



post19

learning and skills strategy

creating a learning borough in
which all individuals can realise
their potential through learning

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1. Foreword

This strategy aims to be simple, achievable, ambitious and aspirational. Its primary aim will be the creation of a **learning borough** where all individuals, families, communities, neighbourhoods and employers can realise their potential through learning.

'Learning and skills can make a profound difference to adult lives in many ways:

- Through the formal development of skills that enable people to get better jobs;*
- Through learning that helps develop families, communities and community cohesion*
- By meeting the basic human need for creativity and stimulation.'*¹

Post 19 learning and skills embraces different degrees and types of engagement all of which place the learner at the centre of learning: formal, informal and work-based. The term 'learning' has been interpreted in the same way as outlined in the framework of *Inspiring Learning for All*, it is seen as a

*'process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas and feelings, or an increase in the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more.'*²

Furthermore, the acquisition of relevant knowledge and the development of a strong skills base is fundamental for the future success of the Borough taking account of The National Skills Strategy 2005 which states;

*"Skills are fundamental to achieving our ambitions, as individuals, for our families, their learning needs and for our communities future. They help businesses create wealth, and they help people realise their potential. So they serve the twin goals of social justice and economic success."*³

This strategy has been developed working with statutory, voluntary, business and community sectors and most importantly adult learners themselves so that they can achieve their aspirations and potential. This strategy also aims to work towards a strategic approach to Post 19 learning and skills for the future within the following areas:

- Promoting well being and personal enrichment
- Supporting families
- Strengthening Communities
- Enhancing Employment Prospects

¹ **'Informal Adult Learning – shaping the way ahead'** Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, January 2008.

² **Inspiring Learning for All (ILFA) definition of learning, adapted from the Campaign for Learning (2003) – www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk.**

³ **'Skills getting on in business, getting on at work' Part 1**, Department for Education and Schools, March 2005.

2. Vision

The Dudley Post 19 Learning and Skills strategy has been developed and written as a platform for the Community Strategy vision of

*'a borough where everyone, irrespective of background, or personal circumstance, has the opportunity to realise their full potential, and one where our children and young people in particular, aspire to realise their full potential and are supported in doing so'*⁴

3. Introduction

The development of Post 19 learning in the Borough needs to include the three types of learning as defined by the European Commission in 2001⁵:

'Formal learning: typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

Non-formal learning: learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is however structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

Informal learning: learning resulting from daily-life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or 'incidental'/random).'

Dudley is a large metropolitan borough with a population of 305,300 within an area of 38 square miles. It is located on the western part of the West Midlands conurbation and forms the southwest corner of the Black Country, which is a sub-region of England with a unique cultural and economic heritage. Despite its predominantly urban character, 25% of the Borough is open space.

The problems faced by people living and working in Dudley are complex and widespread. Like the other Black Country Boroughs, namely Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, the gap between the standard of living and well-being experienced by people living in wealthy areas is still significantly better than those felt by residents in poorer parts of the Borough and this gap needs to be closed for the benefit of all.

Learning, training and education can provide real chances to improve future job prospects and can help improve the general potential and well-being of individuals, families, neighbourhoods, communities and businesses. Learning also helps people to understand how to gain better access to services, help and facilities. Having appropriate knowledge and skills can improve all aspects of life.

⁴ 'Community Strategy 2005 – 2020' Dudley Community Partnership, 2005

⁵ 'Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality' European Commission in 2001 Communication (published Feb 2002)

Dudley's economy generally reflects that of the wider sub-region with a low level of earnings relative to the UK average.

'There are some major economic issues and challenges for the Borough including reducing worklessness and developing and improving the skills of local people through quality training and achievement of qualifications, to equip them with the appropriate skills to meet the current and future needs of the local jobs market. Integral to this is the focus required on narrowing the gap between the most deprived wards and the rest of the borough in terms of worklessness and skills levels⁶.

Dudley is made up of a number of distinct townships and neighbourhoods, each having its own unique character and identity. Their diversity and difference provides a challenge for the delivery of learner-centred provision. For instance, one of the reasons given by young people for not continuing education beyond 16 years of age is that the Colleges are considered too far away - although the distance may be no more than four miles.

In addition to developing the skills and ensuring the appropriate knowledge base, it is also vital to develop *'learning for personal fulfilment, civic participation and community development'*.⁷ This provision is defined by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as

*'learning for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and enjoyment. It is also learning developed with local residents and other learners to build the skills, knowledge and understanding for social and community action. There is no requirement that learners must necessarily progress to other learning or achieve accreditation....This approach also recognises the wider benefits of learning in the community; including its contribution to broader government policies such as health (mental and physical well-being) and community cohesion)*⁸

In Dudley this type of learning will be provided through the development of effective Personal, Community and Development Learning (PCDL) programmes across the borough which are:

- of high quality
- challenging and inspiring
- accessible to everyone
- not based on prior educational attainment
- paid for by those that can afford it.

PCDL learners are expected to contribute some or all of the costs of this type of learning, depending on their income and ability to pay. Public funding for PCDL work is targeted on those learners in most financial need who have benefited the least from education in the past.

⁶ 'An Economic Strategy for Dudley Borough 2008/09' Dudley MBC, 2008

⁷ 'Further Education: raising skills, improving lif chances' Department for Education and Skills, 2006

⁸ 'Our Single Statement of Requirements' Learning and Skills Council, 2006

The following Dudley Borough characteristics have influenced the development of this strategy:

- 18.9% of the working age population have no formal or recognised qualifications compared to 17.5% in the West Midlands and 13.8% nationally
- 61.6% of the working age population are qualified to NVQ Level 2 compared to 60.5% in the West Midlands and 63.8% nationally.
- 21% of the working age population have higher level skills (equivalent to NVQ Level 4 and above) compared to 24% in the West Midlands and 27.4% nationally.
- The percentage of knowledge workers (those in professional, managerial, scientific and technical occupations) in Dudley is 38.3% compared to 42.3% nationally.
- Dudley has the lowest unemployment, by percentage, in the Black Country at 2.9% (5,358 claimants of Job Seekers Allowance)⁹, compared to 2.1% nationally.
- In terms of long term unemployment, the number of people unemployed for 12 months or more is 20% of the total unemployed, which is the highest percentage in the Black Country and compares to 14.8% nationally.
- Thirteen wards have over the national average of 24% poor literacy
- Fourteen wards have over the national average of 24% poor numeracy
- 19.1% of residents have a long term disability of which 8.4% are of working age
- There are still people who suffer more from ill health than others in the borough. Life expectancy stands at 76 for males and 81 for females depending on where you live. Life expectancy can vary by up to seven years.
- 6.3% of the population are from ethnic minority groups
- A significant restructuring of the industry base with a considerable reduction of manufacturing jobs over recent years, and an increase in service sector employment. The proportion of jobs in the manufacturing sector is still higher (at 16%) than the UK average.¹⁰
- The need for more diverse employment opportunities in the Borough of Dudley. The replacement of manufacturing jobs with employment in retail, that may be temporary, low paid and require minimal qualifications is a risk. Gross Value Added (GVA) per head of population for the Dudley and Sandwell Borough's is £13,806, the lowest in the West Midland region.
- An ageing population with people over 60 accounting for 22.2% of the total population compared to 20.6% in 1991. The over 80's account for 4%, increasing from 3.2% in 1991.
- The Dudley City Strategy which focuses on narrowing the gap between the five priority Wards of Brierley Hill, Castle and Priory, Netherton and Woodside, St. James's and St. Thomas's and the rest of the Borough.

⁹ Office for National Statistics, December 2007

¹⁰ **Annual Business Enquiry** , 2006

The Community Strategy for the Borough of Dudley has five objectives within key priority areas which relate to Post 19 Learning and Skills:

Creating a prosperous borough

1. Creating opportunities for local people to gain well-paid employment in the Borough by equipping residents with the necessary skills and encouraging employers to invest in employee development.

Promoting a sense of well-being and good health for everyone

2. Promoting and improving access to physical activity and encouraging healthy eating so as to reduce levels of obesity

Celebrating our heritage and local cultural life

3. Increasing the percentage of the population with good access to cultural, leisure and sports facilities.

Promoting individual and community learning

4. Ensuring that learning provision is of the highest quality and is relevant to both the current and future needs of employers, learners and potential learners.
5. To support communities so that they are properly equipped to make a proper contribution to regeneration in their own areas.

In addition learning will promote and value diversity within the Borough and surrounding areas.

4. Partnership Working

Partnerships exist in Dudley to further develop and provide learning opportunities that include Higher and Further Education, Local Authority provision, specialist work-based learning provision and activities run by the voluntary and community sector. However as resources are becoming increasingly limited, it is vitally important that partnerships and providers work closely and effectively together to ensure improved co-ordination of service delivery.

Partners and stakeholders must collaborate, especially when planning, agreeing and funding any new provision to ensure that best value is achieved. This will also help to minimise unnecessary duplication of provision and work towards closing the gaps where provision is most needed.

In the five City Strategy areas the Community Renewal team co-ordinate and support Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Partnerships (NESP's). Each NESP has a plan which has been developed from neighbourhood management profiles and Area Learning Plans. The detailed, employment focussed NESP plans set out the actions needed to encourage people in the journey from a reliance on benefits into work through training, confidence building and support.

Implementation of the NESP plans is delivered through 5 area boards supported by the Community Renewal team. The boards have strong community involvement and co-ordinate the offer from public, voluntary and private agencies to meet the local skills and support needs.

In addition the Council's Economic Regeneration Division, the Learning and Skills Council and Sector Skills Councils are working with employers and potential employers to identify future skill sets and knowledge needed to develop businesses and improve services in the Borough.

5. Consultation

Fifteen months of public consultation informed the *Community Strategy 2005-2020 for Dudley*, which states:

*'Consultation has clearly shown that the community want Dudley to be a borough with opportunities for learning open to everyone, and one where recognition is given equally to academic and vocational attainment. People want to see help given to raise children and young people's aspirations, whilst also providing opportunity to meet such aspirations.'*¹¹

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as a main provider of funds for learning and skills in the borough have used information gained from learner and employer surveys to help inform the content of the strategy.

The Borough Council's Adult and Community Learning Team work with the Community Renewal Team to create local annual Area Learning Plans for the borough. These are based on learning needs identified through working closely with local communities in the Borough.

Other key learning, education and training providers, such as the Dudley Further Education Colleges, work-based learning provider specialists and the local university have contributed to the writing of this strategy.

6. Promoting well being and personal enrichment

Learning which promotes well being and personal enrichment is provided through a rich and varied range of Personal, Community and Development Learning (PCDL) opportunities in the borough which are made available for people of all ages. This could enable individuals to enjoy learning about their abiding passions or interests. Learning opportunities offer chances for individuals to gain a sense of achievement. When individuals gain knowledge it can help them to stay healthy and safe, encourage active ageing and intergenerational understanding. Appropriate learning can enable people to cope with significant changes in their personal and family life. Furthermore, the development and deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas and feelings increases the capacity for self-reflection and promotes well-being and personal enrichment.

¹¹ 'Community Strategy 2005 – 2020' Dudley Community Partnership, 2005

The White Paper *'Our Health Our Care our Say'*¹² explains in detail the improvements the Government is going to make to health and social care services and states that the following are two of the key dimensions to achieve this:

- *'Improved quality of life – access to leisure, social activities and life-long learning and to universal, public and commercial services.*
- *Exercise of choice and control – through maximum independence and access to information'*

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) research¹³ states that

'the importance of personal development as a motivation for learning increases with age'.

Older learners study various subjects like arts, religion, history and music in significant numbers, and the need for courses in computer skills tail off. The motivation for older learners is a passion for the subject with a need to find pleasure in the activity of learning with others. Participation strengthens self confidence and helps learners to make new relationships and contacts. There are gender differences in the take up of learning by older people, with women using their existing informal networks, and men needing guidance on what is available, possibly as part of preparation for retirement.

*Dudley Older People's Strategy*¹⁴ includes eight broad objectives for implementation, of which five are of relevance to this strategy:

1. *Promoting the principles of active engagement in later life*
2. *Making sure that older people are aware of the range of opportunities and activities that facilitate health and well being*
3. *Ensuring that older people have equitable access to all services*
4. *Encouraging a positive approach to the experience of ageing through older people working together and with others to challenge assumptions about ageing.*
5. *Challenging assumptions about ageing by promoting links and activities across generations*

The *Dudley Borough Strategy for Adults with Physical and Sensory Disabilities*¹⁵ under the theme Housing Advice and Support in the Home includes the commitment to

'train our own staff to deliver a range of courses...these could include "Extend", "Expert Patient", "Get Cooking"...'

all of which improve the quality of life.

¹² **Our Health, our care our say: a new direction for community services'** Department of Health, January 2006

¹³ **'What older people learn'** NIACE 2007

¹⁴ **'Dudley Older People's Strategy'** April 2006

¹⁵ **'Dudley Borough Strategy for Adults with Physical and Sensory Disabilities'** January 2008

The Dudley Community Strategy¹⁶ refers to this area of work by stating that additional work will be carried out to:

- *'develop a whole range of learning opportunities for people from all backgrounds, from informal learning to centres of excellence for further education*
- *'promote family and community learning, where everyone in the household or the wider community helps to learn from one another, whilst also enjoying the benefits of learning themselves '.*

Learning which promotes well being and personal enrichment is provided in Dudley through a wide range of providers and funding streams including the local authority; universities; colleges; extended schools; and voluntary sector groups including community groups and charities. Funding comes from the LSC and is targeted to those in greatest need. Funding is also generated by payment received from learners and funds raised by charities and voluntary groups.

Engaging learners in informal adult learning can then lead onto progression into learning for individual development, voluntary activity, employability and jobs.

Key Impacts of the Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy

Key Impact 1: Improved coordination and availability of learning opportunities in the borough

Key Impact 2: Improved access to learning about physical activity and healthy eating leading to reduced levels of obesity

¹⁶ 'Community Strategy 2005 – 2020' Dudley Community Partnership, 2005

Key outcomes and actions

An illustration of how Post 19 Learning and Skills supports the outcomes and actions of the following plans and strategies:

	Children and Young Peoples Plan	Community Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Economic Strategy	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	Older People's Strategy
NI 8 Adult participation in sport			✓			✓		✓	✓
NI 9 Use of public libraries	✓	✓	✓			✓			
NI 11 Engagement in the arts		✓	✓						
NI 17 Perceptions of anti-social behaviour								✓	
NI 119 Self-reported measure of people's overall health and well-being	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
NI 18 Adult re-offending rates for those under the probation service		✓					✓		
NI 139 People over 65 who say that they receive the information, assistance and support needed to exercise choice and control to live independently				✓			✓	✓	✓
NI 141 Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living				✓					✓
Better health in mothers and new babies	✓	✓				✓	✓		
Establishment of an effective strategic PCDL planning group for the borough							✓		
Increased % of Post 19 learners progressing to other areas of learning					✓		✓		
Increased % of Post 19 learners who achieve 100% of their learning outcomes					✓		✓		

Continued

	Older People's Strategy	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	Economic Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Community Strategy	Children and Young Peoples Plan
Increased % of Post 19 learners who progress through to course completion			✓		✓				
Improved fitness and physical mobility	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Improved health choices	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
Improved mental health	✓		✓			✓			✓
Improved take up of health services by men and boys	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
Improved take up of health and public services by those who need them			✓			✓			✓
Increased uptake of services, clubs, facilities	✓		✓				✓		✓
Increase in the number of people with disabilities who feel that their choices and opportunities have improved	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
Reduction/ cessation of medication and/or use of medical aids						✓			✓
Reduction in the deterioration of brain function in the elderly resulting in reduced reliance on public services									✓

7. Supporting Families

The word 'family' in this context is used to mean any group of people related through kinship or commitment. Learning helps families to strengthen communities and improve the five outcomes for children in Dudley as outlined in The Children's Act 2004:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Economic well-being

The *Dudley Children and Young People's Plan 2008 - 2011*¹⁷ states that

'parents and carers are a crucial influence on what their children experience and achieve. We need to consider how we support and enable all parents to play a full and positive part in their children's learning and development'.

The Plan includes four key strands for the parenting strategy:

1. manual based parenting programmes
2. family support
3. family learning
4. information advice and guidance

The *Parenting Support and Family Learning Strategy*¹⁸, which is currently being developed, states it will

'ensure that all parents/ carers have the opportunity to be confident in their duty to nurture their children, by developing integrated services to support parents/carers in their parenting role that are of high quality, well planned and clearly co-ordinated reflecting a diversity of need to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people'.

The Community Strategy¹⁹ includes the following actions that have been developed to support families:

- *'Ensure active engagement with parents and whole communities to help them support children and young people's learning and development*
- *Promote family and community learning, where everyone in the household or the wider community helps to learn from one another'*.

Effective Family Learning provision supports families by promoting the advantages and impact of intergenerational family learning. It is provided by the Council's Adult and Community Learning Family Learning Team who work in partnership with the Parenting Commissioner, schools, libraries, Children's Centres, community and

¹⁷ *'Dudley Children and Young People's Plan 2008 – 2011'* Dudley Children's Trust 2008

¹⁸ *'Draft Dudley Parenting Support and Family Learning Strategy'* Dudley MBC, January 2008

¹⁹ *'Community Strategy 2005 – 2020'* Dudley Community Partnership, 2005

voluntary groups to deliver high quality, innovative family learning initiatives. It includes formal, non-formal and informal learning which:

- Is inter-generational
- Develops a wide range of knowledge, values, skills, and understanding through health and well-being, family relationships, child development, literacy, language and numeracy, sport and creative arts-based activities
- Helps parents/carers to be able to support their children's learning and development more actively and with greater confidence and to be able to understand why that support is important
- Equips family members with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments
- Promotes lifelong learning as intrinsically worthwhile for the family
- Is accessible to all.

Key Impacts of the Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy

Key Impact 3: Increase in the number of parents and communities actively engaged in supporting children and young people's learning and development

Key Impact 4: Improved outcomes for children and young people in the borough.

Key outcomes and actions

An illustration of how Post 19 Learning and Skills supports the outcomes and actions of the following plans and strategies:

	Children and Young Peoples Plan	Community Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Economic Strategy	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	Older People's Strategy
NI 92 Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest	✓					✓			
NI 110 Young people's participation in positive activities	✓	✓	✓			✓			
NI 116 Proportion of children in poverty	✓					✓		✓	
Improved targeting of family services to those most in need	✓	✓				✓			
Improved self-advocacy by vulnerable families where one or more child is statemented or has other needs that are not being met	✓					✓			
Improved support for carers resulting in improved caring, better life for carers and reduction in reliance on state support by those needing care	✓			✓		✓			
Improved inter-generational understanding leading to more positive role models e.g. for boys, leading to improved performance, behaviour and achievement	✓					✓			✓
Continued									

	Older People's Strategy	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	Economic Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Community Strategy	Children and Young Peoples Plan
Increased use of public sport and leisure facilities by families				✓			✓		✓
% reduction in the percentage of children (0-4) in families in receipt of out-of-work benefits				✓	✓				✓
Maintaining high pass rates for parents taking national literacy and numeracy qualifications				✓					✓
Increase in the number of parents who support their children by integrating learning into fun games and everyday activities at home				✓					✓
Improved progression of learners from family learning into further learning, employment and voluntary activities in schools and the local community.			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓

8. Strengthening Communities

Learning and skills support the Strengthening Communities agenda through the provision of opportunities that are directly targeted to improving active citizenship, but also through the provision of all learning and skills opportunities, as learning *'is what people do when they want to make sense of the world'*²⁰. The achievement of completing their first course, be it one for a couple of hours or for a number of days, improves the confidence of learners. A good progression route for learning in the borough will enable learners who have now re-engaged with learning to move on and develop additional skills, or translate into confidence in having a say about their own community and contributing to the development of positive initiatives.

This was recognised in the February 2006 statement by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

*'Effective local governance now requires informed, engaged citizens who vote in elections, participate in decision making and contribute to the quality of services. This means public bodies need to go beyond providing opportunities for participation, to embark on a process of learning, both for the public and for the organisations that need their input.'*²¹

The Department for Communities and Local Government Report *Unlocking the Talent of Our Communities*²² says that prosperity and competitiveness depend on our ability to tap into the creativity, energy, ingenuity, and skills of people. It states

"People have proved that given the right opportunities, skills and backup, there is nothing inevitable about poverty, crime or anti-social behaviour, and that no area is beyond regeneration and renewal" and "Government has much to learn from voluntary action and from the ways people organise themselves to secure change in their communities... To tap into the talents of all of the people, not merely the few, we need to involve people actively in:

- *Improving deprived areas through regeneration and promoting work and enterprise.*
- *Encouraging active citizenship, and reviving civic society and local democracy.*
- *Improving local public services by involving users and consumers; and*
- *Strengthening local accountability."*

The Community Strategy includes the following actions where effective Post 19 Learning and Skills contributes to the strengthening communities agenda:

- *'Increasing the number of people involved in decision making within their local areas*

²⁰ Inspiring Learning for All (ILFA) definition of learning, adapted from the Campaign for Learning (2003) – www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk.

²¹ *Promoting effective citizenship and community empowerment: a guide to local authorities on enhancing capacity for local empowerment* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, February 2006.

²² *Unlocking the Talent of Our Communities* Department for Communities and Local Government Report, March 2008

- *Better promote the borough's cultural and social heritage, recognising the contribution made by all sections of the community towards the creation and maintenance of stronger, more cohesive communities.'*

In Dudley there is a long standing awareness of the negative socio-economic impact of living in the poorer neighbourhoods. Families and individuals from these communities usually have few or no formal qualifications and are less likely to access opportunities for learning. Community learning is the primary factor that reduces poverty in places and enhances people's life chances.

Post 19 Learning and Skills strengthens local communities by increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence local decision making processes through participation. Learning outcomes focus on improving confidence and self esteem, healthier lifestyles with adults and an engagement target for older people. Joint working with Adult and Community Learning Team and the Primary Care Trust in 2007/08 has strengthened referrals to health and fitness programmes and recording of fitness starting points.

Social capital is strengthened by the contribution of Post 19 Learning and Skills to improving the knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation that communities have across Dudley in their natural networks and associations and supports active citizenship. In some instances, community based provision provides a route to qualifications which leads to voluntary or paid employment as people develop the generic skills required by local employers.

Post 19 Learning and Skills contribute to reduction of crime and disorder through community engagement activities and by offering local learning opportunities which support people into learning and jobs.

In Dudley, community learning programmes and activities focus on the issues in people lives such as better health, education, greener neighbourhoods, less crime and local employment. It recognises through inclusion policies practices that some people have restricted opportunities and influences and therefore should be supported to participate. This work contributes to reducing social exclusion and closing the inequalities gap within the framework of the Community Plan and the Local Area Agreement.

The Strengthening Communities Post 19 Learning and Skills provision includes subjects that support community renewal and development including union representation; committee skills; campaigning and advocacy; cultural diversity; community research; mediation and conflict resolution; community arts; welfare rights; and political literacy. It is provided by the local authority; colleges; extended schools; and voluntary sector groups including community groups and charities. Funding comes from the Learning and Skills Council funding streams which is targeted to those in greatest need. Funding is also generated by payment received from learners and funds raised by charities and voluntary groups

Key Impacts of the Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy

Key Impact 5: Increase in the number of people involved in decision-making within their local areas

Key Impact 6: Increase in the number of people involved in voluntary work including charities and community groups.

Key outcomes and actions:

An illustration of how Post 19 Learning and Skills supports the outcomes and actions of the following plans and strategies:

	Children and Young Peoples Plan	Community Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Economic Strategy	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	Older People's Strategy	Respect
NI1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	✓	✓						✓	✓	
NI 2 % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood		✓								
NI 3 Civic Participation in the local area		✓								
NI 4 % of people who feel they can influence decision in their locality		✓								
NI 6 participation in regular volunteering	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		
NI 7 environment for a thriving third sector					✓			✓		
NI 13 Migrants English Language skills and knowledge						✓	✓			
NI 138 Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood		✓							✓	
Improved tenant participation rates										✓
Increased number of self-regulated clubs and societies			✓							
Improved community safety										✓
Improved environments and reduction in antisocial behaviour										✓
Continued										

	Respect	Older People's Strategy	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	Economic Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Community Strategy	Children and Young Peoples Plan
Learning communities created						✓			✓	
Increased number of voluntary and community sector partners			✓	✓		✓			✓	
Increased number of community schemes for car-sharing, Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS), visiting vulnerable people, neighbourhood watch and other community cooperation	✓						✓			
Improved communication by newsletters, notice boards etc.	✓						✓			

9. Enhancing Employment Prospects

Effective Post 19 Learning and Skills provision is a key element in enhancing the employment prospects of residents in the Borough of Dudley.

The learning provision already outlined in this strategy acts as a hook into learning for many people who have previously become disaffected with learning due to previous poor experiences. Basic Skills including literacy and numeracy are developed, where needed, as part of the learning provision outlined in this strategy as the first stage in developing employability skills to enable local residents to enter employment or get better jobs. In order to enhance employment prospects within the borough, this learning must be effectively complemented by the development of the skills needed by current and future employers in the borough to ensure that Dudley achieves the aspiration contained in the Community Strategy to be 'a prosperous borough'.

The Skills Action Plan for the West Midlands being developed by Advantage West Midlands and the Learning and Skills Council is a key influence to the development of learning and skills provision in the Borough. The Plan covers the three years from 2008 and sets out the regions economic goals and 2020 ambitions that have resulted from the Leitch²³ review of skills. It

'sets out within the Region's economic strategy the specific skills ambitions for the Region (as follows):

- *key actions which meet both the immediate skills needs of employers as well as creating the right conditions for a fundamental shift in the volume and level of employer demand in the future*
- *identifies through key progression options for individuals to continually advance through learning and work*
- *acknowledges the central role of universities, colleges and providers with a commitment to support their development to be world class providers of skills meeting the needs of employers within a demand led system'.²⁴*

The major economic issues and challenges for the Borough of Dudley include **reducing worklessness and developing and improving the skills of local people.** This will be done through the provision of quality learning and skills provision which supports the increase in Basic Skills levels and the achievement of qualifications which will equip local people with the appropriate skills to meet the current and future needs of the local jobs market. A key element of this is the prioritization of the work which will close the gap between the most deprived wards and the rest of the borough.

The *Economic Strategy for Dudley Borough*²⁵ has five strategic aims that provide for the long term vision for economic regeneration in the borough. Learning and skills development contribute significantly to three of them:

²³ **Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills**, (Leitch review of skills), HMSO, December 2006

²⁴ **Skills action plan West Midland Region**, Draft January 2008.

²⁵ **An Economic Strategy for Dudley Borough 2008/09** Dudley MBC, 2008

1. *'to optimize the opportunities for local people – including the most vulnerable people and those from deprived areas – to develop and improve their skills and obtain jobs*
2. *to support and develop new and existing businesses and jobs and to attract inward investment to the Borough*
3. *to encourage and support the development of a diverse and dynamic business base that increases the proportion of well paid jobs across the borough'.*

The *Local Area Agreement (LAA)* and *City Strategy Plans* and targets have been developed with a strong focus on raising skills levels to develop the employability of local people. The LAA has skills development as a key strand in developing its vision of

'A borough with a vibrant and sustainable economy, where all neighbourhoods and communities benefit from the prosperity that results and where inequalities are reduced'.

The LAA Sense of Place document²⁶ states that the

'low skills base is an important consideration in the development of the 'knowledge economy' as it is likely to have an impact of the Borough's ability to attract the necessary business and investment to improve the level of income across the Borough'.

The following actions have been developed for Post 19 Learning and Skills within the Community Strategy²⁷ in relation to enhancing employment provision;

- *'Increasing the number of local people who have the skills and qualifications to gain local employment*
- *Support and encourage companies to invest in workforce development.'*

The Dudley Borough *Strategy for Adults with Physical and Sensory Disabilities* includes a theme Benefits, Employment and Adult and Community Learning which outlines how the Strategy meets the government vision to enhance the employment prospects of its target group through the aims:

- *'To enable people to overcome obstacles to work by focusing on their capabilities and challenging the belief that disabled people are incapable of work*
- *Improving access to opportunities for disabled people to develop their skills, have access to a wide range of affordable, flexible opportunities for continuing learning'²⁸.*

Learning and skills development for enhancing employment prospects is provided through a wide range of providers including work based learning providers; private sector learning providers; universities; public sector employers including the local

²⁶ **'Dudley The Heart of the Black Country'** Dudley Community Partnership Next Generation Local Area Agreement Final Submission, May 2008

²⁷ **'Community Strategy 2005 – 2020'** Dudley Community Partnership, 2005

²⁸ **Strategy for Adults with Physical and Sensory Disabilities**, Dudley MBC, January 2008

authority; colleges; and voluntary sector groups including community groups and charities. Funding comes from a wide range of sources including the LSC, AWM, HEFCE, National, European, business and charity funding. The development of personal Skills Accounts for learners in the future will enable individual learners to manage their own learning plans to support the demand led learning envisioned by Leitch.

Learning and skills are provided through a wide range of programmes targeted at specific communities and ability levels which need to be part of a single, clear, accessible borough-wide learning offer including all types and levels of learning. This offer needs to link together the range of learning to support individual learners to progress on their own personal learning journey for effective Post 19 learning and skills development to in the Borough. This learning journey may include provision within the borough, the region and nationally. This will ensure accessible learning which aims to develop personal, vocational and employability skills that is at the right level for them

The identification of the appropriate learning journey should include the full use of all initial and ongoing advice and support. This will be provided by external agencies and individual providers as appropriate. Provision will also be provided by the new, national Adult Advancement and Careers Services (AACCS). The AACCS will manage, at a local level, provision for people who want to progress within their employment, or into employment, and will replace the current Next Steps service

In Dudley the priorities which need the greatest development are in the engagement of local people from deprived communities in the learning and skills agenda, and also in the development of skills that are at Level 4 and above to support the development of a knowledge economy in the Borough.

One of the key risks to providing high quality, appropriate skills development in the Borough is the wide range of providers, programmes and funding streams. The skills development elements of the NGLAA and City Strategy Plans include a focus on ensuring better connectivity of actions that support the development of learning and skills within the borough, with priority being given to the five City Strategy wards of

1. Brierley Hill
2. Castle and Priory
3. Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews
4. St James's
5. St Thomas's.

Each of the City Strategy Wards in the borough have a community led partnership with manages its own Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Plan (NESP).

It is essential that the providers of learning and skills in the borough are part of the development of future economic plans to ensure that they are providing courses that will prepare the local population to make the most of the opportunities that are realized when new employers come into the borough. This will be achieved through robust, strategic and operational partnership working that includes all providers, institutions, the Local Authority, the Learning and Skills Council and Job Centre Plus.

The provision of learning and skills opportunities in the Borough must involve local employers in providing a range of opportunities for local residents to develop the skills needed for employment including volunteering and work trials.

Another issue in the development of skills for employability is the ageing population, the development of Post 19 Learning and Skills provision in Dudley must include opportunities for the local population aged 60 + to further develop of skills if they wish to continue in employment.

Key Impacts of the Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy

Key Impact 7: Achieve the skills outcomes included in the Economic Strategy through the development of improved learning and skills in the borough. This includes a clear learning journey ranging from first engagement of disaffected learners to the increase of the number of local residents with skills at Level 4 and above.

Key Impact 8: Narrow the skills gap between residents in the City Strategy wards and rest of the borough.

Key outcomes and actions

An illustration of how Post 19 Learning and Skills supports the outcomes and actions of the following plans and strategies:

	Children and Young Peoples Plan	Community Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Economic Strategy	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	Older People's Strategy
NI 144 Offenders under probation supervision in employment at the end of their order or licence					✓				
NI 146 Adults with learning disabilities in employment				✓	✓		✓		
NI 150 Adults in contact with secondary mental health services in employment				✓	✓				
NI 151 Overall employment rate	✓	✓			✓		✓		
NI 152 Working age people on out of work benefits		✓			✓			✓	
NI 153 Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods		✓			✓			✓	
NI 161 Learners achieving a Level 1 qualification in literacy					✓	✓	✓	✓	
NI 162 Learners achieving an entry level 3 qualification in numeracy					✓	✓	✓	✓	
NI 163 Proportion of the population aged 19 – 64 for males and 19 – 59 for females qualified to at least level 2 or higher					✓		✓	✓	
Continued									

	Children and Young Peoples Plan	Community Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Economic Strategy	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	Older People's Strategy
NI 164 Proportion of the population aged 19 – 64 for males and 19 – 59 for females qualified to at least level 3 or higher					✓		✓		
NI 165 Proportion of the population aged 19 – 64 for males and 19 – 59 for females qualified to at least level 4 or higher					✓		✓	✓	
NI 166 Average earnings of employees in the area					✓			✓	
NI 171 VAT registration rate					✓			✓	
NI 172 VAT registered businesses in the area showing growth					✓				
NI 173 People falling out of work and onto incapacity benefits					✓				
NI 174 Skills gaps in the current workforce reported by employers		✓			✓		✓		
Increase in the number of businesses and learners who are supported through the Train to Gain programme					✓		✓	✓	
Public Service Skills Challenge signed up to by the major public service providers in the borough					✓		✓	✓	
Increase in the number and range of apprenticeships in the borough	✓				✓			✓	
Increase in small business start ups		✓			✓			✓	
Continued									

	Older People's Strategy	Next Generation Local Area Agreement	AWM/ Learning and Skills Council Skills Action Plan	Family Learning and Parenting Strategy	Economic Strategy	Disability and Mental Health Strategy	Cultural Strategy	Community Strategy	Children and Young Peoples Plan
Increased take-up of available advice and guidance services and training opportunities					✓				
Greater awareness of routes into employment				✓	✓				
Better use of internet job search and information resources					✓		✓		
Awareness raising with employers of the skills and aptitudes of the available labour pool who are sometimes excluded (e.g. older women, young black men etc.)	✓				✓				
Improved recruitment by colleges onto vocational courses of learners prepared with pre-vocational skills					✓				
Development of the South Black Country Innovation Campus in the Borough					✓				

10. Quality issues and Benchmarking

Quality and breadth of curriculum choice together with quality and variety of learning opportunities offered, will underpin all elements of Dudley's Post-19 Learning and Skills Strategy. Programmes will be continuously improved in response to stakeholder demands, aspirations and needs. Progression routes will be made clear for all learners and partners in learning.

Curriculum choice must meet the needs of the wide range of skills and learning needs identified through the multiplicity of Plans and Strategies as detailed in the matrices illustrated within this Strategy. Funds will be secured from all appropriate sources and utilised cost-effectively.

A wide range of learning opportunities will be made available and accessible to meet the needs of learners from a wide variety of backgrounds.

The curriculum will meet the needs of learners at all stages of their learning journey from confidence building and raising self-esteem through to Level 4 and above.

Every opportunity will be seized to provide learners with learning tools to be used across a range of contexts and through various progression routes. In this way individuals, families, neighbourhoods and employees can develop a sense of 'can do' when faced with life's challenges. Learners will therefore be more willing and able to take the next major step change which is to engage thoroughly in either formal, non-formal or informal learning – and benefit.

Learning opportunities:

- must take into account the diverse needs of learners and employers and also of their circumstances
- must be made available to meet the diverse needs of learners and employers
- must be cognisant of the needs of all learners and employers with regards to accessibility; this includes physical accessibility and geographical accessibility.
- must include the need to be available at appropriate times and places
- must be offered in a variety of venues where learners are encouraged and assisted to learn in a safe and non-threatening environment
- must be provided utilising a wide variety of delivery methods, resources and staff
- must be delivered by experienced and qualified staff
- must take full account of equality and diversity issues and legislation
- should be accredited where appropriate to afford the learner the opportunity to formally progress

Benchmarking

Provision will be subject to inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) and must meet the requirements laid down in the Common Inspection Framework.

Provision will be benchmarked against the above Standards with an aspiration that all provision will meet the Standards as required to achieve a minimum level of OfSTED Grade 2.

Providers will be subject to judgements on:

- **Overall effectiveness**
 - How effective and efficient are the provision and related services in meeting the full range of learners' needs and why?
 - What steps will be taken to improve the provision further?
- **Achievement and standards**
 - How well do learners achieve?
- **The quality of provision**
 - How effective are teaching, training and learning?
 - How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?
 - How well are learners guided and supported?
 -
- **Leadership and Management**

A common grading scale, as follows, will be used for all inspection judgements.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Outstanding | 2. Good |
| 3. Satisfactory | 4. Inadequate |

Information will be accessible in a variety of formats and styles and in a diverse range of environments and locations to meet learner needs.

Advice and guidance will be offered in Centres and will be recommended to be delivered according to the Matrix Quality Standard. Staff will be encouraged to be trained to and achieve NVQ Level 3 or 4 accreditation and/or effectively signpost learners and employers to approved advice and guidance practitioners/agencies.

Health and Safety provision for all learners will be subject to stringent health and safety requirements as required by all funding bodies and organisations.