Thematic Update: Theme A

Employability:

To combat discrimination faced by individuals and promote equality in the workplace and to test support mechanisms to help target groups integrate/re-integrate into the labour market

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1.0 Introduction

This paper gives an overview of policy developments and key sources in relation to Theme A of the **Equal** Programme for the UK, highlighting developments since the publication of the initial Community Initiative Policy (CIP) Guidance in May 2001 and since the previous update published in March 2005.

It is intended to help current Development Partnerships (DPs) during Actions 2 and 3 in developing their work programmes. It sets out recent developments at European, UK national and regional levels, highlighting policy and related initiatives directed at extending employment to particular target groups.

Section 2 summarises progress to date towards Theme A's objectives.

Section 3 introduces the Thematic Network Group that supports theme A.

Section 4 summarises the European context for UK policy on equality and employment.

Section 5 outlines relevant UK policy, strategy and initiatives and the agencies most concerned with the government's aim to extend employment to all those who are currently out of work.

Section 6 – 8 provides further information relevant to each of three sub-themes within Theme A, addressing:

- education, training and learning
- local or regional area based initiatives
- help for particular groups, including ex-offenders, carers, people living with HIV, and people with disabilities.

Section 9 concludes with a summary of the potential for DPs in terms of impact on future policy and practice.

2.0 Theme A's strategic objectives

The strategic objectives of Theme A are:

- *'to combat discrimination faced by individuals and promote equality in the workplace' and;*
- *'to test support mechanisms to help target groups integrate/re-integrate into the labour market'.*

As with other themes within the **Equal** programme, the intention is to develop innovative partnership programmes that can provide models that can be successfully mainstreamed in the future. Action 1 of the EQUAL programme allowed for the development of strong partnerships and working arrangements, Action 2 for developing joint or complementary activities and initiatives, while Action 3 focuses on mainstreaming these initiatives.

Inevitably, there is overlap between the different themes of the **Equal** programme and so, depending on the particular focus of your DP, you may find useful information in other Thematic Updates:

Employability:
- Theme B / ethnic minorities

Entrepreneurship:
- Theme C / business creation
- Theme D / social economy

Adaptability:
- Theme E / lifelong learning and inclusive work practices
- Theme F /adaptability of firms and employees

Equal Opportunities:
- Theme H / gender equality in the workplace

Asylum seekers:
- Theme I

Good Practice Guides are available on the **Equal** website (http://www.equal.ecotec.co.uk/), which provide good practice principles and practical examples emerging from the current **Equal** programme. These guides also draw on the experience of earlier European and national initiatives with similar objectives. The six guides focus on support and guidance centred on the six principles that underpin the whole of the EQUAL programme, which are:

- Empowerment
- Equal Opportunities
- Innovation

- Partnership
- Mainstreaming
- Transnational Working.

3.0 European Policy Context

The Lisbon Summit committed the European Council to making the European Union "the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of ensuring sustainable development, full employment and greater social cohesion". A key aim of the Social Policy Agenda subsequently adopted by Member States is to improve productivity and competitiveness alongside social justice, reform of social policies and industrial relations across the European Union.

In line with the European Employment Strategy (EES), Member States throughout the European Union are taking steps towards developing and implementing comprehensive lifelong learning strategies to improve skills, re-training and job mobility – especially responding to new technology. Initiatives have been introduced to retrain existing workers to match the demand and skill requirements of employers, and to ensure that young people joining the working population, as well as those returning to work, have the skills that industry requires.

The overall aim of the EES is to adopt active policies that favour a radical increase in better quality employment. For the UK, the European Commission has suggested further efforts in response to the employment guidelines and recommendations concerning the partnership approach, gender imbalance, activation policies (especially for adults and disadvantaged groups), and the role of work-based training in tackling skill gaps.

Following an evaluation of the first five years of the European Employment Strategy in 2002, the Barcelona Council called for the Strategy to be reinforced and to incorporate the targets and goals agreed as part of the Lisbon Agenda. In January 2003, the Commission presented an outline for a revised EES with concrete objectives and targets. It highlights three overarching objectives (full employment, quality and productivity at work, cohesion and an inclusive labour market) and insists on a better delivery and governance of the EES. In line with this Communication, the Commission adopted its proposal for revised Employment Guidelines[1] and country-specific Recommendations in the field of employment policy in April 2003. For further information on the reform of the EES and the new Guidelines and Recommendations, see the Commission's web pages at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/employment_strategy/index_en.htm

Following the Mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy, undertaken by an independent High level group, the Commission presented a Communication on growth and jobs in February 2005 proposing a refocusing of efforts on two goals: delivering stronger and lasting growth and more and better jobs. As a result, EES governance has been revised to maximise the synergies between national measures and Community action.

[1] The Employment Guidelines represent a set of objectives, hitherto grouped under the four "pillars" (employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability, equal opportunities) together with horizontal objectives.

The current EES covers the period 2005 – 2008 and contains the following key components:

- *Integrated Employment Guidelines* agreed annually by the European Council and set out common priorities for the Member States' employment policies;
- *National Reform Programmes* describe how the Guidelines are to be designed and implemented nationally;
- the employment chapter of the annual progress report is adopted by the Council to form the *Joint Employment Report*;
- *country-specific recommendations*, proposed by the Commission, can be issued by the Council on a qualified majority basis; and
- an *EU Annual Progress Report*, reviewing progress at national and Community level.

The European Union Directives on Employment and Race and Employment and Occupation, both adopted in 2000, are key to the changes now being implemented in the UK. The UK took an active role in the negotiation of both these directives, introduced to form a common framework of protection against discrimination across Europe. As well as amendments to UK race legislation, Britain has had to introduce new legislation against discrimination on the grounds of age, sexual orientation and religion in employment and training. (See also section 5 of this update.)

2003 was also European Year of People with Disabilities. The 12 million euro budget for the Year of People with Disabilities was used for a wide range of initiatives, events, campaigns, dialogue and reports to complement other European and National strategies and programmes. The overarching aim was to raise public awareness of the positive contribution that people with disabilities make to society and of the difficulties and barriers society inflicts on them. The intention remains that the co-ordinated and complementary approach adopted will maximise the benefits and longer-term impact of the year's activities. The final evaluation of the EYPD is available on the Commissions webpages at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/disability/year_en.html.

Subsequent and current European Years are:

- 2005, European Year of Citizenship through Education, (see http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/Themes/ECD/);
- 2006, European Year of Workers' Mobility which aims to raise awareness, promote exchange of good practice and increase understanding of the scale and nature of mobility in the EU. Further details are available from (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/workersmobility2006/index_en.htm); and
- 2007 has been designated European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

4.0 UK National Strategy

This section sets out the Government's strategic initiatives, in line with policy and recommendations from the European Commission, to extend employment to all those who are out of work. UK National policy includes commitment to reducing unemployment amongst job seekers and commitment to drawing other people (those currently economically inactive and outside the labour market) into or back into paid work. In particular, national government policy now targets lone parents, those who have been claiming incapacity benefit, and partners of claimants.

4.1 National programmes to reduce unemployment:

The core of the UK Government's strategy to combat unemployment and help people to move off benefits and into work is the New Deal. It is delivered by Jobcentre Plus through its network of Jobcentres and Jobcentre Plus offices. New Deal aims to give the unemployed the opportunity to develop the skills and experience that employers require and assist them to find lasting, worthwhile jobs. The New Deal also aims to improve the overall skills base of the British workforce and provide help to employers whose businesses are suffering from staff shortages. The different strands of the New Deal are outlined below:

- The New Deal for Young People is mandatory for those aged 18-24. After an initial Gateway period of job search and other guidance from a personal adviser, the mandatory range of options for those who are still workless include training and subsidised employment.

- The New Deal 25 plus strand is mandatory for the long-term unemployed (usually those unemployed for 18 months or longer) and is otherwise comparable to New Deal for Young People.

- The New Deal 50 plus seeks to address the barriers to work facing older people who are out of work for at least 6 months and in receipt of one or more unemployment-related benefits on inactivity benefits – by offering a package of personal advice, help with job search, an in-work Employment Credit and in-work training and grants.

- The New Deal for Lone Parents provides a comprehensive package of support. Personal advisers assist with childcare and training advice, benefit and tax credit and job search. Outreach provision has been introduced to attract more lone parents from "hard to reach areas".

- The New Deal for Disabled People is a voluntary programme delivered through a network of Job Brokers with experiences of working with people with health conditions or disabilities.

- The New Deal for Partners is a voluntary programme for those whose partner has been claiming job seekers allowance, income support, incapacity benefit, severe disablement allowance or invalid care allowance. From April 2003/4, partners claiming out-of-work

benefits will be required to attend Personal Advisor interviews to discuss options and help for return to work, as a condition for benefit.

- The New Deal for Musicians aims to help aspiring unemployed musicians into a sustainable career in the music industry. It provides advice and guidance on the business aspects of the industry rather than specific training. It is also part of the New Deal for Young People and New Deal 25 plus.

A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work, Green Paper

Since taking power in 1997 the Labour Government has progressed its 'welfare to work' agenda through a number of policy developments. Key elements of the approach include the series of 'New Deal' programmes, the introduction and development of tax credits for working people with low incomes in addition to a minimum wage, and reform of welfare delivery in terms of bringing together the former Employment Service and Benefits Agency to create Jobcentre Plus.

Recent policy developments reflect the approach to tackling the high numbers of incapacity benefit claimants set out in the 2002 Green Paper, *Pathways to Work: Helping People into Employment*, and the more recent 2006 Green Paper on welfare reform, *A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People to Work*.

The 2006 Green Paper sets out a range of proposals to advance the Government's welfare reform agenda. Within the document there is a particular focus on incapacity benefits, though attention is also paid to lone parents, older people, housing benefit reform and the delivery of welfare reform more broadly.

The reform agenda has the aspiration of achieving an employment rate equivalent to 80% of the working population. To work towards this aspiration the Green Paper sets a series of targets to:

- reduce by 1 million the number on incapacity benefits;
- help 300,000 lone parents into work; and
- increase by 1 million the number of older workers.

4.2 National and regional initiatives introduced to support strategic programmes:

- Working Neighbourhoods Pilot commenced in April 2004 in 12 of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and will runs for two years. The pilot aims to test a new approach to offering intensive support to local residents to help them overcome barrier to employment. For more information see: http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

- Employment Zones (EZs) are testing an alternative approach to helping long-term unemployed people aged 25 to 49 years old in 13 areas of the UK. Originally launched in 2000 and covering 15 areas, contracts extending EZs until 2009 have been launched.

Assistance is tailored specifically to the needs of the individual. Jobseekers and their personal advisers are able to set up Personal Job Accounts to make more flexible and innovative use of the funds available to overcome individual barriers to work. Providers are funded on the basis of successful outcomes, with the bulk of the funding linked to sustained employment. For more information see: http://www.employmentzones.gov.uk/

- Some discretionary funds are now also available to all New Deal advisors in providing small amounts of money to tackle barriers faced by individual clients in looking for and getting back to work. Additional targeting of resources to particular housing estates has also been announced.

- Targeted assistance for New Deal clients with drug problems is provided under the name of "progress2work". This specialist support includes counselling and advocacy to help jobless people disadvantaged by drug misuse to make more effective use of mainstream provision.

- Transitional Employment 'Step-up' pilots have also been introduced across the UK. Long term unemployed people are offered access to supported jobs, which will equip them with the skills and the experience of work they need, as a stepping stone to unsupported jobs in the local labour market.

- The Fair Cities pilot programmes have been designed to address the imbalance in employment opportunities for different ethnic minority groups. The pilots are employer-led initiatives designed to improve job entries for ethnic minorities in these communities, and orchestrated by the National Employment Panel[2].

  In March 2003, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit published a report titled *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market*[3], which highlighted the severe labour market disadvantage faced by ethnic minority communities in the UK. The labour market achievement of different ethnic minority groups varies widely, but on average, ethnic minorities experience higher unemployment, lower pay and fewer opportunities for progression than whites. Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Black Africans and Black Caribbean's fare particularly badly. The national employment rate currently stands at 75% - for Black Africans it is 55%, for Pakistanis only 47%[4]. These comparisons mask further variations by factors such as gender and age. While ethnic minorities currently make up 8% of the UK population, half of the growth in the working-age population over the next five years will come from ethnic minority groups. Failure to address the employment barriers that they face will have severe economic and social costs.

  The Institute for Employment Studies has recently started a research project for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to evaluate three Fair Cities Pilot

[2] An advisory non departmental public body: http://www.nationalemploymentpanel.gov.uk/freedomofinformation.htm

[3] http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/su/ethnic_minorities/report/downloads/ethnic_minorities.pdf

[4] http://www.nationalemploymentpanel.gov.uk/publications/nep/2004/faircities.pdf

programmes, in Brent, Birmingham and Bradford. The study will examine the impact of the interventions, and the effectiveness and sustainability of delivery.

Further information about these initiatives and other useful links can be found at:

- http://www.dwp.gov.uk
- http://www.scotland.gov.uk
- http://www.wales.gov.uk.

For further information on organisations and agencies responsible for adult education and work based learning policy, you should also read Section 6. Sub theme – education, training and learning.

For further information on regional and local initiatives, you should read section 7. Sub theme – local or regional area based initiatives.

4.3 UK response to European Union Directives on Employment and Race (2000) and Employment and Occupation (2000)

Adopted in 2000, the EU Framework Directive for Equal treatment in Employment and Occupation requires member states to implement legislation prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and religious discrimination by December 2003 and on grounds of age and disability by December 2006. The Race Directive of the same year outlaws discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin in the areas of employment, vocational training, goods and services, social protection, education and housing

New legislation to implement the Employment Directive, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, came into force in December 2003. Amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 came into force in October 2004 and new legislation outlawing discrimination on grounds of age by the end of 2006. More information about this new legislation can be found at: http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality/

Changes to the Race Relations Act 1976 to implement the Race Directive come into force in July 2003.

As part of the reform process, the Government announced plans at the end of October 2003 to merge the UK's equality bodies into a single human rights organisation. The work of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRE) will come together under the 'provisionally' titled Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). The new organisation will also tackle discrimination on the grounds of age, religion, belief and sexual orientation. The Government intends to appoint the CEHR Chair and Commissioners during 2006 in order to ensure that they body is operational in 2007. A process of phased entry is anticipated for the existing Commissions, with all of them being incorporated by 2008/09.

The UK's current voluntary **Code of Practice on Age Diversity in Employment (1999)** was developed in partnership with Age Concern, TUC, CBI and EFA.

Legislation governing the EU Council Directive 2000/78/EC outlawing age discrimination in employment and vocational training will enter into force by the end of 2006. The Age Positive campaign, operated by the DWP, promotes the benefits of employing a mixed-age workforce that includes older and younger people. Further information can be found on the Age Positive website at: http://www.agepositive.gov.uk

4.4 Current UK legislation for equal rights and opportunities includes:

The **Race Relations Act 1976**, updated through the **Race Relations Act Amendment 2000**, already outlawed discrimination by any public body on racial grounds (directly, indirectly or by victimisation) and places a positive duty on all public bodies to tackle institutional racism. This includes wider use of ethnic monitoring to assess the impact on racial equality of existing and revised organisational polices.

The **Equal Pay Act 1970**, and **Sex Discrimination Act 1975** have also been strengthened, by numerous additions to UK domestic and European law over the past thirty years, with reference to part time work, parental leave, childcare provision and sexual harassment.

Learning and Skills Act (2000) and **Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001)** was based on recommendations made by the Disability Rights Taskforce in its report 'From Exclusion to Inclusion'. The first of these pieces of legislation reforms planning, funding, delivery and quality assurance of all post-16 learning (except higher education), by taking account of disabled people's rights for protection against discrimination in the delivery and accessibility of education and training, and in the transition from school to other post-16 learning.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 aims to improve the standard of education for children with Special Educational Needs. This brings access to education within the remit of the Disability Discrimination Act, making it unlawful for education providers to discriminate against disabled pupils, students and adult learners. In addition, local education authorities and schools are under a duty to plan to increase progressively the accessibility of schools to disabled pupils.

For further information call: http://www.disability.gov.uk

Until the planned merger occurs, additional information can be found on the websites for the three equality commissions:

- The Equal Opportunities website is at http://www.eoc.org.uk
- The Commission for Racial Equality website is at http://www.cre.gov.uk
- The Disability Rights Commission website is at http://www.drc-gb.org

Other groups receiving particular attention within the **Equal** programme include carers, people with disabilities, ex-offenders, and people living with HIV and Aids. For further information relevant to these groups, you should also read Section 9 of this update.

5.0 Sub theme - education, training and learning

This section provides background information about government departments and related agencies concerned particularly with education, training and learning needs, highlighting initiatives with particular relevance to currently disadvantaged adults.

5.1 Department for Education and Skills

It is generally accepted that raised skills levels will both improve competitiveness and reduce the social exclusion for those who were previously unskilled. In 2004, the Department for Education and Skills published their Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners. The strategy highlights continuing challenges in 14-19 provision and in adult literacy and numeracy skills and training provision that fail to meet the needs of employers. For more information go to: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/5yearstrategy/

In March 2005, DfES published a new skills White Paper, *Getting on in Business, Getting on in Work.* The White Paper builds on the Government's first national Skills Strategy with the aim of ensuring that employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses while helping individuals gain the skills they need. It focuses on the three broad areas of meeting employer needs, meeting learner needs, and reforming training supply.

In terms of meeting employer needs, the White Paper announces plans to implement a new National Employer Training Programme (NETP) involving a brokerage service that will work on behalf of the employer. The programme will build on the 18 ETPs currently operating, and will be rolled out nationally from 2006-07.

In terms of meeting learner needs the White Paper outlines a '…commitment to adult learners …[to]… provide the best possible support to help people gain the skills and qualifications they need to achieve employability and personal fulfilment'[5]. This support is intended to cover all levels of learning. Along with concentrating on Basic Skills through the Skills for Life initiative the paper outlines a new entitlement for any low-skilled adult to get free training to achieve their first full Level 2 qualification from 2006/07. Similarly the need to support people to achieve Levels 3, 4 and 5 qualifications is stressed as a key strand of the new strategy.

In respect of reforming training supply the White Paper notes the need for major changes in the way colleges and other publicly-funded training providers design and deliver training. In response it cites plans to put in place programmes to help colleges and other training providers respond effectively to the demands of employers and learners. These will include developing the skills of staff working in the further education and training sector, jointly with Lifelong Learning UK (the new Sector Skills Council for lifelong learning) and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership.

[5] DfES (2005) Skills Strategy White Paper - *Getting on in Business, Getting on in Work*, p.17

Learning and Skills Development Agency

The Learning and Skills Development Agency was launched in 2000 to replace the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA). At the end of March 2006, the LSDA will split into two separate organisations. Its policy and strategic work will continue as part of the new Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA) while existing programmes, research, training and consultancy work will continue via the Learning and Skills Network (LSN).

For more information go to: http://www.lsda.org.uk

Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs)

From April 2001, the 47 regional and local LSCs have been responsible for all post-16 education and training. Their aim is to give individuals the opportunity to learn new skills, fulfil their potential and to improve the quality of their lives. Investment through the LSCs includes new routes to higher education, the new generation of Modern Apprenticeships and better information services for youth and adult education. The DfES and LSC at national level, also co-fund The Learning and Skills Research Centre. The Centre, managed by the LSDA, aims to increase the volume and impact of independent research in post-16 education and training, to provide stronger evidence for the development of policy. For more information go to: http://www.lsc.gov.uk and http://www.lsrc.ac.uk

Basic Skills Agency

The Basic Skills Agency is the national agency for literacy, numeracy and related basic skills in England and Wales. The national literacy and numeracy core curricula were introduced in 2001, followed by a national curriculum framework for ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages) in 2002. More information at: http://www.basic-skills.co.uk

Skills for Life Strategy Unit (SfLSU)

Working within the DfES, the SfLSU is responsible for driving forward the implementation of the national Skills for Life strategy and ensuring the co-ordination and consistency of efforts to improve literacy, language and numeracy skills at national and local level. The unit works in partnership with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Learning and Skills Development Agency, the Prison Service as well as the voluntary sector. For more information see: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus

Connexions Service

Connexions offers differentiated and integrated support to young people aged 13-19 –with access to a personnel adviser for careers advice, for brokering access to more specialist support, and for in-depth support to identify barriers to learning and find solutions. See also: http://www.connexions.gov.uk

Connexions brings together all the services and support young people need during their teenage years offering differentiated and integrated support to young people through Personal Advisers (PAs). For some young people this may be just for careers advice, for others it may involve more in-depth support to help identify barriers to learning and find solutions brokering access to more specialist support, eg drug abuse, sexual health and

homelessness. PAs work in a range of settings including schools, colleges, one-stop shops community centres and on an out-reach basis.

Connexions is delivered through a range of local partnership arrangements based either on Local Authority boundaries or Learning and Skills Council (LSC) boundaries. Funding is through a grant from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. The success of Connexions depends on the involvement of young people. Listening to and taking account of their views in the design and delivery of Connexions is essential.

In light of the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, Ofsted has developed a new integrated inspection framework which focuses on the five key outcomes for children and young people: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic well-being.

Reducing the NEET Group

The proportion of 16-18-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) has remained broadly level over the last decade, although there are signs of a downward trend[6]. Data produced by Connexions partnerships in November 2003 showed a 3% reduction in the proportion of NEET 16-18-year-olds, with an 8% reduction in the areas where partnerships had been established the longest. The DfES has recently agreed a challenging target to reduce the proportion of NEET 16-18-year-olds by two percentage points between 2004 and 2010.

Work is under way to develop a delivery strategy for reducing the NEET population, building on the experience of Connexions partnerships in multi-agency working with other services supporting young people. This showed that reductions in the proportion of NEET young people are the result of a wide range of organisations working effectively together to target the issue. Connexions' work with schools also forms a vital part of the strategy, by giving young people the support they need to continue in learning and preventing them from falling into the NEET group.

5.2 The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) have some similar objectives in terms of social inclusion. Cultural co-operation has become a recognised aim of European Union action – at the heart of the Member States' "ever closer union among the peoples of Europe". Relevant initiatives overseen by the Department of Culture Media and Sport, including in the fields of post-16 education and lifelong learning, are outlined below.

The DCMS highlights the role of art and sport in reducing long-term unemployment, by reducing crime, improving health and developing community based responsibility. The Department therefore encourages local authorities to respond to the needs and aspirations

[6] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/neet/

of local communities, by recognising the role of cultural services in tackling the wider objectives of social inclusion and regeneration, lifelong learning, healthier and safer communities.

The DCMS works closely with the devolved administration in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, sharing information and ideas and consulting them on UK-wide matters, such as broadcasting and the National Lottery, the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and the National Endowment for Science, Technology, and the Arts (NESTA).

For further information go to: http://www.culture.gov.uk/

5.3 Childcare

A number of initiatives have been introduced to address the need for family friendly working conditions and childcare support, to encourage unemployed parents into paid jobs.

ChildcareLink helpline

The Government launched the ChildcareLink helpline and website in December 1999, as part of the National Childcare Strategy. This strategy aims to help people back into the workplace by removing the childcare barrier. The ChildcareLink service is funded by the Department for Education and Skills and the Scottish Executive.

The ChildcareLink national website provides childcare and early years information collected from over 170 English and Scottish local authorities, with sign-posting information from the Welsh National Assembly. The website helps you find information about the different types of childcare and early education in your local area. The site also contains details of your local Children's Information Service, who can provide additional help and advice with all aspects of childcare and early years.

For more information go to: http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk

The Parents Centre

The Parents Centre is a DfES website providing information on a child's education and how parents can help: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/parents

Worktrain

In February 2006 the Worktrain website moved to the direct.gov.uk website. It can now be accessed at: http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk. The webpages includes information on childcare providers provided by ChildcareLink.

Sure Start

The aim of Sure Start is to work with parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of pre-school children - particularly those who are disadvantaged. More information on Sure Start programmes could be found at: http://www.surestart.gov.uk

For information about Sure Start in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/settings/fundedsettings/

For useful links to other agencies go to:
http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk/whitebox/links.asp

5.4 Links with Equal Theme E

Further information related to education, training and learning needs can be found in the Thematic Update for Theme E: Education and Lifelong Learning. This includes reference to other agencies such as:

- Sector Skills Development Agency and Sector Skills Councils
- Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)
- The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

Other useful links relevant to education, training and learning can be found at:
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/learning&skills

6.0 Sub theme – Local or regional area based initiatives

Resources directed to particular regional and local areas vary according to socio-economic factors and funding strands.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
The Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have a key role in economic development and regeneration and aim to promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness; enhance the development and application of business skills; and contribute to sustainable national development. The RDAs are responsible for regeneration and renewal programmes through the so-called 'single pot' which has also subsumed the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). The RDAs have significant emphasis on partnership working with local authority, private sector, voluntary and community sector expertise and resources. For more information on the English RDAs see: http://www.englandsrdas.com/home.aspx

Neighbourhood renewal
The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) is responsible for overseeing the Government's comprehensive neighbourhood renewal strategy. A range of different programmes have been established to determine local needs and to pilot new ways to fight deprivation in the poorest, most deprived communities.

The NRU is part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and works with government offices neighbourhood renewal teams to oversee and support local strategic partnerships in the 88 most deprived districts in England.

The NRU runs a number of the government's cross-sector regeneration programmes, including:

- New Deal for Communities partnerships tackling the five key themes of: poor job prospects; high levels of crime; educational under-achievement; poor health; and problems with housing and the physical environment.
- Neighbourhood Management, working with local agencies to improve and link their services at a local neighbourhood level.
- Neighbourhood Wardens, providing a highly visible, uniformed, semi-official presence in residential and public areas, town centres and high-crime areas.
- Skills and Knowledge programme offering practical support to those at the front-line delivering neighbourhood renewal.

Further information from: http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)
LSPs link together civil servants, professionals, practitioners and community residents to help prioritise early learning and development needs at local level. They aim to improve delivery of sustainable economic, social and physical regeneration, or improved public services. For more information see: http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=531

Local Area Agreements

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three year agreement that sets out priorities for a local area as agreed between central government and a local area represented by a local authority and local strategic partnership[7].

In June 2005 a national roll out to all top tier authorities in England by 2007 was announced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The 66 local areas in round two are coming to the end of the negotiation process were scheduled to be signed on 27th March 2006. Round 3 LAAs were due to begin negotiations with Government Offices from 1st April 2006.

They are designed to simplify arrangements for pooled funding streams from central government to Local Authorities, help join up public services more effectively, and thus allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances. LAAs should help to devolve decision making and reduce bureaucracy associated with administering multiple funding streams.

LAAs are structured around four blocks (or policy fields): children and young people; safer and stronger communities; healthier communities and older people, and; economic development and enterprise. The latter links most directly to employability although the others are also linked.

LAAs form a key part of the local:vision[8], Government's 10-year strategy for Local Government, which seeks a more mature relationship between central and local government. They are also driving forward the principles of the Devolved Decision-Making review in terms of the rationalisation of funding streams.

PSA Targets

The Public Service Agreement (PSA) framework continues to articulate and drive forward the Government's highest priorities and ambitions for delivery. As part of the 2004 Spending Review, the framework was strengthened and refined. The 2004 PSA targets seek ambitious further improvements in key priority areas and are based on experience, evidence and analysis. They have been developed in consultation with those responsible for delivering them and with those that stand to benefit from them.

The PSAs have also been altered to reflect the conclusions of the report *Devolving decision making: 1 – Delivering better public services: refining targets and performance management*, published by the Government alongside Budget 2004. This has resulted in an extra focus on outcomes, and a move towards establishing national standards in areas where performance is high and further stretching targets are no longer required.

[7] http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161635

[8] http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1137789

The White Paper set out the PSAs for the main departments covering the period 2005 to 2008 and beyond. It includes:

- departments' key aims and objectives;
- stretching outcome-focused performance targets to deliver further improvements in key areas of public service delivery across Government;
- 'floor' targets focusing in particular on areas of deprivation, ensuring that everyone benefits from improved public services; and
- 'standards' which ensure that where previous PSA targets have been met or are about to be met, performance will continue to be monitored and reported to ensure that the high levels of performance achieved are maintained.

For an overview of progress towards each department's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets, in addition to the more detailed Departmental Reports and Autumn Performance Reports[9]:

Local PSAs

A Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) is a voluntary agreement negotiated between a local authority and the Government. The overall aim of LPSAs is to improve the delivery of local public services by focusing on targeted outcomes with support from Government. LPSAs were piloted with 20 authorities starting in late 2000 and a rollout to all upper tier authorities began in September 2001. All but three of the 150 upper tier authorities have elected to negotiate an LPSA and the majority of agreements have now been completed.
Second generation LPSA negotiations are now underway; these agreements will allow local authorities and their partners to tackle the priorities for improvement locally and provide a renewed focus on improving final outcomes for local people.

Reducing Worklessness

The focus of public service targets is on improving public service delivery and rectifying failure in housing and employment markets through local and sub-regional housing strategies, strengthening economic activity, involving the private sector, supporting businesses and enterprise and reducing worklessness. Reducing worklessness appears to have been achieved in some NDC areas where worklessness rates have been falling faster than the districts in which they are situated[10].

Several New Deal for Communities areas, including Southwark, Derby and Manchester, have launched employability skills projects. These tackle the needs of adults for support with literacy and numeracy and build relevant vocational skills. Southwark NDC has introduced Learn Easy, a project which is delivered jointly by a community organisation and a local college. Derby NDC has set up a lifelong learning and young people partnership between

[9] http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/public_spending_and_services/publicservice_performance/pss_perf_index.cfm

[10] http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=1782

local residents, learning providers and agencies. All training is provided close to where residents live, usually in non-traditional venues like community and sports centres.

Local Strategic Partnerships are important and can deliver change when well co-ordinated. Many of the housing improvements funded by local strategic partnerships and the NRU are linked to wider aims such as reducing crime, health and the environment. Wirral LSP, for example, has promoted an independence network for elderly people called POPIN. This brings together the sheltered housing warden service and the home care service in priority wards. Liverpool LSP launched six projects in its first year, including social enterprises that now deliver regeneration in major areas. They have created 11 jobs, and almost 3,000 homes have security upgrades. Sedgefield LSP has invested in improvements to homes in all sectors and an affordable warmth project. Rochdale's home improvement agency is testing out a handyperson scheme to improve conditions for elderly homeowners.

7.0 Sub theme - Help for particular groups

7.1 Carers

The Department of Health sets overall policy on all health issues and is responsible for the provision of health services through the NHS. In 2004 the Department completed a review of the size of the core Department, which saw a reduction in the number of posts from 3,600 to 2,245. In addition, a review of the Departments high level structure was announced in January 2006.

The Department has also changed its structure from 14 directorates to a streamlined structure of three business groups. The three business groups focus on:

- developing effective DH strategies and managing the Department's business;
- improving the delivery of health and social care services; and
- setting, maintaining and monitoring standards and quality in the NHS and social care.

For further information: http://www.doh.gov.uk

National Strategy for Carers

The Government's Strategy for Carers has three key strands:

- information for carers, to provide wider and better information about sources of help including flexible support;
- support for carers in the planning and provision of care, including the development of appropriate flexible workplace polices;
- care for carers, so that they can maintain their health, exercise independence and see their role recognised by policy makers and statutory services.

The Government's objectives for carers who are of working age are:

- to encourage and enable carers to remain in work
- to help those carers who are unable to, or do not want to, combine paid work with caring to return to work when their caring responsibilities cease.

This forms part of a wider commitment to implementing family friendly work policies such as the right for carers for time off to deal with a family emergency.

For further information on the National Strategy for Carers and for further information on practical support and carers benefit allowances, go to: http://www.carers.gov.uk/

7.2 Young People

Work experience was the factor most widely mentioned as likely to improve employability among young people. As noted above, this has its problems and it is unlikely that all young

people will enter their first employment with sufficient 'real' experience of the workplace, including the important discipline of turning up every day and on time. This can only be learned in a 'real life' situation. The researchers conclude that a renewed focus on the induction process as providing a type of advanced work experience would be very helpful to both employers and young people.[11]

The Change for Children reforms will introduce major changes to the structure of children's services. The proposed development of a new youth support service will bring together relevant agencies dealing with troubled young people with complex needs. YOTS will play a key part in these reforms. Other relevant proposals set out in the Youth Matters consultation document include effective information, advice and guidance, and the use of Opportunity Cards to encourage participation in satisfying and rewarding activities. In the 2005 Budget, the Chancellor announced resources to fund personally negotiated agreements for 16 and 17-year olds not in employment, education or training.

Young offenders

All of the agencies involved in the criminal justice system have an important role in helping young people achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes[12]. Local change for children programmes will follow the multi-disciplinary approach already adopted by the criminal justice system in areas such as youth offending teams (YOTs).

Developments in which the youth justice workforce will be particularly involved include:

- Statutory children and young people's plans (CYPPs) setting out how joined-up services will be provided (youth justice plans will remain a separate statutory requirement). These will be mandatory from April 2006.
- Local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs), the statutory successors to non-statutory area child protection committees (ACPCs).
- Databases of children in each local authority area, containing information relevant to their welfare. This will have far-reaching implications for all of the agencies within the Criminal Justice System.

The Youth Justice Board is working with the DfES' Children's Workforce Unit to address the needs of the youth justice workforce. All qualifications within the Youth Justice National Qualifications Framework will address the six Common Core competencies applicable to everyone working with children, young people and their families.

7.3 People living with HIV

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) makes it unlawful for people with a disability to be treated less favourably than other people for any reason related to their disability, including those disabled by HIV. Under the DDA people with HIV ate covered by the Act

[11] Joseph Rowntree Foundation: http://www.jrf.org.uk/KNOWLEDGE/findings/socialpolicy/613.asp

[12] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthjustice/

from the point of diagnosis rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

A report on 'Social Exclusion and HIV' from the Terrence Higgins trust also recommends that the Department of Work and Pensions should review benefit regulations to make them more flexible for people with long term chronic medical conditions and that the Department of Education and Skills should consider ways of supporting those people with HIV who are able to work to do so. For further information and links:
http://www.tht.org.uk/informationresources/

For information on the Government's National Strategy for Sexual Health and HIV Implementation Action Plan go to:
http://www.dh.gov.uk/Consultations/ResponsesToConsultations/ResponsesToConsultationsDocumentSummary/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4084676&chk=otwlNX

The Department of Health for England has provided funding to the National AIDS Trust (NAT) to co-ordinate a public awareness campaign aimed at highlighting and challenging the public's prejudicial attitudes towards people living with HIV. The context for this campaign originates from the 'Sexual Health and HIV Strategy' and the Strategy's National Implementation Plan. The integrated media campaign, entitled "Are You HIV prejudiced?" was launched in March 2003, following earlier pilots in London and Manchester. For information see: http://www.areyouhivprejudiced.org/

For additional information go to the internet resource of National AIDS Manual and British HIV Association: http://www.aidsmap.com

7.4 People with Disabilities

The Special Needs and Disability Act 2001 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 make it unlawful for education providers as well as employers to discriminate against disabled people in terms of education, training or employment. Several Government initiatives are designed specifically to support disabled people's access to employment – for example the New Deal for Disabled People and Access to Work scheme.

Since 1999 service providers have had to make reasonable provision for disabled people such as providing extra help or making changes to the way they provided their services. From 2004 service providers will also be expected to make reasonable adjustments to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access.

Further information go to: http://www.disability.gov.uk

The Disability Rights Commission

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is an independent body set up by the Government to help secure civil rights for disabled people. Its statutory duties are:

- to work to eliminate discrimination against disabled people;
- to promote equal opportunities for disabled people;
- to encourage good practice in the treatment of disabled people;
- to advise the Government on the working of disability legislation (the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and the Disability Rights Commission Act 1999).

As noted earlier, the Government has announced plans to merge the DRC with the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission. For further information go to: http://www.drc-gb.org/index.asp

For information on other useful organisations and affiliated sites go to:
http://www.drc-gb.org/links.asp

Mobility and Inclusion Unit (DTLR)

The Mobility and Inclusion Unit aims to achieve policies and provision for public transport users, pedestrians and motorists that are acceptable, accessible, available and affordable and secure and to promote diversity in policy across the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. Further information at: http://www.mobility-unit.dft.gov.uk

7.5 Ex-offenders

The government is seeking to develop constructive regimes in the Prison Service that address offending behaviour and improve educational and work skills amongst juvenile and adult prisoners. The key aim is to reduce and prevent re-offending.

The Offenders Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU)
The transfer of responsibility for prisoner education from the Home Office (the government department responsible for prisons) to the Department for Education & Skills in 2001 led to the creation of the Prisoners' Learning & Skills Unit (PLSU). An extension of that Unit's responsibility to include learning and skills for offenders in the community from April 2004 led to it becoming the Offenders' Learning & Skills Unit, or OLSU. The Offenders Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) is responsible for taking forward the 1999 Crime Reduction Strategy commitment to improve dramatically the quality and quantity of prison education and for offenders' education in the community.

The Unit works in partnership with the Prison Service, the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, the Youth Justice Board and other partner organisations within and outside Government. It will also develop strong links with the National Probation Service, recognising the relevance of education and training to their statutory aims of reducing re-offending and supporting the rehabilitation of offenders.

In December 2005 the Government published a Green paper entitled Reducing Re-Offending through Skills and Employment, jointly produced by the Department for Education and Skills, the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions. This document sets out the Government's strategy to help reduce re-offending by improving skills and employment opportunities for offenders.

For more information go to:
http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning/index.cfm?flash=1

Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)
The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and partners including the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), the Probation Service, Prison Service, Youth Justice Board and Jobcentre Plus have developed a new Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS). The OLASS is aimed at young people (aged 16 –17) who have offended and adult offenders (aged 18 and over) whether they are in custody or the community. The OLASS is currently operating in three regions and is due to roll out to the rest of England in August 2006, with a new curriculum that supports education and vocational training.

The task of creating the OLASS service was given to the LSC (August 2005) to further integrate learning and skills provision for all offenders – in custody and the community – with mainstream adult education. The LSC therefore control of the budget.

A major challenge for the integrated service is to provide a seamless learning journey for offenders, making their learning relevant to the needs of the labour market and taking into account the Government's White Paper *Skills: Getting on in business, getting on in work* (March 2005). The integrated service has a different emphasis compared with the way that learning activities have been provided for offenders in the past, and will involve different ways of working, new relationships and providers. For example, the Green Paper *Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment*[13] (December 2005) highlights the focus on early assessment of learning needs and sound planning in the context of the overall sentence plan to lead to better educational outcomes and opportunities for employment and progression.

The National Reducing Re-offending Action Plan[14] was published in July 2005 and set out the Government's plans to reduce re-offending, based on the factors identified in the Social Exclusion Unit's report, *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners*, published in 2002. Seven Resettlement Pathways out of re-offending have been identified, including Pathway 2: Education Training and Employment.

[13] http://www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning/uploads/documents/green_paper_reducing_re-offending_through_skills_%20and_employment_final_version.pdf
[14] http://www.noms.homeoffice.gov.uk/downloads/National_Reducing_Re-offending_Delivery_Plan.pdf

Youth Justice Board (YJB)

As a non departmental public body, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Youth Justice Board is responsible for advising the Home Secretary in delivering its aim to preventing offending by young people. The YJB also monitors the operation and performance of the youth justice system, including the youth court, the work of the offending teams and the delivery of secure accommodation.

The YJB's new education specification requires all young offender institutions to provide a minimum of 30 hours of timetabled education and training activity per week for every young person. This increased provision focuses on numeracy and literacy, using new teaching and learning materials developed for use in the community as well as in custody, and on transfer from custody to community supervision. Research undertaken by the YJB has shown that engagement in engagement in education, training and employment is one of the most important factors in reducing offending and reoffending.[15]

The Board seeks to reduce the levels of offending by children and young people, and to reduce the perceived need to use youth courts, custody, or inadequate regimes in secure facilities for children and young people. It aims to promote a culture:

- that respects the rights of victims and the rights and responsibilities of children, young people and their parents;
- that treats young people fairly and regardless of background; and
- where young people believe they have opportunities to contribute to society.

Key principles for the YJB's work are:

- early intervention in the lives of young people;
- effective local systems requiring new ways of working together; and
- strong intervention by the Board where local agencies are failing across government to tackle youth offending as an urgent priority.

The YJB has recently published their Youth Resettlement Action Plan[16]. It outlines a range of measures to tackle the serious problems faced by many young people as they leave custody each year. The document notes that these young people have multiple needs and calls for a more co-ordinated approach from youth offending teams (YOTs), government departments, the secure estate and other organisations, to improve young people's access to housing; education, training and employment; health and substance misuse services; family support; and financial advice.

Further details can be found at:
http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/YouthJusticeBoard/

[15] See: http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/Publications/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=290&eP=YJB

[16] http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/YouthJusticeBoard/AboutUs/News/NewsArchive/YouthResettlement.htm

The National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ)

The National Association for Youth Justice was established in Britain in 1994 following the merger between the National Intermediate Treatment Federation (NITFed) and the Association for Youth Justice (A.Y.J). NAYJ seeks to promote 'children in taking active responsibility for their actions while remaining in the community. Further information at: http://www.nayj.org.uk/

The Probation Service

The National Probation Service for England and Wales is responsible for the forty-two Probation Services (matching police force area boundaries) throughout England & Wales together with the National Probation Directorate based in London. The service's aims are:

- protecting the public;
- reducing re-offending;
- the proper punishment of offenders in the community;
- ensuring offenders' awareness of the effects of crime on the victims of crime and the public;
- rehabilitation of offenders.

One of the services key challenges, in terms of offenders' future employability, is to establish offender programmes that have a track record in reducing re-offending. More information: http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/output/page1.asp

Youth offenders / Young Offender teams (YOTs)

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 have resulted in new interventions and punishments to help local communities and youth justice agencies take effective action against youth crime. Early intervention, such as local child curfew schemes and anti-social behaviour orders, has been introduced to deal with anti-social behaviour and to divert the very young from crime. First time offenders who plead guilty and do not require a custodial sentence will be referred to their local YOT for a contract to be drawn up with the young offender and their parents to tackle the look causes of offending. These measures emphasise personal responsibility, reparation and the role of the family, friends and other responsible adults in tackling offending behaviour. For further information go to:
http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/YouthJusticeBoard/YouthOffendingTeams/