plans into a reality for employer customers, and will do this by;

- Stimulating demand for business improvement locally by entering into meaningful consultation with employers, and clearly demonstrating involvement and ongoing dialogue in order to shape future strategies at a local level.
- Promoting a coordinated and coherent service to employers, providing direction, and by creating the right environment, stimulate innovative approaches to service delivery.
- Making no-wrong door a reality; specifically ensuring that all employer facing staff have a sound knowledge of, commitment to, and contacts within all other partner organisations, in order that a single contact by an employer will open the door to the full range of available support; thus creating a culture of collaboration to provide the best possible service to employers.
- Providing a comprehensive and targeted offer to employers (referred to as the single offer) specifically to ensure that the value of partner organisations working together at a local level exceeds that of them working independently. In essence creating synergy between each partner contribution in the interests of local employers.

Core Membership

County Employer Engagement Groups will have a core membership comprising representatives from the following organisations;

- East Midlands Development Agency Business Support (*emda*)
- Business Link (until the re-tendering exercise take place)
- Government Office for the East Midlands (GO:EM)
- Jobcentre Plus
- Learning & Skills Council (LSC)
- Appropriate Sector Skills Council (SSC) representation dependant on local sector priorities
- Sub-regional Strategic Partnerships (SSPs)

Each CEEG is will invite other members as they see appropriate, to best suit the partnership agenda in their locality and provide the best opportunity to meet employer needs. These will in the main be other organisations involved in employer facing delivery, such as colleges, universities, Connexions or local authorities.

Appendix 5
Abbreviations used in Report

Abbreviations

CEEG	County Employer Engagement Group
EBLO	Education Business Link Organisation
<i>emda</i>	East Midlands Development Agency
esp	Employment, Skills and Productivity
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ILM	Intermediate Labour Market
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
LABA	Leicestershire Asian Business Association
LACBA	Leicester African Caribbean Business Association
LEA	Local Education Authorities
LLCLP	Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSEP	Leicester Shire Economic Partnership
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
SBS	Small Business Service
SME	Small Medium Enterprises
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SSP	Sub-regional Strategic Partnerships
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
WBL	Work Based Learning