

# West Yorkshire e-Learning Strategy

## Summary for Providers

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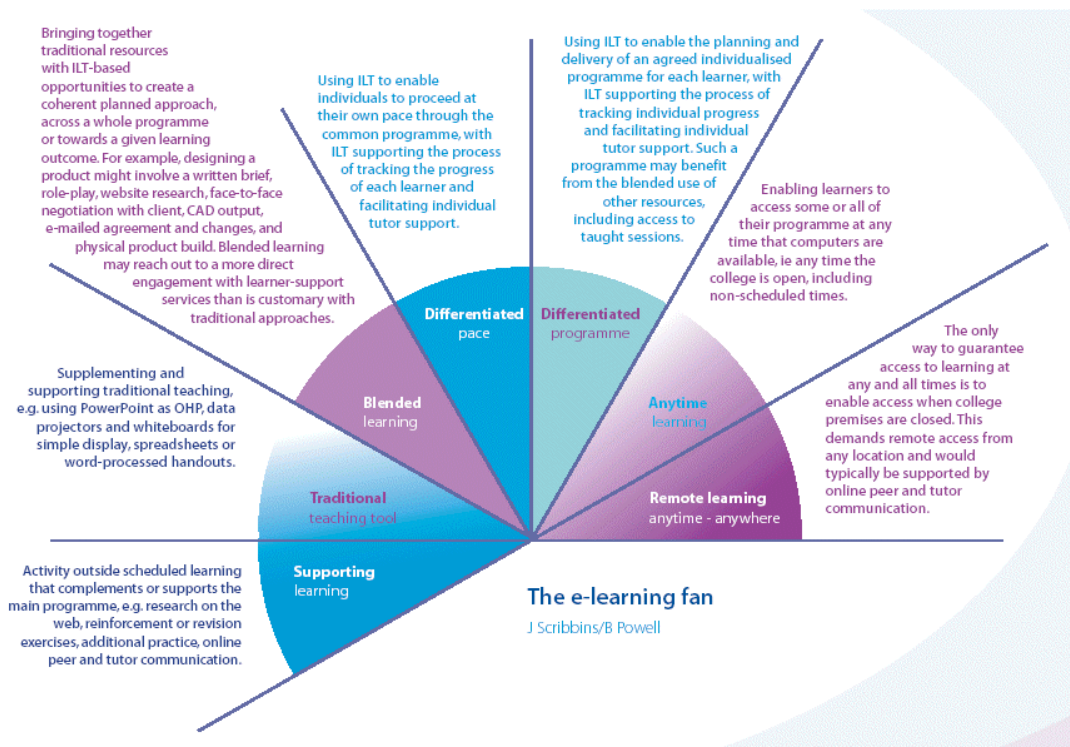
## 1. Introduction

The West Yorkshire e-Learning Strategy was produced on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council West Yorkshire. Its aim is to provide a post 16 e-Learning strategy for the sub-region.

### ***What is e-Learning?***

***e-Learning is the effective learning process created by combining digitally delivered content with (learning) support and services.***

This definition has been extended in terms of the provider, in particular college dimensions, as shown in sections of the diagram below.



**Figure 1: The e-Learning fan**  
(*“Managing Inspection and ILT”, FERL*)

There is however, considerable support for widening the definition even further for e-Learning activities in the workplace and communities.

**e-Learning can help you achieve your objectives as providers.**

The diversity of the post-16 sector, with learning in colleges, school sixth forms, workplace and homes means that the benefits of e-Learning can be many and various.

Increased motivation observed in e-Learning can be a tool to improve completion rates and the ability of e-Learning to recruit harder-to-reach individuals make it a potentially powerful tool in addressing issues of social inclusion.

The challenges facing the Post-16 Learning Sector are well-known:

- the basic skills gap, now augmented by the ICT skills gap
- the range of teaching standards from excellent to, in some cases, unsatisfactory provision

- improvement of completion rates
- social inclusion issues; and
- a long term funding shortfall in infrastructure investment in buildings and facilities.

There is evidence that e-Learning can provide a significant contribution to post-16 learning. Its flexibility makes it a useful tool for learning providers as long as consistent standards can be achieved.

## **2. Where are we now?**

### **2.1 Strategic Context**

The Learning and Skills Council West Yorkshire (LSCWY) Local Strategic Plan 2002-2005 and the supporting Annual Plan 2003-4 were constructed around the need to deliver five national strategic objectives:

1. To extend participation in education, learning and training
2. To increase the engagement of employers in workforce development
3. To raise the achievement of young people
4. To raise the achievement of adults
5. To raise the quality of education, training and levels of user satisfaction

These strategic objectives are clearly linked to provider objectives and e-Learning can contribute in helping to achieve these.

#### ***Objective 1 – To extend participation in education, learning and training***

- 1. To ensure provision meets the needs of individual learners and employers and is tailored to meet identified needs.*

In this context, e-Learning can contribute to the provision of blended and flexible learning opportunities. It is particularly suited to enable providers to create tailor-made learning packages. e-Learning will be particularly useful for providers to create customised and bite-sized learning packages that meet the business needs of employers.

- 2. To increase 16-18 participation, particularly amongst hard-to-reach young people.*

Young people who have been brought up in a world of computer technology are particularly open to e-Learning as an alternative to other more traditional delivery methods.

- 3. To improve retention across all provision and ensuring that learners are on the right course, at the right level, at the right time and with the right support.*

e-Learning enables individuals to customise learning to their own needs. Its flexibility of delivery and timing enables individuals to learn “at their own pace, in their own time and from a location that suits them best”.

- 4. To increase the number of adults in all forms of learning and develop and implement innovative provision to meet the needs of people who have not recently accessed learning opportunities.*

There is evidence that e-Learning’s most significant contribution will be to post-16 learning, due in particular to the part-time nature of much adult learning. The ongoing investment in ICT skills training opens doors to e-Learning opportunities for those with newly gained e-skills.

***Objective 2 – To increase engagement of employers in Workforce Development***

- 1. To encourage employers to take responsibility for the planning and delivery of learning to meet the needs of their organisation and the economy.*

The Post-16 e-Learning Strategy Task Force Report states that the recommended expansion of the Curriculum Online for School into post-16 learning will initially focus on the 14-19 age group. However, the “greatest audience to benefit will be employees accessing college online from the workplace”. e-Learning is a particularly powerful tool for smaller businesses, where in-house training programmes are often inappropriate.

***Objective 3 – To raise achievement of young people***

- 1. To improve levels of attainment across all learning sectors.*

The use of e-Learning will enhance existing approaches to core provision. With appropriate support available for teachers and trainers it will offer a means to extend the current capacity and capability of providers.

- 2. To narrow the gap in achievement which exists between different groups of learners.*

The ability of e-Learning to recruit harder-to-reach individuals makes it a powerful tool to target groups of young people whose achievement is significantly below the local average. The inclusion of e-Learning in the

learning opportunities portfolio will also help meet some needs of learners that have traditionally been hard to fulfil.

***Objective 4 – To raise the achievement in adults***

*1. To raise the achievement in adults.*

By using the experience of learndirect as a template for the development of e-Learning opportunities for adults, this will help adults make the right choice of provision and be given adequate support.

*2. To raise the literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) skills of adults.*

The associated ease of accessibility of supported e-Learning will increase the percentage of Basic Skills training which is accredited and counts towards national targets.

***Objective 5 – To raise the quality of education & training and user satisfaction***

*1. To improve the quality of teaching and learning; management and leadership across all provision.*

Local providers will develop and refine their own e-Learning ICT strategies so that they are effective and include appropriate actions, targets and milestones that are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Flexible local funding is available to support improvement strategies and develop capability through the use of e-Learning to complement and enhance existing learning.

*2. To improve the level of satisfaction of learners and employers*

Providers will have to monitor satisfaction levels of learners and employers through feedback from users.

## **2.2 *E-Maturity of the sub-region***

In order to establish the most effective e-Learning strategy for the learner, an assessment of the e-maturity of the sub-region was carried out. This indicated that the conditions in West Yorkshire could support extensive development of the potential of e-Learning. The infrastructure is on the whole good, a significant percentage of individuals having sufficient ICT skills and personal experiences of using computers and the Internet. However, there is still a relatively low business use of ICT for training and there are also issues of the potential digital divide that need addressing.

## **2.3 *Content and Learning Systems***

Considerable progress has been made towards the development of e-Learning content and learning management systems (LMS). However we are still a long way from experiencing seamless integration and operability across the many products and systems that exist.

The industry has also been working towards educating learning professionals about learning standards so that they can become “de facto” standards (voluntarily used by a critical mass).

Standards help to ensure the five “abilities” desirable to protect and even nurture e-Learning investments. These are:

- Interoperability – can the system work with any other system?
- Re-usability – can courseware (Learning Objects or “chunks”) be re-used?

- Manageability – can the system track the appropriate information about the learner and the content?
- Accessibility – can a learner access the appropriate content at the appropriate time?
- Durability – will the technology evolve with the standards to avoid obsolescence?

The key issue of standards is addressed in the Government's report on the post 16 e-Learning Strategy "Get ON with IT" and the LSC's DELG (Distributed and Electronic Learning Group) report. (These are discussed in more detail in the full strategy document available on the LSC website.)

## **2.4 Learner Support**

### **Learner Support Personnel**

Lack of integrated support has been responsible for some of the disappointing outcomes in terms of completion, success rates and added value to businesses. Therefore learner support personnel should be given the necessary training and support to use e-Learning as a tool. The DELG report discusses in some detail issues around the changing roles of tutors and other learner support personnel and reasons for non-engagement of trainers / tutors with e-Learning.

New training requirements for FE tutors introduced in 2001 will ensure that all tutors have underdone some ICT training. However, the "Get on with IT" report indicates that more work is needed to ensure that different learner support roles acquire the necessary skill sets.

There are already other National FE initiatives in the sub-region. These include the Learning Champions initiative and the National Mentoring Scheme for tutors.

## **Learners**

Lack of basic ICT skills is a fundamental barrier to e-Learning. Although much progress has been made in the sub-region, there is still a long way to go in ensuring that the lack of ICT skills is not an initial barrier.

True e-Learning requires additional skills in order to learn more effectively. These include self-direction and communication. Universities of the sub-region have done much work in leading the way on collaborative learning environments.

## **2.5 Quality**

Although traditional measures of quality can be applied to some e-Learning, especially where it contributes to blended learning in “traditional” courses, new quality assurance processes and procedures are being developed as part of DG Education and Culture’s Quality in e-Learning initiative.

For LSC funded provision, the key elements for provider QA are:

- self assessment
- LSC’s performance review process
- inspection
- use of benchmarking and external quality kite-marks

## **3. What is Planned ?**

### **3.1. Strategic Partnerships**

3.1.1 A dynamic e-Learning strategy steering group made up of both the supply and demand side will be put in place. Their primary role will be to accelerate the growth of e-Learning in the sub-region. Providers will be represented in this group.

3.1.2 A Virtual Quality Centre for e-Learning will be established that will act as an impartial advice centre with a particular emphasis on employer support.

### ***3.2. Increasing the engagement and achievement of individuals***

#### **3.2.1 Communication**

Exploitation of businesses' and individuals' enthusiasm for the Internet can be maximised by the use of a coherent and consistent approach to marketing e-Learning. Communication of the benefits of e-Learning, as a part of blended learning, to potential learners is essential.

#### **3.2.2 Innovative ways to attract learners**

Consideration will be given to developing innovative ways of attracting people to participate. The establishment of training centres does not solve the problem of getting people through the door.

Innovative delivery methodologies will increase the numbers of adults engaged in learning. The contribution of e-Learning to improve achievement among adult learners will be most effective when it is responsive to individual needs. The emphasis will be on customised learning, allowing a learner to choose the level and pace of learning. Appropriate resources will need to be in place to support client requirements. The benefits of flexible access, both in time and place, and increased motivation should therefore be reflected in retention and achievement rates.

The sub-region will be at the forefront of piloting new technologies such as handheld devices and digital television.

### **3.2.3 ICT as a Skill for Life**

Everyone in West Yorkshire will have access to ICT as a Skill for Life. Ensuring universal access to ICT skills will address the issue of the digital divide and remove the social exclusion caused by those without access, who risk becoming marginalised in employment and within the community.

### **3.2.4 Improvement of availability**

Learners will be offered the flexibility to learn at home or at work and so improvement of availability of e-Learning courses is recommended. This might involve supporting the development of infrastructure to particular community and SME venues. It is important that community locations, previously operating as UK online centres, are exploited to extend learning opportunities beyond the communities currently using traditional institutions. There will be particular emphasis on disadvantaged groups, for whom availability of access is paramount.

### **3.2.5 Integration of e-Learning into mainstream provision**

Providers will be encouraged to ensure that a significant percentage of their programmes demonstrate a blended learning approach.

## ***3.3 Increase the engagement of employers in workforce development***

### **3.3.1 Delivery of training and education by ICT**

There is a need for a strategic approach to increasing delivery of training and education by ICT. The implementation of the e-Learning strategy will be developed in the context of “business benefits” and address workplace learners’ needs, particularly in the development of small, focused learning packages.

### **3.3.2 Communication plan**

The benefits of e-Learning applied to SMEs' business needs are considerable and a targeted communication plan will be developed. Communications will be tailored to the receptivity of the market segments and the most effective methods of reaching groups of learners should be used.

### **3.3.3 Case studies**

Sub-regional e-Learning case studies will be collected and collated to present the business benefits of e-Learning to company performance.

### **3.3.4 Support systems**

Support systems are essential to the successful implementation of e-Learning and there are many models available that will be considered: virtual employer networks, virtual employer-based learning centres, TUC Learning Representatives, exploitation of learndirect resources, mentoring for formal and informal learning in the workplace.

### **3.3.5 Taking the college to the company**

As noted in the DELG Report, e-Learning should be an effective 'route to market' for the LSC in achieving its workforce development ambitions. The national initiative of "Taking the College to the Company" will be delivered in the sub-region.

## **3.4 *Encourage the development of quality content***

The LSC's DELG take the view that the adoption of global standards and specifications is vital to the development of a sound market for e-Learning systems and content.

### **3.4.1 Tailoring to learner needs**

Any developments will be aimed at customising the learning method towards the needs of the individual learner with a focus on "blended learning" and "embedding skills" in order to make them of relevance to

the learners' everyday lives. This may require the development of some new materials with a focus on bite-sized provision. Consideration will be given to pump priming the building of e-Learning courses, including staff development.

#### **3.4.2 Access to quality resources**

A repository of learning content will be created for the sub-region that makes the existing wealth of learning materials available for other sectors.

Common specifications and interoperability standards will underpin any such development. All newly commissioned materials will, where possible, adopt production of learning content in "object" form, in order to enhance values for money and create content targeting.

#### **3.4.3 Accessibility**

Adoption of best practice in terms of accessibility will be promoted. eg the Bobby standards will be considered in some cases to enable access to those with certain disabilities.

#### **3.4.4 Conformation**

Any e-Learning environment will conform to national / international specifications and standards.

#### **3.4.5 e-Learning vouchers or credits**

A system of e-Learning vouchers or credits will be made available for use by community organisations and SMEs to promote the adoption of e-Learning.

### **3.5 *Effective and appropriate Learner Support***

#### **3.5.1 National Mentoring Scheme**

The National Mentoring Scheme for tutors will be supported and publicised.

#### **3.5.2 Skill sets for learner support personnel**

The differing skill sets for learner support personnel will be identified publicised, promoted and supported. If there is no action nationally then this will be undertaken at a sub-regional level.

#### **3.5.3 Integration**

A long-term consistent approach will involve closer integration between technical and teaching staff and potentially the creation of on-site support centres for staff to overcome any skills gaps.

#### **3.5.6 Case Studies**

Case Studies illustrating good practice will be collected from the sub-region (e.g. from learndirect centres) and promoted to e-Learning providers in both the public and private sector.

#### **3.5.7 BLA Quality Mark**

The use of the BLA Quality Mark for learner support will be encouraged.

#### **3.5.8 CPD initiatives**

Learner support CPD initiatives outside the FE Sector will be based on the European Institute for e-Learning's competency statements.

#### **3.5.9 Unique Learner Number (ULN)**

West Yorkshire will actively seek to pilot the introduction of the Unique Learner Number (ULN) and its extension into non-FE areas.

### **3.5.10 Co-operation**

The Sub-region will seek to encourage further co-operation between learndirect, Connexions and UCAS to maximise their effectiveness in working together and will identify any gaps in provision of effective online advice, support and diagnostics for individual learners, employees and employers.

### **3.5.11 Pilot activities**

Pilot activities will be put in place to encourage the development of e-portfolios for bite-sized accredited and non-accredited formal and non-formal learning.

## **4. Quality**

### **4.1 Quality standards**

West Yorkshire will take the lead in supporting comprehensive quality standards for all aspects of e-Learning.

### **4.2 New standards**

Initially the sub-region will work to develop and then pilot new standards being co-ordinated by the British Learning Association as part of DG Education and Culture's Quality Call.

## 4. Implementation Plan 2004-2005

(Focus on Provider interest \*\*)

AIM	OBJECTIVE	SMART TARGET
<b>To put in place Strategic Partnerships to accelerate the growth of e-Learning in West Yorkshire</b>	An e-Learning strategy group to be in place for the sub-region (e-Learning strategy forum)	Operational by May 2004 Quarterly meetings
	To ensure key players have access to up-to date information on quality in e-Learning	Virtual Centre of Excellence to be established April 2004 and then incorporated into the West Yorkshire e-Learning portal
<b>Increase the engagement and achievement of individuals</b>	<p>Increase participation through innovative delivery methods with a focus on community outlets</p> <p>Work with organisations at provider and client level to develop appropriate learning materials, addressing issues of appropriate content and language</p> <p>Identification of minority and shortage skill areas in mainstream programmes which require development of resources</p>	<p>Development of community mentor network (+++)</p> <p>Identification of needs not being met in communities (+++)</p> <p>Development of resources (+++)</p> <p>Structure in place identifying partner roles and mechanisms for this activity. September 2004</p> <p>Report back on identification activities to inform next commissioning round. January 2005</p>
	ICT skill entitlement for all	Promotion of National Standards once confirmed
	Ensure all providers integrate e-Learning into mainstream programmes. A Significant percentage of provider programmes to demonstrate a blended learning approach	<p>A mapping exercise in which providers will forward information to the LSC outlining the percentage of programmes that demonstrate a blended learning approach</p> <p>Definitions and scope determined by July 2004</p> <p>Information to LSC by Sept 2004 and collated by Dec 04</p>

<p><b>Increase the engagement of employers by the development of a business benefits approach to e-Learning</b></p>	<p>Development of appropriate business-focused learning packages</p>	<p>Skills gap analyses to determine need</p> <p>Repository development to focus on bite-sized business focused provision</p> <p>A number of learning packages in place by specific dates (+++)</p>
	<p>Put e-Learning support systems in place for businesses</p>	<p>Further develop Union Learning Representatives in terms of e-Learning support (ESF co-financing)</p> <p>Promote learndirect activities with SMEs</p> <p>Development of a virtual employers network</p>
<p><b>Encourage the development of quality content</b></p>	<p>Pump prime the development of e-Learning courses including staff development</p>	<p>Incorporate the development of new e-Learning provision into the Commissioning Document 2004</p>
	<p>Put in place access to quality learning resources</p>	<p>Develop a West Yorkshire e-Learning portal</p>
		<p>Populate a repository with appropriate bite-sized content to meet the learning requirements of the workforce</p>
		<p>The capacity to develop content in “learning object” format should be considered for any newly commissioned materials funded through the public purse</p>
	<p>All materials placed on the sub-regional repository to conform to common specification and interoperability standards</p>	<p>All material to be evaluated independently before incorporation</p>

<b>To ensure appropriate and effective Learner Support</b>	Support the National Mentoring Scheme for tutors	
	Support development of staff resources both technical and pedagogic	<p>Identify roles and functions for learner support personnel and associated skill sets by September 2004</p> <p>With a view to supporting further development, skill gap audits to be carried out in LSC funded centres. March 2004</p> <p>Case Studies illustrating good practice to be collected from the sub-region and promoted to e-Learning providers in public and private sector</p>

**Key:** +++ Specific target to be identified after contract agreed as part of the ESF Objective 3 Commissioning process

\*\* Full implementation plan plus lead partners to be found on the LSC Website