

Support for Success  
Quality Improvement Programme



Leading learning and skills



# beyond prejudice

inclusive learning  
in practice

Vikki Smith and  
Anne Armstrong



# Support for Success Quality Improvement Programme

The Support for Success Quality Improvement Programme is funded by the Learning and Skills Council and delivered by the Learning and Skills Development Agency in partnership with the Association of Colleges, Inclusion and NIACE.

The programme aims to help providers to:

- **enhance their capacity for self-improvement**
- **share good practice**

and provides support and resources on:

- quality management at a strategic level
- continuous improvement
- improving outcomes and measuring success
- equality and diversity
- meeting local and regional needs.

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- the providers involved with the action research projects, in particular those who have explored ways of responding to the challenges presented in providing inclusive learning
- the team of LSDA Associates who supported the projects
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- Robin Wardle, Administrator, Support for Success
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# Summary

Promoting an inclusive learning environment that caters for all learners and their individual needs and meeting challenging targets set in this area is a huge undertaking for providers across the learning and skills sector. This booklet offers general, transferable pointers for providers set alongside strategic issues, community involvement and practical considerations.

As a checklist for providers, actions required to deliver inclusive learning are signposted under three broad headings: strategic direction, community involvement and the practicalities.

## Strategic direction

Providers need to:

- adopt a coordinated approach to inclusive learning, working with different groups, genders and levels of learners
- be responsive to changes in demographics and employment patterns and tailor the type and level of provision
- review any new or recent developments to assess the impact they have had on provision
- take compliance with legislation and funders' requirements as the starting point not the ultimate aim
- challenge stereotypical assumptions held by both learners and providers and take appropriate action to counteract them
- be proactive in prioritising and setting targets for the multitude of possible subgroups of learners
- set targets for identified groups as part of the performance indicator process, and monitor these on a regular basis
- implement staff training to promote awareness of equality and diversity issues and engender understanding of what these issues mean to those delivering learning and skills
- tailor recruitment strategies and new positions to take account of the inclusive learning agenda
- establish a strategy for sharing good practice within an organisation.

## **Community involvement**

Providers must:

- work with the local community to break down any barriers caused by, for example, cultural, religious, social and/or economic differences
- actively engage with different community groups
- liaise with parent groups to change parental attitudes and win support for learners
- select partners carefully
- formalise partnership arrangements
- monitor the quality of partners' inputs
- engage in a dialogue and maintain effective communication.

## The practicalities

Achieving success within this complex agenda is a large undertaking for providers. It requires that they:

- allocate resources
- place the needs of learners at the centre of the planning process and subsequent provision
- identify and overcome the varied barriers that different groups of learners face
- utilise teaching and learning methods that stimulate the learner
- differentiate delivery (where necessary, learning opportunities for specific groups will need to be considered)
- make sure that the continuing professional development and of staff training supports structures and systems implemented to deliver the inclusive learning agenda
- target recruitment activities to the needs of particular groups (eg those under-represented in, or previously disadvantaged or disaffected by, learning and skills provision)
- use clear, appropriate communication methods, media and locations when liaising with learners and potential learners
- remove all jargon from literature, so that it appeals to learners and clear terminology
- revise recruitment materials and paperwork to respond to the needs of specific groups of individuals
- promote the early identification of 'at risk' learners, regardless of what triggers the concern
- show commitment to, and invest in, individual support to keep learners on track
- place health and safety of learners at the heart of all procedures
- provide detailed analysis of retention, achievement and progression rates of different groups of learners to inform provider policies and procedures
- devise assessment policies and procedures that are comprehensive and effective, taking into account preferences for different learning environments and styles
- use paperwork that is user-friendly (for both staff and learners), focusing on the essential requirements and removing any unnecessary detail and duplication.



# Introduction

The terms equality, diversity and widening participation are all in common usage in the post-compulsory learning and skills sector, as elsewhere. Inclusive learning, inclusion, integration and social inclusion are other terms commonly used. In practice, these terms are often used interchangeably. The difficulty this presents is that each term brings with it its own remit and parameters that are highly context specific.

The challenge for the post-compulsory learning and skills sector is to untangle the issues, clarify what the various terms mean and recognise why providers of learning and skills should adopt an inclusive learning agenda and embed it into daily practice.

A single publication cannot do justice to this topic as a whole; we will therefore focus on a number of key areas that have challenged providers across the learning and skills sector in recent times, as reflected in the work of the Quality Improvement Programmes of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). Following these key lines of enquiry, we will look at some of the history and background information surrounding the issues identified, in an attempt to clarify just what providers need to concern themselves with.

Each area is supplemented by illustrative case studies, demonstrating how others have responded to the challenges of inclusion. These examples are drawn from a number of LSDA managed, Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded, action research projects. Each project embarked upon a quality improvement process, introducing a new dimension to their practice with the explicit aim of improving learner outcomes in relation to inclusion.

The lessons learnt from the projects are drawn together to provide guidance for providers on how to respond to the inclusive learning agenda.

## What is inclusive learning?

What is inclusive learning and what does it mean for providers? As we have seen, terms abound and these are often used synonymously. This does not, however, help a provider to analyse what is required in terms of responding to legislative or perhaps funding imperatives.

Others have sought to define the myriad terms that may connect to, or impact on, inclusive learning. Taking our lead from the seminal work of Tomlinson (FEFC 1996), in this publication we will adopt an all-encompassing, post-compulsory learning and skills perspective. Herein, inclusive learning is viewed as:

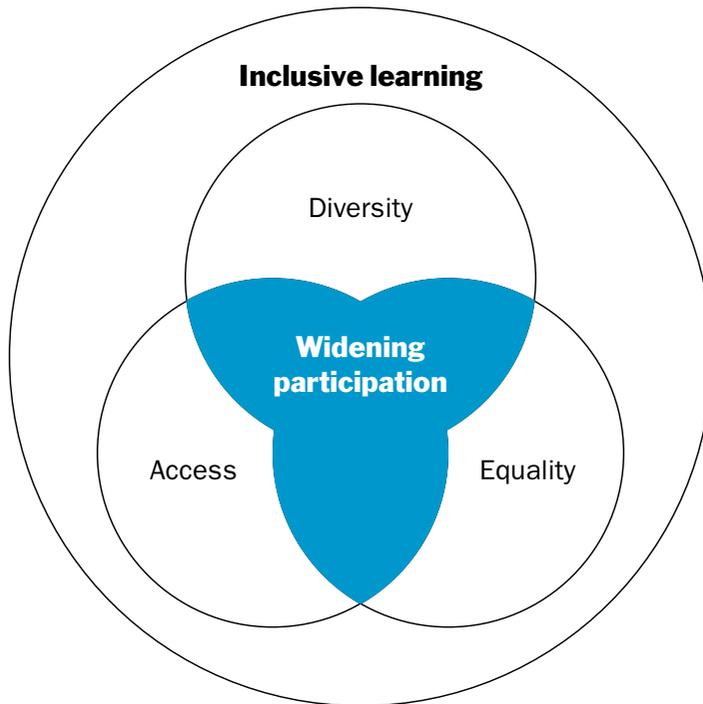
*an educational model, as opposed to a political one ... [where] inclusive learning does not equate with locating the learner within the mainstream or consider the social dimensions of education which extend wider than the learning activity. Instead, ... inclusive learning operates ... at the level of the education system, the institution and the individual teachers and learner.*

(Anderson *et al.* 2003:3)

This definition requires providers to place learners in the best possible learning environment for their needs, whatever they may be. It recognises that individual learners may well fall into a number of categories of need. Thus, the needs of any one individual may need to be addressed using several strategies to ensure that those specific needs are met. This requires providers to devise a complex yet comprehensive strategy that is able to tackle every aspect of an individual learner's need – a growing challenge for providers who have to cater to an increasingly diverse population of learners.

Working within the definition of inclusive learning provided above, it is useful to illustrate the inter-relatedness of the terms in common usage that are sometimes used to express what it is about. Figure 1 depicts these relationships.

Figure 1  
Dynamics of inclusive learning



It is aspects of access, equality, diversity and widening participation that lie at the heart of inclusive learning, and that enable all individuals to learn irrespective of their background, circumstances or need.

At an organisational and strategic level, providers need to establish protocols of good practice to ensure they are able to provide opportunities for inclusive learning. Taylor (2000) identified six principles of good practice for effective working with disadvantaged young people, describing a range of interventions and characteristics of provision that should be in place as an entitlement for young people in any locality. These are revisited in Table 1 to identify key principles for working with learners as part of an inclusive learning agenda.

**Table 1**  
Principles for working within an inclusive learning agenda

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Key elements</b>
Targeting, recruiting and initial assessment and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A clear policy</li> <li>Effective strategies to reach learners</li> <li>Effective strategies to engage young people</li> <li>Systematic Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)</li> <li>Integrated assessment</li> </ul>
Re-engagement strategies to motivate, engage and encourage progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A clear rationale for the programme(s)</li> <li>Effective arrangements for identifying needs, aspirations, abilities and options and deciding on an action</li> <li>Programme matched to the learners' needs</li> <li>Clear and realistic progression routes</li> <li>An ethos of respect</li> <li>Effective individual support</li> <li>A clear and realistic plan to ensure and maximise delivery of an inclusive learning strategy</li> </ul>
Monitoring and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular reviews</li> <li>Timely opportunities and encouragement to achieve</li> <li>Rewards for achievement</li> <li>Follow-up of early drop-out</li> <li>A final review to determine next steps</li> <li>Well-managed and supported transition</li> <li>Tracking first destinations</li> </ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinated partner involvement</li> <li>Effective links between organisations, to enable progression and support for the unique requirements of individuals</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate staff who benefit from appropriate/targeted continuing professional development</li> <li>Adequate staffing levels</li> <li>Accessible venue(s) and learning resources</li> <li>High quality learning environments</li> <li>Good funding arrangements for learning and access to learning provision</li> </ul>
Leadership and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management recognition and support</li> <li>Quality assurance, including standards and indicators against which to measure provision</li> <li>Budgetary control</li> <li>Reporting to partners</li> <li>Long-term planning</li> </ul>

It also needs to be recognised that, within this framework, one size does not fit all. Providers need to identify the barriers faced by different groups of learners and to respond to each of these. To facilitate this process a checklist of questions for providers to ask themselves, based on Williams (1999) and CRE (2003), is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**  
Provider inclusive learning checklist

Do we understand the diverse learning and access to learning needs of learners from across the sector?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we have ways of developing an ongoing dialogue with groups and individuals who tend to be excluded?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do our services meet the diverse needs and aspirations of learners from across the sector?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we provide an appropriate and professional service to learners from across the sector?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we achieve equally high outcomes for all learners in all programmes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we have a strategy for inclusive learning?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we communicate our inclusive learning strategy internally and externally?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we have specific, comprehensive outcomes and targets for inclusive learning?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we know our baseline – where are we now, and what have we achieved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we know which of our major functions, services and policies have most (potential) impact on inclusive learning?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we know how well these currently promote inclusive learning or work against it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we regularly monitor and review the extent to which we achieve/promote inclusive learning and the impact of our work?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Do we need to develop our capacity to deliver the inclusive learning agenda?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

## Compliance

Tables 1 and 2 are mutually reinforcing, signposting for providers the areas in which they need to exert energy and influence, to demonstrate how they are responding to calls to promote inclusive learning. This is of increasing importance for providers because they are measured and assessed on their ability to respond.

*With Equality and Diversity a statutory remit of the LSC and firmly embedded within the ALI–Ofsted inspection framework, no service, function or area of curriculum can be regarded as neutral.*

(Commission for Black Staff in Further Education 2003:5)

With inclusive learning a key tenet within the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) inspectors are asked to consider:

*how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination is tackled so that all learners achieve their potential ... [and] the extent to which:*

- *clear direction is given through strategic objectives, targets, and values that are fully understood by staff, including subcontractors and work placement providers*
- *there are explicit aims, values and strategies promoting equality for all that are reflected in the provider's work*
- *there are effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour, including all forms of harassment*
- *there are effective procedures for dealing with appeals and complaints.*

(ALI/Ofsted 2001:13)

The LSC also recognises the importance of inclusive learning through various policy initiatives, including the introduction of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs) that each LSC has to set for its area. EDIMs are an essential tool in supporting, monitoring and assessing the LSC's work in terms of the impact of equality and diversity. They provide specific local measures for participation, retention and achievements of groups of learners who have been under-represented or identified as under-achieving in learning. EDIMs are also seen as changing attitudes of providers and employers and addressing some of the inequalities that currently exist in LSC-funded education and training provision. Providers in turn are expected to set targets in their three-year development plans which reflect these inequalities, and constantly to revise these plans to ensure they are addressing the specific needs of the local population. It has been suggested by one local LSC that 'this is ... one of the most significant mechanisms introduced by the LSC, for making an impact on equality and diversity issues' (Northamptonshire LSC 2004).

## Reality bites

In sum, promoting inclusive learning is not a matter of choice – it is a legal requirement. That said, the picture across the sector with regard to providing inclusive learning and access to learning appears bleak:

*The post-16 education and training market ... is stratified and hierarchical, with class, gender, special needs and 'race' all acting as filters for segmentation ... those in most need of help (the disadvantaged, disaffected) do not receive the guidance they need.*

(Maguire *et al.* 2004)

The inference here is that the learning and skills sector is still failing individuals. The following section outlines the legislation that is supposed to redress this imbalance, while subsequent chapters provide specific examples of the action some providers have taken to remedy the situation.

## Legislative and policy drivers

There is growing recognition of the role of learning in promoting both economic success and social cohesion. This recognition reflects a change in society's values over the last 30 years. There has been an increase in the body of legislation promoting educational equity (Perry 1997), relating to education in general and to the post-compulsory learning and skills sector in particular. Notions of social cohesion, inclusion equity, equality and access to learning increasingly form the cornerstone of education policy. Significant strides are being made under the inclusive learning agenda to increase the participation of groups of individuals currently under-represented, in an attempt to prevent disaffected learners becoming completely disengaged from education (Kerry 1996).

The Tomlinson report on inclusive learning (FEFC 1996) is a seminal piece of work in this area. It challenged the FE sector to become proactive in providing opportunities for inclusive learning by increasing its capacity to respond to the needs of the individual learner:

*we want to avoid a viewpoint which locates the difficulty or deficit with the student and focus instead on the capacity of the educational institution to understand and respond to the individual learner's requirement. This means we must move away from labelling the student and towards creating an appropriate educational environment; concentrate on understanding better how people learn so that they can better be helped to learn; and see people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties first and foremost as learners. (FEFC 1996:4)*

Legislation ensures the rights of individuals to learning opportunities (Leader 2003:366). The Human Rights Act of 1998 states that 'no person shall be denied the right to education', while *The learning age* picks up the debate with the explicit aim of responding to 'the learning divide between those who have benefited from education and training and those who have not' (DfEE 1998:11). Similarly, the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4, known as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA), aims to combat exclusion from learning and provide equality and access to learning opportunities. More recently, both the LSC's National Equality and Diversity Strategy (2002a) and the DfES's Skills Strategy (2003) champion the need for widening participation and promote a vision of inclusiveness. This is further supported by the LSC through a number of mechanisms, for example:

- the *Successful participation for all: widening adult participation strategy* (LSC 2003)
- the relatively recent introduction of EDIMs
- the tenfold increase in the LSC's discretionary financial learner support funds (LSFs) since 1998/99 (DfES 2004)
- the national roll-out of Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) from 2004/05.

The ultimate aim of these approaches is widening participation in learning and skills of those groups of individuals that historically have not engaged with the sector.

All of this is underpinned by the remit of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights and by the addition of age, sexual orientation and religious belief as strands of equality and diversity. This broadening in scope increases the chance of targeting multiple disadvantage (LSDA 2004:3). Collectively these policies and initiatives aim to make it very difficult for providers to disregard learners at the periphery.

It is clear that constant change features in the inclusive learning policy arena, with new requirements being placed on the provider in ever-broadening areas. In recognition of this the LSC publish up-to-date guidance on what can broadly be conceived as equality and diversity on their website ([www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

However, the issue is also being tackled at the level of the provider. A number of Support for Success and Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programme action research projects have focused on meeting aspects of this agenda. The following sections will detail some of the challenges they have faced and how they have sought to respond to them. Many of the examples are drawn from FE institutions (see page 60 for a list of the organisations that contributed to this report). However, because the concerns are pervasive, we have selected approaches and interventions from across the sector that can be adapted for use by providers to improve their provision, be they work-based learning, FE or sixth form colleges, or adult and community learning providers.

## Action research: supporting providers delivering inclusive learning

Action research has a strong tradition as a development tool in education as it allows practitioners to work through their everyday concerns to bring about improvements to their practice. It is a ‘form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants ... to improve ... their own practices’ (Carr and Kemmis 1986:162). The rationale for adopting this approach is that it bridges ‘the divide between research and practice’ by taking as its starting point ‘practical questions arising from concerns in ... everyday work’ (Somekh 1995:340). In essence, it is ‘a “pilot” or “test bed” intervention, with the built-in opportunity to change the direction of experimentation in the light of the emerging findings’ (Perrin and Powell 2004:3).

The quality of an organisation’s current performance is the catalyst and motivator for implementing an intervention. Practitioners review their work to identify the action needed; this engenders a sense of ownership as the improvement is then seen to be of direct benefit to the institution. As part of the process, practitioners reflect on and assess their practice, explore and test new ideas/methods/materials and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. The outcomes and impact of the action research are then shared with colleagues so that they can be adopted institution/organisation-wide. This latter stage helps to support and develop the community of practice. The cyclical and ongoing nature of action research stimulates a climate of reflection followed by action, which has the potential to generate genuine and sustained improvement.

Action research, then, is a technique for practitioners to improve their practice, rather than being an abstract process. It is a pragmatic approach to quality improvement.

Further information about the value of action research as a tool of quality improvement can be found in the LSDA publications Cox and Smith (2004) and Perrin and Powell (2004).

The following sections of this publication draw on a number of Support for Success (s4s) and Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programme (ACLQSP) action research projects that sought to facilitate inclusive learning. Full reports on these projects and their outcomes are available on the Support for Success website ([www.s4s.org.uk](http://www.s4s.org.uk)).

## Access all areas

Inclusive learning calls for an egalitarian approach to learning, meaning that all individuals are given the same opportunities to enable them to reach their potential. This means that learners are treated differently, according to their individual needs, and where necessary are given additional support to address those needs. Inclusive learning should take account of learners' 'different ... backgrounds, qualifications and expectations ... to provide fair and equal treatment, experience and opportunities' (Kerry 1996). This approach represents a pragmatic attempt to engage in learning and the benefits it can bring, those who have had limited or negative learning experiences.

*Learning is central to economic success ... Those who are disadvantaged educationally are also disadvantaged economically and socially; equity and viability dictate that all should have the opportunity to succeed.*

(Kennedy 1997:15)

Inclusion is not merely increasing the number of enrolments. It is about a greater number and wider range of individuals signing up for programmes than before and for those individuals to progress and achieve. In the words of Helena Kennedy: 'A much wider cross-section of the population needs to be involved' (Kennedy 1997:22). Providers need to understand the differing needs of individuals and groups and to develop a dialogue that will allow those needs to be met.

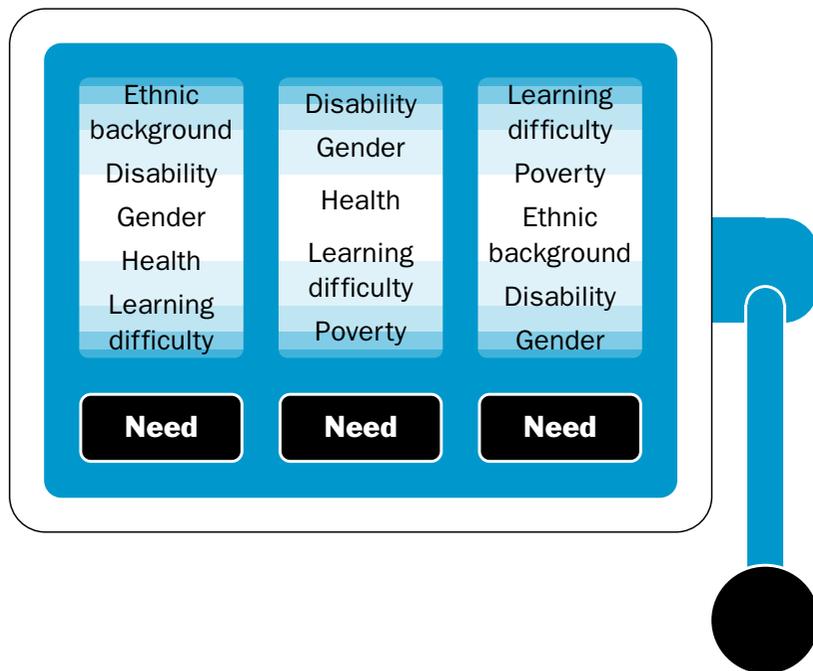
An additional challenge for providers of learning and skills is the need to abandon any practice that steers learners on to certain courses based on preconceived notions of ability and stereotypes. Instead, learners must be given all pertinent information to enable them to make an informed decision about possibilities open to them. This may at times mean challenging advice and guidance services to ensure that the academically inclined are not just channelled towards academic study; women are not presented only with stereotypical options such as care, hairdressing and beauty therapy; men are not simply guided towards construction, plumbing or engineering; and that vocational programmes are given due consideration by all learners and not seen solely as the route for the less academic learner.

Above all the learning and skills sector must respond to the challenge presented by fact that although participation post-16 is improving, 'the best-qualified 16 year olds continue to receive the widest choice and the best quality of education post-16', and the finding that 'students who experience disadvantage or belong to some minority groups are more likely to opt out at 16' (Ofsted 2003:48).

Only under a system that promotes equality of access to learning will individuals have parity in the life chances they encounter. As a result, the most vulnerable learners (either socially/economically disadvantaged and/or those with learning difficulties/disabilities) will no longer be the least well catered for (Ofsted 2003:39) and the spiral of disadvantage whereby vocational and work-based learners are statistically less likely to progress (FACE 2004) will be halted.

In recognition of the fact that some learners and potential learners are affected by more than one disadvantaging factor, the provider will have to take account of a learner's multiple learning and access to learning needs. This is illustrated in Figure 3. The idea of expressing this as a fruit machine is not to mock or belittle the notion of disadvantage but to demonstrate that the multiple needs of a learner will be unpredictable and, while not random, drawn from a wide range of possible sources. This has major implications in terms of planning and budgeting and staff training.

Figure 3  
Learners may have multiple needs in varying combinations



## Case study 1 **‘Switching on’ to valuing diversity**

Runshaw College

### **Introduction**

Historically, training and support in diversity related issues at this large urban college, for both teaching and support staff, satisfied only the minimum legislative requirements. There was no real reflection on what diversity meant to educators, nor was there any consideration of how to realise the ethos of inclusion.

### **Aims**

To develop a college ethos whereby diversity is valued and supported and equality of opportunity promoted.

### **The strategy**

To ascertain staff skill levels in valuing diversity and equal opportunities, a questionnaire (Figure 4) was designed.

### **The outcomes**

The results of the questionnaire identified notable strengths, namely:

- strong internal college processes  
(ie management responsibilities, policy location)
- a wide ranging knowledge of alternative cultures
- a willingness to support learners or staff from alternative cultures
- a willingness to challenge discriminatory behaviour outside the classroom.

The results also exposed significant knowledge gaps, about gender and sexual orientation, disability, and appropriate and inappropriate terminology.

The information gathered suggested that a radical overhaul of the staff development programme based on the actual needs of staff was required rather than mere compliance with current legislation.

As a result of this research a new staff development programme was developed with training materials designed to help the college improve its services in the fields of valuing diversity and promoting equal opportunities.

As a result of the findings of this action research project, the college:

- increased its confidence and understanding of the real issues involved
- increased its motivation to get it right
- reinforced its determination to place diversity at the heart of the college culture.

Figure 4  
Staff equality and diversity awareness questionnaire

### Organisation

- 1 Do you have a copy of the:  
Equality and Diversity Policy?  
Race Equality Policy?  
If not, do you know where could you get one?  Yes  No  
 Yes  No  
 Yes  No
- 2 Are you familiar with the content of the:  
Equality and Diversity Policy?  
Race Equality Policy?  Yes  No  
 Yes  No
- 3 Who is responsible for equality and diversity in the company?  
 Senior manager  Other (please specify)
- 4 Are you confident that you fulfil your personal responsibilities for ensuring and promoting equality and diversity?  Yes  No
- 5 Have these responsibilities been explained to you?  Yes  No
- 6 Have you attended training in equality and diversity in:  
SENDA Stage 1?  Yes  No  
SENDA Reloaded?  Yes  No  
diversity roles and responsibilities?  Yes  No  
diversity good practice in learning and skills?  Yes  No  
other? (please specify)  Yes  No
- 7 Do you know how to make a complaint about equality and diversity?  Yes  No

### Communication

- 8 Where do you expect to find information on equality and diversity?  
 Staff updates  Library  
 Intranet  Professional development  
 Internet  Other (please specify)
- 9 Do you actively promote equality and diversity while at work?  
If yes, how?  Yes  No

- 10 Do you integrate equality and diversity into your:
- |                         |                              |                             |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| resources?              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| schemes of work?        | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| lesson plans?           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| personal tutoring?      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| other? (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

- 11 Have you undertaken an equality and diversity audit of your resources within the:
- |                         |                              |                             |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| last year?              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| last two years?         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| other? (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

### Legislation

- 12 Is it lawful to discriminate on the ground of:
- |                     |                              |                             |                   |                              |                             |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| age?                | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | religious belief? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| gender?             | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | facial hair?      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| disability?         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | marital status?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ex-offender?        | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | height?           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| sexual orientation? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | race?             | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| mental illness?     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | size?             | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

- 13 Which two new areas became unlawful reasons to discriminate against in December 2003?

1

2

- 14 Does SENDA require you to:
- |  |                              |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| make all adjustments possible regardless of cost?          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| make all adjustments requested of you?                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| anticipate need and make adjustments judged as reasonable? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| make no adjustments until requested?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

- 15 Which of the following are requirements under the Race Relations Amendment Act:
- |  |                              |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| positive discrimination?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| annual report on the race equality monitoring? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| race equality induction?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| promotion of race equality?                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

## Figure 4 continued

**Terminology**

- 16 Which of the following terms are likely to cause offence:
- |                   |                              |                             |                      |                              |                             |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| coloured?         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | disabled parking?    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| wheelchair bound? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | visual impairment?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| blackboard?       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | brainstorm?          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| blind?            | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | lads?                | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| gay?              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | equal opportunities? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ladies?           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | disabled learner?    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

**Confidence**

- 17 How confidently could you:
- |  |                               |                                     |                                   |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| describe the difference between equality and diversity?    | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| challenge a learner who is using racist terminology?       | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| challenge a colleague who is using inappropriate language? | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| recognise sexist terminology?                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| say when Ramadan is?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| describe what Ramadan is?                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| say when Eid is?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| describe what Eid is?                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| say when Hanukkah is?                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| describe what Hanukkah is?                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| say when Christmas is?                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |
| describe what Christmas is?                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Very | <input type="checkbox"/> Reasonably | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all |

## Case study 2 **Specialist support to meet learner needs**

Huddersfield Technical College

### **Introduction**

The School of Foundation Studies in this large, urban technical college provides a wide range of programmes for learners with learning difficulties, disabilities, sensory impairment, communication and mental health difficulties and/or disabilities. Historically, learners with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) have received no specialist teaching and have been in learning groups with learners who have a range of learning difficulties, including those with very complex needs.

### **Aims**

The aim of this action research project was to provide relevant and meaningful opportunities for learners with ASD to develop their receptive and expressive language skills, social relatedness and sequential memory while alleviating or moderating problems that were inhibiting learning, limiting achievements and preventing progression despite learners having significant cognitive ability.

### **The strategy**

Seven learners with ASD were identified from a group of learners participating in sessions for learners with complex learning difficulties and disabilities, and given access learning as a discrete group. Using a model already followed successfully within local feeder schools, both special and mainstream:

- the layout of the classroom was reorganised so that it was less challenging to learners and supported the learning process
- teaching methods specifically for learners with ASD were developed
- a comprehensive individual and person-centred approach to planning and recording was implemented
- individual work systems were developed that allowed learners to progress and achieve
- observation forms that helped identify development needs and challenges for individual learners were designed (see Figures 5 and 6).

### **The outcomes**

The project was successful in terms of learner progress and achievement. It also contributed to an increase in the understanding and expertise of the staff team. Together these two factors led to an increased sustainability of the provision for these learners.

Figure 5  
Classroom assessment/observation

Learner

Assessment number

Assessor

Date

**Situation**

**Observed behaviours**

Anticipation and enjoyment  
of interactions

Ability to take turns in staff/peer  
interactions/activities

Ability to initiate and end interactions

Ability to use and maintain  
appropriate eye-contact

Ability to share interests  
with staff and peers

Ability to appreciate  
physical contact and proximity

Ability to respond to  
intentional communication

Ability to stay on task  
and maintain concentration

Additional comments and observations

Evidence available (eg photographs, testimonials, videos, learner work)

Signed

Date

Figure 6  
Behaviour observation record

Learner

Date record started

Date record ended

Trigger	Behaviour	Duration (mins)	Debrief/actions

**Noticeable changes in behaviour**

Improvement

Deterioration

Signed

Date

## Case study 3 **Learning opportunities for all**

Bolton Community College

### **Introduction**

Widening participation in learning is a key strategic objective of the adult and community learning service involved in this project. Within that context, adults with learning difficulties or disabilities were identified as a key target group. For this group, access to learning opportunities was often restricted to informal activities that take place in day centres. The term 'learning' was often used to describe leisure activities.

### **Aims**

This project sought to identify the learning needs of this group of learners and to make appropriate learning opportunities available and accessible, both within the day centre and beyond in the local community. Access to community-based mainstream learning, both formal and informal, was included in the scope of options.

### **The strategy**

A multidisciplinary team was established, consisting of participants from the adult learning service, a college, a special school, a day centre, Connexions and the information, advice and guidance network. The short timescale available to conduct the project meant that individuals were required to quickly take responsibility for the various aspects of the work.

The team, led by the college, consulted with learners in a series of focus groups. The findings from the focus groups informed the future direction of provision for this group of learners. In retrospect, it was recognised that those not participating in learning should also have been consulted.

## The outcomes

The learners signposted a number of issues necessary to improve provision:

- better transport facilities
- support during learning activities
- the involvement of carers in any further consultation
- a multi-agency response to learner choice and progression.

As a result of this consultation process a number of decisions were taken to improve the learning offer for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:

- specific learning opportunities in the day centre, including evening classes, would be provided for this group of learners
- a wide range of opportunities to learn new hobbies and develop new interests would be introduced to extend current learning provision
- learning priorities were established, which led to the subsequent delivery of additional learning programmes in the day centre including independent living, relationships and mobility.

At the end of the project, three of the learners were attending a mainstream class in animation at the college. As a project team member noted:

*They enjoy the opportunity to develop their skills in an integrated community setting. Animation is an area in which they had expressed interest, and so this is seen as a real response to personal choice. These service users are interested and challenged.*

This was a signal to the project team of the value of the work undertaken and the future potential it holds. To deliver on this promise the work is moving forward with the aim of:

- investigating learner attitudes and aspirations
- exploring whether learners have high levels of satisfaction or low levels of expectation
- agreeing a city-wide approach to funding and transport
- introducing night classes at day centres in the city.

An application has been made to the local LSC to formalise this into an LSC-supported research project.

## Case study 4 **Mainstream provision for people with a hearing impairment**

Swarthmore Centre, Leeds

### **Introduction**

This Lifelong Learning Centre in an urban setting identified a clear need for the learning centre to encourage and support those learners with a hearing impairment.

### **Aims**

The project aimed to:

- reach out to the city's large hearing impaired community through the medium of art
- prepare the learning centre to cater for these new learners
- pilot a model for good practice that could be transferred to other groups of learners, for example when working with students whose first language is not English
- improve current provision by piloting a course that is inclusive and supportive.

### **The strategy**

To deliver on this remit, the project leader undertook intensive awareness training from a profoundly deaf teacher of British Sign Language (BSL), supported by an interpreter. This training was subsequently rolled-out to the art staff and later offered to all staff at the learning centre.

A number of other techniques to increase participation were utilised:

- a poster campaign was launched
- an exhibition was set up
- taster classes were run
- a needs analysis questionnaire was devised and implemented
- a review of the paperwork was conducted.

## **The outcomes**

- The taster sessions and follow-up classes worked as evidenced by the fact that eight new learners embarked on the programme.
- The light-touch, minimal, tutor- and learner-friendly paperwork approach to external requirements such as enrolment forms, learning agreements and individual learning plans was deemed a major plus.
- As well as posters, personal letters of invitation (with maps) and ‘word of mouth’, SMS text messaging emerged as a good way to communicate with the target group.
- The needs analysis questionnaire did not have the desired response; feedback suggests that using a BSL signer to ask learners about their learning needs would be more effective.

Ultimately, the project helped the centre to recognise that promoting inclusive learning and equality of opportunity for people who are hearing impaired required that the learning environment be adapted to meet their needs, including the provision of a receptive and welcoming environment where staff and other learners recognise their individual learning needs.

## Learning points

- A coordinated, holistic approach to inclusive learning is fundamental and enables providers to adopt strategies that assist them to respond to the learning and access to learning needs of all learners.
- Providers need to work across the local community to break down any barriers that learners encounter (real or perceived).
- Partnership working with the stakeholders from across the community is an essential ingredient to success.
- Learners must be central to the planning process and subsequent provision.
- Barriers will differ between learners – the support provided has to be targeted to individual need.
- Strategies designed to overcome any barriers that have been identified must then be resourced.
- Staff need to have the necessary skills to deliver on the promise of inclusive learning – providers may need to tailor their continuing professional development for staff to meet this need.
- Training must be provided that promotes awareness of equality and diversity issues and engenders an understanding of what it means to those delivering and supporting learning and skills development. Strategies to move from discourse to action must follow if providers are to offer quality, inclusive learning.
- Merely complying with legislative requirements will result in a deficit model for inclusive learning; compliance should be seen as the starting point not the ultimate aim.

## Success for all?

It is well documented that black and minority ethnic (BME) learners are persistently failed by the education system, and that there is an urgent need to improve the quality of provision for this group of learners to ensure that they are all able to reach their full potential. The gravity of this situation and the long-lasting influence it can have is conveyed in *Black to the future*:

*student responses to disengagement, such as 'non-participation', 'non-attendance', 'non-compliance' and 'non-production' are continued in post-16 education and training with underachievement as a constant.*

(Patel and Grant 2004:2)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, in their report *Experiencing ethnicity: discrimination and service provision* (Chahal 2004), drew on research from across the public sector. A key indicator that has resonance for the learning and skills sector was that:

*black and minority ethnic service users felt mainstream services were often inappropriate for their needs and that services made assumptions based on stereotypes and prejudice about what the needs of these users may be or what they may want to access.*

(Chahal 2004)

In specific reference to school provision, preconceived notions and stereotyping were seen to reinforce discrimination. For example: 'Black schoolgirls often felt that some teachers were operating within a racist frame of reference' (Chahal 2004). Barn *et al.* (2005) concur with this and suggests that teachers have poorer expectations of black students. The consequence and impact of such behaviour are catastrophic and are likely to support the commonly reported rhetoric of under-achievement by some minority ethnic groups.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is one attempt to counter this pattern. The LSC is duty bound to adopt a proactive approach to achieving race equality:

*The Act requires the LSC to assess the impact on race equality of all of its relevant policies.* (LSC 2002b:1)

EDIMs gave formal recognition to this and require providers to respond to nationally determined targets that reflect local priorities. The LSC is then able to report on 'patterns of access, retention, achievement, employment, satisfaction etc by racial group' (LSC 2002b:7), enabling patterns of inequality to be identified and solutions sought.

Organisational structures and funding can also cause ghettos. The Adult Learning Inspectorate has reported frequently on the limitations affecting the learning of those for whom English is not their first language even when they are receiving appropriate support. These concerns are particularly relevant for immigrants and refugees, where links with the wider provision offered by FE colleges or adult education services are not made. Case study 5 provides an example of a way of overcoming this.

The rationale behind these drivers is to counter any earlier failure and, by promoting equality and inclusivity, ensure that it is not further compounded within the post-16 learning and skills sector.

## Case study 5 **A community-based degree for minority ethnic women**

Dunstable College

### **Introduction**

The national LSC convened a meeting of colleges that ran substantial numbers of courses for minority ethnic groups. At this meeting it emerged that achievement of full qualifications and subsequent progression on to further learning was not commonplace among these learners.

### **Aims**

To develop a Community Degree targeted at minority ethnic groups.

### **The strategy**

National and relevant local LSC representatives, six colleges, an awarding body and the community groups decided to develop a Community Degree, with Dunstable College as the lead provider.

The key features of the Community Degree were that it had to:

- be a curriculum designed in consultation with community representatives
- include basic skills delivery to meet the LSC agenda
- allow both part-time and full-time delivery
- be delivered wholly in the community
- have the potential for local tailoring of selected modules
- provide a ladder for progression.

The Community Degree was based upon the nationally accredited framework of qualifications, delivered to mainly Asian women in community settings. The scheme consists of ESOL at all levels and modules from vocational pathways that have particular relevance to women learners where religious and cultural context excludes them from mainstream education.

## Case study 5 continued

### **The outcomes**

The project is still in the early stages. The full picture will only become clear after five years, when learners complete the programme and hard data on retention and achievement becomes available. However, anecdotal findings for the Community Degree are positive.

The early consultation with potential learners ensured the degree included what the target groups considered to be suitable topics and viable progression routes. The ability to study for a degree on a part-time basis has proved a success as it enables extended breaks and takes account of relevant religious holidays.

The research suggests that the Community Degree could be developed and delivered in any number of community languages, and that pathways for men in minority ethnic communities could also be developed.

## Case study 6 **Supporting the learning of the local population**

Burton College

### **Introduction**

With a BME population of around 7% in its catchment, and with some inner wards up to 25%, Burton College needed to ensure that it catered for its BME learner population.

Each year the college recruits a large number of young Pakistani learners. Typically, the men go on to IT and Computing, women to Care, and both men and women to Business and GCSEs/A-levels. However, while overall the retention rate of Pakistani learners was similar to all learners, the achievement rate tended to be significantly lower (particularly for young men on full-time programmes).

### **Aims**

The project aimed to investigate the critical success factors affecting the performance of Pakistani learners.

### **The strategy**

A number of interventions were put in place with selected learner groups to follow up key issues identified in a series of focus groups.

These interventions included:

- making referrals to learner officers
- providing additional 1:1 tutorials
- offering mentoring
- establishing contact with parents
- improving initial guidance.

## Case study 6 continued

### **The outcomes**

The improvements secured in learner outcomes as a result of this (and associated work) include:

- improved retention rates among BME, and particularly young Pakistani, learners; the in-year retention rate among the target group has improved by around 5% in comparison with previous years
- a high progression rate among the cohort of Pakistanis, above the rate for the college population as a whole
- feedback from the learners involved identified the additional 1:1 support as the most effective strategy
- an improved atmosphere in the college, partly as a result of addressing learners' individual issues.

Improved achievement rates among BME, and in particular young Pakistani, learners are anticipated.

An additional benefit of the project was that the detailed analysis of achievement/retention rates by disability, age, gender and ethnicity was useful preparation for the ALI/Ofsted inspection, which took place midway through the project. Inspectors focused on strategies to improve participation by under-represented groups in college programmes. The detailed analysis of success rates of BME learners was also well received. The inspection itself gave added impetus to the action research project and inspectors were impressed by the proactive approach adopted towards equality and diversity issues.

## Learning points

- Providers need to work with local communities, including their own organisational community, to break down any barriers caused by cultural, religious, social and/or economic differences.
- Providers need to engage actively with different community groups, including parents and carers, to change attitudes and ensure full support for learners.
- Financial and other barriers need to be identified and resources and support needed to overcome these barriers then need to be put in place.
- Any identified under-representation needs to be redressed, by targeted open evenings, to improve understanding of the problems faced by particular groups but also with a view to increasing participation.
- Resources need to be made available to deliver on this agenda – be they staff, space, equipment, furniture, materials, transport or childcare.
- The programme on offer should be tailored to meet the needs of specific groups of learners – this may refer to course development or support mechanisms.
- Data needs to be made available, and used, to:
  - provide baselines
  - demonstrate success
  - plan future and target strategies to combat exclusion.

## Tunnel vision

Historically, men have dominated certain professions and women others. Even in recent times this has been reinforced within the apprenticeship system with certain occupational areas typically the preserve of a single gender group, something that is now a source of concern:

*...the lack of explicit recognition of equal opportunity and gender segregation issues is a concern because it is likely to lead to reinforcement of traditional gender divisions in education and training, contrary to the intention to increase opportunities. The concern is greater because of the introduction of vocational GCSEs and the forthcoming changes to work-related learning for young people.*

(Miller *et al.* 2003)

The professions most heavily dominated by one gender are 'construction, engineering, plumbing, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (all male-dominated), and childcare (female-dominated)' (Miller *et al.* 2003). All of these professions are experiencing skills shortages that can be alleviated if gender discrimination is eliminated.

Traditional views of occupations are strong influencing factors over career choices for young adults and are maintained within the current apprenticeship framework.

More specifically in England for 2002/03:

- 16 women started Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMAs) and 6 started Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (AMAs) in Plumbing compared to 3107 men
- women made up 1% of people starting FMAs in Construction (only 163 women in total)
- 6% of those starting FMAs in Engineering Manufacturing were women
- almost all nursery nurses and childminders are women.

(EOC 2004a and 2004b:3)

This segregation of genders between occupations not only limits career choice for both men and women but also tends to lead to poverty for women, as low pay is most likely to be in occupations in which females predominate. This differentiation starts during training and tends to continue throughout an individual's working life.

*There are no set rates of pay for modern apprenticeships, and the LSC does not monitor them, but it appears that engineering apprenticeships (96% male) pay almost twice as much as child-care apprenticeships (average around £120 compared to £67). Thus, in choosing stereotypical 'female' jobs, girls are already condemning themselves to a lifetime of poverty.*

(NATFHE 2004)

## Case study 7 **Women into computing**

Long Road Sixth Form College

### **Introduction**

This large sixth form college in the east of England accepts approximately 300 learners each year on to the following courses: AS Computing, A2 Computing, AS ICT, A2 ICT and GCSE ICT. Over the last four years, on average only 7% of all AS Computing students have been women, with an even smaller percentage going on to the A2 Computing course.

### **Aims**

The aim of this project was to redress the gender imbalance at A-level by devising and implementing a strategy to attract more women on to the computing-related programmes.

### **The strategy**

To explore why computing was not appealing to women, a focus group was held with five of the women currently studying the subject, to find out why they chose computing. A subtext to the focus group was to explore why they thought computing did not appeal to women.

The focus group identified that:

- computing was perceived as a subject for men (one of the women said ‘there is a label stuck on it for blokes’)
- there are few women role models and many ICT teachers at school are men, reinforcing the idea that computing is primarily a subject for men
- ICT teachers at school vary in their knowledge of the difference between computing and ICT, as some are non-specialist.

As a result of this initial exploration, the college decided to:

- encourage women into computing by showing them the sort of activities that were involved
- run a series of taster sessions for women only, led by women teachers
- place an article in the staff newsletter about the taster sessions
- stage two open evenings, attracting potential learners from around the local area: the events included a short rolling presentation, advertising the taster sessions. Interested parties were given a flyer that had a tear-off slip for registering an interest in attending the Women into Computing taster session.

## **The outcomes**

Six taster sessions were run in November, December and January. Feedback from the sessions was very positive:

- 74% of the women attending said they were more interested in studying computing as a result
- of the 61 women who attended, 25 (41%) have applied to do other AS courses at the college, 1 to do a GCSE retake year, but 5 (8%) women decided to take AS ICT.

More broadly:

- 10 conditional offers have been sent to women for the following year's programme – a significant increase from previous years
- an unexpected and key outcome has been the increased retention of women students from AS Computing to A2 Computing; the learners attribute this to their greater awareness of the subject and the way they were recruited to the course
- the article in the staff newsletter about the taster sessions generated queries from staff in other departments about similar gender-related recruitment problems for their own courses – it is expected that lessons learnt during this project will be transferable to other departments.

## Case study 8 **Men into learning**

Dukeries College

### **Introduction**

The social, economic and educational disadvantage experienced by the catchment area of this community college was seen to be a direct result of the decline of its primary sources of employment – the mining and textile industries.

### **Aims**

A recent survey conducted by the college found that:

- only 8% of men were engaged in learning or training
- learning or training undertaken by men was mainly done in the workplace
- unemployed men were least likely to participate in learning, although participation by both unemployed and employed men was low
- future intentions of men to learn, especially in a college environment, were low
- many men did not have enough information about learning and training opportunities
- many did not feel confident about re-entering learning.

The college embarked on a project to encourage men to engage in training by providing them with information about local learning opportunities and working to stimulate a willingness to develop new skills and knowledge.

### **The strategy**

The initial plan was to provide learning opportunities for unemployed ex-miners by offering drop-in sessions at the Miners' Welfare, a Working Men's Club (known as the Social Club) and a public house. However, the men were reluctant to engage in discussions about learning itself, and made it clear that they were not interested in learning.

Instead, the project holders decided to target a local working colliery to see if the managers there would be interested in a scheme offering ICT sessions to miners. An information, advice and guidance open day was held at the colliery on a drop-in basis to accommodate the various shift patterns. A leaflet promoted the open day and was given to all the men with their wage-slips. Posters were also put up in various places around the colliery.

The day helped to:

- identify the potential demand for future learning programmes
- plan future learning programmes according to identified needs
- provide information about learning and learning related support and opportunities.

## The outcomes

Seven men attended the open day – a sufficient number to run an introductory ICT course at the colliery. The course was in the form of drop-in sessions rather than structured classes.

A further seven men enrolled for the sessions after word had got round about the course. Thus, the course started with 14 men, who may not have otherwise entered learning.

The learners' ages ranged from 35 to 51 years. The majority of the learners were employed in either supervisory or craft related roles. Past qualifications were predominantly gained through apprenticeship schemes or other forms of work-based learning related to the mining industry. For the majority it was at least five years since they had taken part in any learning or training.

Number of learners enrolled or completing for each unit at the time of writing were as follows:

enrolled on to unit 1	14
successfully completing unit 1	14
enrolling on to unit 2	12
successfully completing unit 2	7
enrolling on to unit 3	7
successfully completing unit 3	3
enrolling on to unit 4	3
successfully completing unit 4	1

It is evident that the early positive learning experience encouraged many learners to continue with their learning.

The success of the project was at least in part attributable to the management at the colliery. They were fully supportive of the project and encouraged their employees to become engaged in learning; this included actively promoting the open day and course, and making their on-site training room available. In recognition of the fact that the men were attending this course in their own time, before and after long shifts working underground, free drinks and sandwiches were made available during the sessions.

## Learning points

- Changes in demographics and employment patterns must be built into the type and level of provision and the courses provided.
- Partners for collaborative ventures and employers taking work placement learners need to be selected carefully.
- When working with other stakeholders (eg employers) training providers need to:
  - secure and formalise the stakeholders' commitment
  - monitor the quality and content of work placements and on-the-job learning closely
  - remove any ambiguity by adopting an open and productive approach to communications.
- Participation and achievement data must be interrogated to identify pockets of inequality and exclusion.
- Participation and achievement targets need to be set for all groups and subgroups of learners as part of the performance indicator process, and then monitored on a regular basis with appropriate action supported by management.
- Stereotypical assumptions held by both learners and providers must be challenged and appropriate action taken to redress them.
- Recruitment activities must be tailored to the particular learners, for example by using different media or different locations.
- Assessment policies and procedures need to be comprehensive and effective to ensure that needs are identified and met – different learning environments and styles need to be taken into account.
- A strategy for sharing good practice within an organisation needs to be established to ensure that weaker areas operate at the highest standard.

## Tailoring the package

Once the learning and skills sector has managed to engage the learner, the sector needs to be 'flexible in developing tailored packages to help ... people achieve their potential' (Kerry 1996). What is important here is that the learning experience offered must be responsive to reflect individual needs (FEFC 1996). Inclusive and responsive learning requires that learning opportunities be 'tailored to address the very different barriers that affect participation and outcomes in learning for particular groups of people' (LSDA 2004:11). This is increasingly challenging when many young people and adult learners alike have had negative educational experiences and are likely to lack confidence and possess low self-esteem.

The need to provide a responsive and inclusive learning experience requires that flexibility is placed at the very heart of provision. This can be hard to do and financially unrewarding for providers – it is far easier to maintain the status quo and accept only those learners who are likely to succeed. But this is no longer an option because of the stated values of society and policies, implemented through EDIMs for example.

The Tomlinson report (FEFC 1996) brought inclusive learning into the spotlight, arguing that learning needs have to be addressed more effectively (Anderson *et al.* 2003:1). One consequence of this is that providers across the learning and skills sector are increasingly asked to provide a personal, individualised education and training programme for their learners. The case studies below show how some providers are striving to meet that challenge.

## Case study 9 **Confidence and participation building**

Mid-Kent College

### **Introduction**

This large general FE college in the south-east of England supports a significant number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A dedicated department – the Curriculum Access Support Team – coordinates this support. While this help is seen as very successful with many students, some do drop out of their support sessions and fail to achieve.

### **Aims**

The college sought to improve levels of attendance, retention and achievement of supported students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by:

- reviewing the Curriculum Access Support Team approach to recruitment
- reviewing the marketing materials, procedures and other formal information
- improving communication with learners raising awareness of additional learning support among staff
- setting expectations for learner attendance and satisfaction rates.

### **The strategy**

A number of key activities were undertaken to meet the stated aims:

- the 'Disability guide' was updated and renamed 'A guide for students with learning difficulties and disabilities'
- the prospectus entry was updated to highlight the support offered to learners
- marketing materials were updated and used to promote the support available throughout the college
- all learners were issued with a 'Student Handbook' at the start of their courses, which detailed support available
- new documentation and procedures were put in place relating to:
  - initial assessment summaries
  - learning support reviews
  - learner support agreements
  - learning support needs information sheets
  - learning support plans
- facilitators were allocated to learner support needs.

### **The outcomes**

A survey of a sample found that 94% of students taking up support believe that the service they are receiving will help them achieve their qualification. The actual achievement rates are not yet available, but a significant improvement is anticipated at the end of the programme.

## Case study 10 **Super-tutor tutorials**

Havant College

### **Introduction**

For this sixth form college in the south-east of England the retention of a small cohort of Level 2 learners was consistently poor. As a result the college embarked upon a programme to improve retention and progression.

### **Aims**

The aim of this project was to devise a new tutorial programme, focused on the specific needs of Level 2 learners with a view to improving their retention and achievement.

### **The strategy**

To respond to this challenge the college elected to make radical changes to its 16–18 tutorial system, moving from a traditional structure, in which all full-time and most part-time staff were contracted to be pastoral tutors, towards a professional tutor [or ‘super-tutor’] structure.

The following strategies were designed to achieve these aims:

- a 10-strong personal tutor team, working in a newly created and specially equipped tutor room was established
- a structured and fully resourced group tutorial programme was designed
- a differentiated tutorial programme for Level 2 learners was prepared
- personal tutors trained in mentoring and action-planning were selected
- a new teacher–tutor referral mechanism was introduced to target students at risk
- electronic registering of tutorial attendance with mechanisms in place to respond to absences from lessons and tutorials was introduced.

### **The outcomes**

The outcome of this undertaking was a 13% improvement in Level 2 retention, from 69% in 2003 to 82% in 2004. Although this was 7% below the target, it was still a significant improvement. Of the 35 students who completed, 20 were offered the option of returning to the college in the following September to begin Level 3 courses.

It was clear to the college that raising the status of tutoring paid dividends. The college’s response to individual need, especially to learners at risk of failing proved efficacious. To bolster this success, the college created the new post of Head of Tutoring and Learning Support and appointed two further personal tutors.

Figures 7 and 8 show the documentation used to identify individual need.

## Figure 7 Tutorial review form

Learner's name

Personal tutor group

Date of meeting

### Programme of study

Subjects(s)	Level
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

Other college activities and major outside interest

Details of part-time work

Hours worked  Mon  Tues  Wed  Thurs  Fri  Sat  Sun

Specific career or other ambitions

Did you attend an open evening?  Yes, in Oct  Yes, in Feb  No

Did you attend the Induction Day?  Yes  No

Do you have a Student Handbook?  Yes  No

Did you open an ICT account?  Yes  No

Have you arranged a Student ID Card?  Yes  No

Have you had an IT induction session?  Yes  No

Have you used the Library and ICT Centre?  Yes  No

Did you attend the 'HE and Gap Year Fair' in September?  Yes  No

Do you understand the requirements of Key Skills?  Yes  No

Have you signed a learning agreement?  Yes  No

Have you had a diagnostic assessment for:

Communication?  Yes, 1  Yes, 2  Yes, 3  No

Application of Number?  Yes, 1  Yes, 2  Yes, 3  No

---

What action has arisen from your diagnostic assessment?

---

Have you taken part in a learning styles analysis?

Yes  No

---

If you have any learning support needs  
what are we already doing in college to help you with them?

---

Are there any other issues you would like to raise?

---

Aims for the coming term

---

What do you see as the main challenges for the term ahead?

Learner's signature

Tutor's signature

Date of next review

**Figure 8**  
Progress review form

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Review of progress</b>	<b>Agreed action plan</b>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Key Skills		
Key Skills		
Other agreed personal action		
Plans for the coming year		

Learner's signature

Tutor's signature

Date of next review

## Learning points

- Staff recruitment must reflect a commitment to the inclusive learning agenda.
- Staff training must refer to support structures and systems implemented to deliver on inclusive learning.
- Paperwork should be user-friendly (for both staff and learners), focusing on the essential requirements and removing any unnecessary detail and duplication.
- Support needs identified for learners must be satisfied quickly and appropriately.
- Any identified under-representation of groups of learners needs redress (for example, by targeted open evenings) to improve understanding of the problems faced by particular groups but also with a view to increasing participation.
- Resources need to be made available to deliver on the inclusive learning agenda – be they staff, space, equipment, furniture, materials, transport or childcare.
- Recruitment materials and paperwork should be revised to target specific groups of individuals – one size does not fit all.
- All jargon should be removed from any literature – appeal to your target audience by drawing on what they would see as user-friendly terminology.
- Communication with the target group should use appropriate communication methods and media.

## Learners at the periphery

Inclusive learning is frequently seen as a response to a deficit, a marker from a negative past learning experience or as a strategy for tackling educational disadvantage. Many learners, for example BME groups or those on the financial breadline, find themselves on the periphery of education. The preceding case studies have demonstrated how providers have reacted to issues of equality and diversity, access, gender segregation and responding to individual need. Inclusive learning, however, does not stop there.

The underpinning principle of inclusive learning demands that the diverse needs of all learners should be considered.

A group not mentioned thus far are the gifted and talented. 'Like all learners, the gifted and talented need frequent opportunities to apply their skills and understanding, and to develop their knowledge, within a secure and flexible learning environment' (QCA 2001).

The National Curriculum inclusion statement supports flexibility in lesson planning for gifted and talented learners:

*For pupils whose attainment significantly exceeds the expected level of attainment within one or more subjects during a particular key stage, teachers will need to plan suitably challenging work. As well as drawing on materials from later key stages or higher levels of study, teachers may plan further differentiation by extending the breadth and depth of study within individual subjects or by planning work which draws on the content of different subjects.*

(QCA 2004)

## Case study 11 **Raising the performance of gifted and talented learners**

Hills Road Sixth Form College

### **Introduction**

Historically, this college based in the east of England achieved good value-added scores at Advanced Level. It was, however, conscious that some of its extension activities had become marginalised after the introduction of Curriculum 2000.

### **Aims**

The college therefore embarked upon a programme to challenge and enrich the 14–19 curriculum for gifted and talented learners. The aim was to enhance learners' value-added scores and improve their chances of success in HE applications.

### **The strategy**

The resultant strategy was to introduce two accredited extension courses.

The courses were marketed in a positive way with attendance and assessment being voluntary, a point appreciated by both staff and learners. The impact of this approach meant that teaching methods moved away from the formal and developed into a university-style seminar approach.

### **The outcomes**

Both of the extension programmes are judged by the college to have been extremely successful, in that:

- retention on both projects has been excellent, with only one learner not continuing with each programme
- although not compelled to do so (owing to the voluntary nature of the course), seven out of the completing 11 learners on one programme decided to submit and achieved A grades, including two learners who scored maximum marks.

On a less substantive level:

- the new teaching and learning strategies encouraged learners to take responsibility for their own learning and to take part in unfamiliar teaching methods (eg role-play)
- the learners felt that they owned the course and were 'in control'.

As a result of this success the extension courses were expanded to include additional subject areas as well as increasing the number of learners able to access them. The lessons learnt through this pilot stage have resulted in the college developing a checklist for the future development of such courses (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9**  
**Checklist for running extension courses**

Teachers must:

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| pay attention to the effect on student workload in timetabling courses   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| pay attention to student workload in assessment requirements   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ensure that accreditation is available in order to boost the status of the course  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| make enrolment and attendance on the course voluntary  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| make completion of assessment voluntary  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| emphasise that the course is for learners who have demonstrated that they are more able/enthusiastic                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| emphasise the 'special' nature of the course   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| make learners feel that they have ownership of the course and are in control   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ensure staff do not belittle or dismiss any view put forward by learners   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| create an atmosphere of trust in which learners will not feel 'uncool' when demonstrating enthusiasm or using specialist terminology | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Case study 12 **Motivational interviewing**

Worcester Sixth Form College

### **Introduction**

At this sixth form college in the Midlands, a small number of Level 2 learners were identified as being among the most gifted and talented within their cohort; however, their attendance and behaviour gave cause for concern.

### **Aims**

The aim of the project was to improve the attendance and behaviour of high ability students by differentiating between learners.

### **The strategy**

Two members of staff were trained in motivational interviewing techniques.

The college piloted motivational interviewing among two groups of Level 2 learners in the hope of raising retention and achievement.

### **The outcomes**

This project involved piloting the technique of motivational interviewing with a limited number of learners. It was found that:

- the attendance levels of those benefiting from the motivational interviewing improved
- retention among the target group has also improved when compared with a control group at Level 2.

## Learning points

- Critically review any new development to assess the impact it has had on provision and make changes as necessary.
- Develop teaching and learning methods that stimulate the learner, providing continuing professional development as appropriate.
- Differentiate the delivery of programmes to meet the needs of all learners within a group – where necessary provide learning opportunities for specific groups.
- Place emphasis on improving retention, achievement and progression rates for all learners by:
  - the early identification of at risk learners, regardless of what triggers the concern of at risk
  - showing commitment and investment in individual support to keep learners on track
  - placing learners at the centre of the planning process and all subsequent provision.

## Lessons learnt

The work undertaken in the action research projects serves to demonstrate the complexity that surrounds the inclusive learning agenda. The case studies presented are by no means exhaustive in terms of the array of issues that could have been touched on – there are many others that require consideration. Based on the work of the projects described, some general lessons learnt have emerged that transfer across different provider groups.

### Strategic direction

It is abundantly clear that a coordinated approach to inclusive learning is fundamental when working with different learners. Furthermore, changes in demographics and employment patterns must be taken into account when arranging the type and level of provision available to learners.

Providers are already required to respond to EDIMs. However, adopting a compliant approach and following the letter of legislative requirements will result in a deficit model for inclusive learning; compliance should be seen as the starting point not the finishing point. Providers need to be proactive in prioritising and setting targets for the multitude of possible subgroups of learners. Stereotypical assumptions held by both learners and providers must be challenged and appropriate action taken to redress them. Targets for all groups should be set as part of the performance indicator process, and then monitored on a regular basis with appropriate action supported by management.

The involvement of staff who are committed to widening participation is central to success. This will require investment by the provider in continuing professional development for teaching and support staff. In recent times, the broad area of inclusive learning has been the recipient of much change. Staff training to promote awareness of equality and diversity issues and engender understanding of what it means to those delivering learning and skills is essential.

In particular, diversity legislation, including the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4, known as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, needs to be put into context and the ramifications made explicit to staff. Strategies to ensure providers move from discourse to practice and ensure inclusive provision need to form part of this development activity.

Such training and development activity might usefully link to recruitment strategies and new positions, which must reflect provider commitment to the inclusive learning agenda. These might include 'gifted and talented' coordinators, minority ethnic staff (reflecting the local environment), community/parent liaison officers, employer liaison teams and people with responsibility for promoting and securing partnership and collaboration.

A strategy for sharing good practice within an organisation needs to be devised. A review of work undertaken by different teams/occupational areas to improve equal opportunities should be the starting point. This will highlight areas of good and developing practice and act as a focus for further development activity across the provision. This will ensure that weaker areas, be they departments, teams, occupational areas or gaps in responding to inclusive learning, receive appropriate opportunities for development.

### **Community involvement**

No amount of strategic intent or goodwill will be completely successful if the surrounding community is not involved with this process. Providers need to work with the local community to identify and break down any barriers caused by, for example, cultural, religious, social and/or economic differences. Providers need to actively engage with different community groups, and to liaise with parent groups to change parental attitudes and ensure full support for learners.

Other stakeholders such as employers are also essential to success. Partners for collaborative ventures and employers who provide work placement for learners need to be carefully selected. When working with other stakeholders (eg employers) it is vital that their commitment is formalised and the quality of their input is monitored closely.

Where the monitoring of targets has identified under-representation, targeted open evenings, can help to increase participation. Ideally, relevant community groups need to be involved to improve the chance of success.

## The practicalities

The allocation of appropriate resources is essential and the needs of learners must be central to the planning process and subsequent provision if learning provision is to be inclusive. Providers will have to identify and overcome the varied barriers that different groups of learners face. The required action must be appropriate and follow quickly.

Perhaps above all, teaching and learning methods that engage the disaffected learner will need to be implemented. This will involve differentiated delivery of a programme to meet the needs of all learners – where necessary, learning opportunities for specific groups will need to be considered.

Staff need to have the necessary skills to deliver on the promise of providing opportunities for inclusive learning. Providers may need to tailor their professional development for staff to meet this need, so that staff training takes account of support structures and systems implemented to deliver on inclusive learning. Individualised training packages may, for example, include training that promotes awareness of equality and diversity issues or aims to engender an understanding of what these issues mean in practical terms.

In order to communicate successfully with learners and potential learners, recruitment activities need to be tailored to the needs of particular groups of learners. This will go at least part way to ensuring that providers engage with particular target groups. Using modern communication techniques and jargon-free language, providers will be able to address target audiences in a friendly manner. Recruitment material and paperwork will need to be revised to respond to the needs of specific groups of individuals – one size does not fit all.

Providing the support and resources to deliver on inclusive learning will require dedicated space – prayer room, workshop spaces, learning centres – all fitted out with appropriate equipment, furniture and materials. Such provision will need to be staffed, and ancillary support (eg transport or childcare) provided.

Throughout the process, emphasis will need to be placed on improving retention, achievement and progression rates for all learners. This requires providers to:

- identify at risk learners early on, regardless of what triggers the concern of at risk
- show commitment to, and investment in, individual support to keep learners on track
- place health and safety of learners at the heart of all procedures
- analyse retention, achievement and progression rates of different groups of learners to inform provider policies and procedures.

The data generated on retention, achievement and progression rates should be used to provide baselines, demonstrate success and plan future and target strategies to combat exclusion. Equally, the data should be used to identify pockets of inequality and exclusion, to help set targets for all groups and subgroups of learners. These targets need to be monitored on a regular basis with appropriate action supported by management.

Assessment policies and procedures need to be comprehensive and effective to ensure that needs are identified and met – different learning environments and styles need to be taken into account. The paperwork used to support the learning process should be user-friendly (for both staff and learners), and should focus on the essential requirements and avoid any unnecessary detail and duplication.

## Conclusions

There is little doubt that the learning and skills sector has made progress in responding to the inclusive learning agenda and improving the quality of the provision it offers over the past years:

*The multiplicity of recent measures, devised to effect improved access to education, mirrors policy intentions and discourse around social inclusion and widening participation.* (Leader 2003:366)

Nevertheless, there remain pockets of non-participation suggesting that some groups still lack opportunities to learn and therefore remain under-represented. Providers need to identify how to create opportunities for these groups to participate at local, organisational and programme levels, and:

*aim for accessible, equitable and flexible provision in order to effect social, economic and cultural improvements ... If we don't find common ground then we perpetuate difference, lose opportunities to learn from each other, and impede progress towards achieving accessible and equitable provision.*

(Kerry 1996)

Recent legislative developments are contributing to the creation of a robust and comprehensive policy framework to support inclusive learning. In response, providers need to review all aspects of their provision to ensure that they are best placed to meet these requirements and achieve any associated targets. They must also address the needs of those learners who are disengaged and/or disaffected in a meaningful way and not just to meet government targets. There must be commitment to inclusive learning throughout the whole organisation: from a quality perspective this may well require challenging the culture and ethos if headway is to be made.

*Within FE, the context for social inclusion is set by government policy, which in turn informs inclusive learning strategies. It is imperative that the underlying principles for meeting this agenda ensure equality of opportunity through improved access to a curriculum that is socially inclusive ... it is about ensuring accessible provision of resources and materials, as well as learning opportunities based on an individual's needs. Accessible learning is a key policy for addressing the experiences of disadvantaged individuals and communities.*

(Leader 2003:368)

The preceding sections offer providers some suggestions about steps that can be taken to move learners from the periphery to the mainstream, and to develop programmes that are accessible, flexible and appropriate to all learners.

The Support for Success action research projects also offer some evidence of the strides that are being made and an indication that the inclusive learning agenda, and all that it embodies, is being taken seriously. This is a good start, but there is still much to be done as there are still gaps in learning and access to learning provision for particular groups of learners. To achieve a more inclusive system that has flexibility and responsiveness at its core, and that is capable of meeting the diverse and complex needs of the sector, requires coherent strategic intervention across all types of provision.



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## Organisations contributing to this report

Case studies undertaken as part of these action research projects can be found on the Support for Success website via [www.s4s.org.uk/index.php?mod=page&page=home&id=3](http://www.s4s.org.uk/index.php?mod=page&page=home&id=3)

The contributing organisations are:

Bolton Community College

Burton College

Dukeries College

Dunstable College

Havant College

Hills Road Sixth Form College

Huddersfield Technical College

Long Road Sixth Form College

Mid-Kent College

Runshaw College

Swarthmore Centre, Leeds

Worcester Sixth Form College



# Support for Success Quality Improvement Programme

What do 'inclusive learning', 'equality' and 'widening participation' mean? Are they synonymous? How can providers decipher what is required of them and relate it to their mission and development plans? How do they ensure that they are responding to the challenges presented? How do they achieve the targets that are set?

The Learning and Skills Council has a statutory duty to apply the principles of equality and diversity, and these principles are included within the Common Inspection Framework. Providers from across the learning and skills sector need to review their provision in the light of this agenda.

This booklet provides an overview that illustrates the breadth and variety that the broad banner of inclusive learning encapsulates, signposting further information and focusing on a number of key issues that have challenged providers across the learning and skills sector in recent times. These key areas are supplemented by illustrative case studies drawn from the Support for Success and Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programmes that outline how some providers are responding to the challenges inclusive learning can present.