

Interim Evaluation of
London's Employability Demonstration Pilots &
ESOL Transition Fund Pilots

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Introduction

This paper summarises the headline findings of the London Employability Demonstration Pilots (EDPs) and ESOL Transition Fund (ETF) pilots at the first interim evaluation point (December 2008), setting them in the wider strategic context of the development of an integrated employment and skills (IES) system. It is intended to highlight particular successes and challenges in the delivery and further development of the pilots, making proposals to take forward key elements that support the development of an IES system in London.

The report begins with a brief background to the pilots. It continues with a summary of the big messages arising from the pilots, set in the context of policy and strategic change (pages 3-4). This is followed by a narrative that provides illustrative detail and further analysis (pages 5-13). Proposals and actions to help take forward the pilots in making further contributions to the development of an IES system are made on pages 14-15.

Brief background

Since autumn 2006, 11 FE Colleges in London have been involved in developing and delivering EDPs. In September 2007, 20 colleges and 1 adult education service also began to develop and deliver work focused ESOL provision supported through the ESOL Transition Fund. 10 of these are 'EDP colleges'. A full list of participating organisations is included at the back of the report. Throughout the report, the term 'college' includes the one adult education service for ease of reading.

All colleges have been encouraged to use the Licence to Skill framework as an integral part of their pilots. This approach includes encouraging organisations to develop IES 'supply chains' that not only join up their internal activity (including pilots and 'mainstream' provision), but also that integrate college provision with the wide range of services delivered by other organisations. The EDP colleges have been given significant additional support (and time) to help them develop this approach, using the Licence to Skill tool.

Colleges are required to produce quarterly interim evaluation reports, using the Employability Evaluation Framework as a guide, and giving information and evidence that shows:

- The difference the pilots are making for individuals and for employers
- The changes that are taking place in colleges in order to make this difference
- The key challenges and milestones for continuing to develop, deliver and roll out IES solutions

This paper draws on internal evaluation reports submitted by the 22 organisations delivering EDP and ETF activity, which are based on a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

The evaluation is essentially qualitative. Although some information on targets is provided, figures for people engaged on the pilots and the outcomes resulting from activity are yet to be fully reported and/or confirmed. This is in part due to 'data lag', as well as the challenge of tracking individuals and gathering data sets that have not previously been associated with Further Education (FE) stream funding. These issues, arising from the experience of this first interim evaluation have in themselves proved to be valuable learning points for the LSC, LDA and providers.

The big messages

When the EDPs first began their development, Lord Leitch's report had only just been published and the London Skills and Employment Board had not been inaugurated. Whilst employability was clearly on the agenda, this policy directive had yet to gather full force. In the autumn of 2006 London was therefore foreshadowing much of the policy development that emerged over the following year, and at that point in time some were not convinced that employability as a focus for colleges was here to stay!

The pilots now have the benefit of visible shifts in policy, including the draft strategy of the London Skills and Employment Board and the joint Command Papers '*Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work*' and '*Ready to Work: Skilled for Work*' (Departments of Innovation, Universities & Skills and Work & Pensions). These commitments help in terms of delivering clear messages about employability, integrating employment and skills services and establishing new ways of working. However, mainstream funding and target mechanisms in public agencies are yet to align fully with policy, leaving room for mixed messages at best or 'business as usual' thinking at worst.

It is useful to review the pilots in this context because they were established to provide an opportunity for colleges to do things very differently. Rather than simply 'put on another programme' or develop a stand alone 'project' they were being encouraged to try out radically new approaches.

Significant changes required

Developing a whole new way of working requires significant organisational change for providers and for public agencies – cultures, skills sets, processes and structures. The learning and skills sector is risk averse. Convincing staff, from senior management through to delivery, that these big changes are necessary and will position colleges favourably in business terms, was (and in some cases remains) a real challenge, given that participation numbers and qualifications remain the main business drivers.

Staff in planning and funding organisations are also on a steep learning curve. Many remain narrowly focused on allocations and targets rather than taking a more strategic approach that embraces the new culture required for IES to become a reality. The evaluation highlights the significant shift that must also take place within public agencies themselves if the right conditions are to be created to maximise the impact of the pilots and to move effectively towards a more integrated employment and skills system. This includes embedding internal evaluation processes that enable agencies to learn the full lessons of the pilots.

FE colleges were chosen for these pilots because they account for the vast majority of Learning and Skills Council investment. The rationale is clear – if this part of the sector can become more responsive to employers and those with employability needs, its size alone will create significant impact in improving overall performance for skills and employment in London.

However, it is important to note that many activities being delivered through FE pilots form the core work of other providers, including those in the work based learning and community based sectors, as well as prime and sub contractors for Department of Work and Pensions programmes. The cultures of these organisations are very different, as are the ways in which they are funded by the LSC and other agencies. This is not to dismiss the efforts and achievements of the pilots, or other examples of successful employer-focused work delivered by colleges. But it is important to acknowledge that colleges are generally founded on different principles than that of other training organisations, and now find themselves in an environment in which they must make very big changes.

Pilots are catalysts, but change is slow

A year on, there is greater recognition that fundamental change in the FE sector is needed and that colleges have, and continue to be provided with significant financial resources and other support to make these changes. Pilot development has helped some colleges to see the urgent need to galvanise their organisations into action that responds better to the employability agenda.

Generally, the EDPs show greater progress in embedding 'employability' across their organisations than a number of the ETF pilots. This is to be expected since they have benefited from an additional 9 months pilot development. That said, whilst there are signs of movement, these have yet to gather the momentum required for systemic and widespread change in colleges' business strategies and cultures. Whilst this is partly due to the sheer size of colleges, much work remains if they are to capitalise on the progress to date.

Work focus is motivating for individuals

At this evaluation point, impact is more evident for individuals than for employers. A key feature reported by a number of pilots is that client retention and motivation has significantly improved, specifically because people identify the jobs they want and understand the level of skill that they need to get them. Many pilot colleges now understand the need for activity to be employment focused from the earliest stages of engagement with an individual – in marketing, assessment, individual goal setting and planning. The importance of work experience is now very widely recognised.

For individuals who are most excluded or not ready to prepare for entry into paid work, the development of employability skills as part of a longer progression route that will eventually lead to pre-employment training and sustainable employment is crucial. This may take years and requires goals that mark progression that is meaningful for the individual and the community, such as taking part in school life, community centres etc. Goals need to be capable of recognition by public agencies as qualifications are only one proxy for skills development. This has implications for the future direction of ESOL and Foundation Learning Tier design.

Where pilots recognise and respond to non-skills needs (housing, debt etc.), client confidence and 'sticking power' is increased. The role of the 'routeway broker' is seen as particularly important for these clients.

Improving response for employers

There is evidence of improved dialogue with employers, including some good sectoral approaches, involving employers in course development and dialogue about vacancies and skills shortages. Some colleges are establishing central internal coordination for key employment activities such as work placement, employer training requests and employer feedback. This is reportedly helping organisations to be more efficient, particularly in their responses to employers, although the perceptions of employers and what impact they feel is being delivered will need to be assessed fully in order to test these reports.

Many ETF Pilots are delivering some provision to employees with poor English in low paid jobs, demonstrating responsiveness to this target group. A significant amount of this appears to be delivered out of work hours because employers are unwilling to pay, reflecting the difficulty of making a business case for ESOL (and other skills development) when there is a seemingly unlimited pool of labour for low skilled jobs. There are some indications that ESOL is being taken up through Train to Gain, but these are yet to be confirmed.

More generally, substantial impact for employers is the exception rather than the rule and employer engagement is proving to be a key challenge for most colleges. This suggests the need for a concerted focus

at regional as well as local level, drawing on the experience of business support organisations, Sector Skills Councils and DWP providers, to identify and promote effective approaches to employer engagement.

Delivery supply chains are in development

Evidence shows that colleges are successfully using the Licence to Skill approach to create linked pathways with partners including Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and other organisations. This is helping to establish the supply chains necessary to move an individual through skills development and into sustainable employment, but work is still in its early stages and primarily focused on improving recruitment from disadvantaged areas and groups.

The introduction of the new Licence to Skill starter kit in November 2007 has provided a more immediate way for partners to work together from the outset, leaving the full toolkit to be brought in at the detailed planning stage. This is now beginning to bear fruit with a number of 'roll out' clusters forming and significant interest in using the tool from non-pilot providers.

Further and more sustained linkage with other providers, including JCP prime contractors, employer intermediaries and niche community organisations is needed for the full impact of the pilots to be realised in terms of developing an IES system. Models of partnership working need to be developed in every area, with partners playing to each other's strengths and establishing effective business-to-business relationships. At regional and national levels, the relationship between LSC and DWP funded programmes needs to be more clearly defined and communicated to providers.

Small scale beginnings that need to grow

Pilots have given colleges the 'creative space' to do things differently, but are small scale. Quantitative data on the activity and outcomes for participants is to be confirmed. An indication of the scale of the pilots from target numbers shows around 1,500 people in the 11 EDPs and approximately 2,000 people getting 'employment support' through the 21 large ETF pilots. By contrast, annually around 400,000 adults take up skills development and learning opportunities that are LSC funded. Although pilots in general tend to be small scale, this contrast demonstrates the challenge in terms of mainstreaming and scaling up new approaches.

The pilots have the advantage of not being subject to the same financial, performance and inspection requirements as mainstream provision. This is helpful because it reduces the risk (perceived or real) in trying something new, but unhelpful in that it can foster a reluctance to tackle the not insignificant challenges of bringing approaches into the mainstream. The pilots have demonstrated that an employability focus and greater 'personalisation' works for individuals. The challenge is to scale up from the small numbers in the pilots to the scale of programmes which would make colleges serious players in the employability agenda.

Shared targets may well be a key factor in scaling up the pilots and driving the development of supply chains. Sustainable job outcomes are new for many colleges, but are only very small scale. If this target becomes the norm for the majority of their mainstream provision, but they are encouraged to work with other partners to achieve it, it may provide a catalyst for better integration of provision. Of course, this is reliant on an investment model that recognises and rewards the components that lead towards achievement of the main goal. This is relevant to the draft LSEB strategy's goal of joint investment planning.

A key element for roll out is sustainability. A number of ETF pilots report that the investment for this initiative has enabled them to reinstate ESOL provision that had been affected by reductions in funding. These pilots, as well as some EDPs need to undertake significant work to identify how successful provision and services can be sustained through whole organisation business planning and development.

Making a difference for people who want to work

The pilots are producing tangible differences for individuals wanting to improve their skills, become more employable and move into sustainable employment.

Employment focus from the start

A number of colleges report that **providing a work focus from the outset** of a programme improves client motivation, highlighting the key importance of identifying the **specific employment opportunities** that the programme is designed to lead to. This is increasing retention rates, particularly for clients who normally would be reluctant to attend college or take up skills training, and is helping people to gain self confidence which is such an important employability attribute.

Examples in action:

- The College of North East London's REWIND programme involves a mixture of training and work experience delivered by the College **and** the employer. This enables people to see *"the high levels of professionalism needed to get a job in the media"*, motivating them to progress and achieve.
- Hackney Community College's ESOL Pathway to Classroom Assistants programme is helping clients to see that they need help with numeracy as well as English language skills if they are to get jobs. Numeracy is now being built into the programme and clients are very appreciative of the range of support offered. A similar approach is being taken at Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College.
- A number of ETF pilots are beginning to combine ESOL with vocational training, including Westminster Adult Education Service delivering hospitality focused training and Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College where ESOL is combined with programmes in office skills, retail and customer service.

Some people are not clear about what type of job they would like to get, or see work as a distant and terrifying prospect – perhaps because of disability, several generations of unemployment or significant language needs. Whilst it is vital that these people are supported on pathways that lead to employment, a programme that starts with a focus on specific job vacancies may be a step too far.

The systems and processes that some pilots are developing to bring a broader employment focus to their programmes (in addition to those that focus on specific sectors or jobs) can help to establish the longer pathways that these people need. This includes carrying out employability assessments and/or using an **'individual employability plan'** rather than the traditional individual **learning plan**.

For all programmes, these are important changes as they signal a move away from a 'learning aim focus' to seeing provision as a means to employment. They can also help in identifying when volunteering is a good first step towards paid employment.

It is essential that, where colleges are establishing longer employability pathways, there are clear plans in place to enable progression towards pre-employment training at the appropriate point for the individual. A key issue for these types of pathways is how progression is measured – what does success look like?

Success for the individual will vary, but could include at the earliest stages, parents taking a more active role in school activities, becoming involved in a tenant's association or community centre, or taking part in some other kind of activity that builds confidence and develops underpinning employability skills.

The pilots have much to offer to the debate about how we recognise progression, including tracing movements from one Licence to Skill segment to another. This could usefully be contributed to the national and regional discussions on ESOL, Foundation Learning Tier and the IES system.

Examples in action:

- City and Islington College has developed an Individual Employability Plan which will be piloted and evaluated by the college, including those involved in providing information, advice and guidance, and Merton College is developing a similar model. The City and Islington Plan will be used with all people with ESOL needs as well as other pilot cohorts. In addition, the employability skills and needs for all those taking up ESOL are being assessed, in common with a number of other colleges including Merton.

The development of work experience placements to improve employability skills and provide recruitment opportunities is a key theme in the evaluation reports. Whilst work placement has traditionally been a widely accepted part of training activity for young people, this has not always been the case for adults taking up training, particularly in the FE sector.

Examples in action:

- The College of North West London in partnership with Brent in 2 Work has introduced work placements for adults for the first time, predominantly in the construction and hospitality sectors. This includes placements for people with ESOL needs, lone parents and people with learning disabilities and difficulties.
- Capel Manor Horticultural College is engaging the parents of individuals with a learning disability, so that they understand the value of work experience and can provide the 'at-home' support and encouragement to help make it successful. This approach also helps to reassure parents who can inadvertently be a barrier to employment.
- Merton College has developed programmes for several cohorts of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (people with learning difficulties, hearing and visual impairments, and mental health difficulties) each of which has included substantial elements of work experience.

Making it flexible

A key success factor for pilots is flexibility. This isn't a new finding, but what is interesting about the pilot activity is the extent to which flexibility is needed if really hard to engage clients are to stick with programmes and move into sustainable jobs.

For colleges, this has involved continuous review and development to fine tune delivery, learning 'on the hoof' about what keeps a person motivated and interested, and having the will and expertise to change plans to respond.

Examples in action:

- Southwark College's programme for people with deep seated and enduring barriers to getting work is being continuously refined and developed to maximise the chances of clients sticking with the programme. In just a 3 month period, this has involved many revisions to the modules on offer and the order in which they are being delivered, leading to very positive feedback from a number of clients who for the first time are experiencing a sense of achievement.
- Barnet College is delivering new daytime and evening ESOL for Work programmes (full and part time) to cater for employees who have specific work related English language needs. These will lead to ESOL for Work qualifications and will be tailored to suit the particular jobs and sectors in which people are working.

There are a number of reported challenges for colleges in delivering flexibly. These include the balkanisation into their different silos between mainstream programmes and the fact that the main drivers for those programmes are participation levels and numbers of qualifications. The rigidity of some qualifications is also a barrier. Unitised and modular arrangements work best – they can be adapted to suit client need more easily. However, some of these don't 'register' as mainstream college provision. This not only may have funding implications, but also presents a challenge in terms of getting pilot work more widely accepted in a college.

Many colleges are planning to use the ESOL for Work qualification and a variety of employability qualifications from January 2008. They will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these qualifications (for individuals and for employers), and report on them at the next evaluation point in March 2008. Deloitte employability programmes are used by a number of colleges, most of which appear to find them very helpful. However, there is some lack of flexibility because of the constraints placed on buying this type of programme.

Integrated solutions in development

The pilots are intended to address the varying needs of people (adults in particular) who have significant barriers to skills development and moving into sustainable work. The Licence to Skill approach requires pilots to identify the 'segment' of this client market for which a programme is being developed and delivered, to identify the primary goals of the segment and the range of services needed.

There is evidence that many pilots have clearly identified their client groups in line with this approach, although reports suggest some 'mismatches' with the intentions of the initiatives. For example, there are some cohorts of young people (the pilots are intended to be for adults). Also, it is not clear what proportion of all participants recruited by ETF providers are at Entry 1 and Entry 2 levels as is intended, although many of the **employed** cohort appear to be at these levels. Quantitative data should be able to clarify this when it becomes available.

Along with generally good identification of target groups, colleges are developing a keen understanding of the breadth and complexity of their need. Efforts are being made to work with a range of partner organisations that can provide additional support for housing, debt, health, childcare and other needs. It is encouraging that some colleges recognise that specialist services are better delivered by 'expert' organisations, and that the imperative is to find more effective ways of working in partnership, rather than trying to develop the services in house. However, while this need has been identified, fully effective models of partnership working have yet to be developed in a number of instances.

Examples in action:

- Hackney Community College is working with mental health service providers to create tailored, supported pathways into sustainable work for people with mental health issues, using Licence to Skill to develop, document and share the pathways with wider networks. An early outcome is one client tutoring other people in this very vulnerable group to support them back into work. A mental health employment forum has been set up to provide multi-agency input for people who are finding it particularly difficult to get work.
- Southwark College is working with Southwark Childcare Support Service to enable the significant proportion of lone parents on the EDP (some of whom are also refugees) to have the full cost of childcare covered whilst they are on the programme.
- City & Islington College is developing a construction multi-skills programme for women offenders, in partnership with Women and Manual Trades, Holloway Prison and the College of North East London. It is designed to enable women to start training in prison and continue after release, including receiving ongoing support to become successfully self employed.
- Capel Manor College has developed a relationship with a voluntary organisation that provides job coaches for people with learning difficulties during work placement.

A number of colleges raised the importance of the role of the 'routeway broker' – and the challenges in identifying who should play this role particularly for those clients with complex and varied needs. This concept is part of the Licence to Skill approach and refers to the person/people who will support an individual at each stage of their pathway to work, particularly at key transition points. Routeway brokers can include professionals and skilled volunteers drawn from a wide range of backgrounds e.g. school, guidance service, social services, probation, voluntary sector organisations, who act as mentors, advisors and/or advocates.

Whilst pilots are demonstrating some good examples of integrated approaches that tackle 'non-skill' as well as skills needs, a number report the challenges of the 'reality' of working with partners to do this. It is vital that a close eye is kept on this part of pilot development since it is critical to the full integration of employment and skills services. This priority not only forms a crucial element of the LSEB's strategy, but also central to national developments where it includes shaping an Adult Advancement and Careers Service (AACCS).

In the existing mainstream skills system, there is far more resource available for skills delivery than for the processes of initial assessment, guidance, coaching and brokerage. The pilots have demonstrated that redressing this imbalance increases people's employability and this has implications for the design of an effective IES system. In addition, there is also a significant cost benefit if people are provided with in depth assessment and guidance, they are more likely to move onto provision that meets their needs and this in turn should help them to progress more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

Starting to reach employers

Most colleges very candidly highlight that working with employers and employer intermediaries remains one of their biggest challenges in taking forward pilot activity and more generally. This is not surprising since we know that traditionally, employer-college relationships tend to feature mainly or exclusively in the business development units and other 'pockets' in colleges, and that there is little current linkage between colleges and the wider business support system (which includes Business Link and reportedly over 400 other business support organisations in London).

That said, and bearing in mind that for most pilots, actual delivery only began in September 2007, there are signs of progress to report. There is evidence that colleges are **developing dialogues with employers**, in contrast to the more 'distant' relationships that they may previously have had. This is having a direct impact on the development of programmes which appear to be more focused on employer and sector needs.

Examples in action:

- As a result of highly successful work placement activities for clients with learning disabilities, City and Islington College has been asked to deliver Disability Awareness Training for an employer as part of its staff development package.
- Capel Manor College has developed horticulture related training with 3 local authorities – Haringey, Barking & Dagenham and Luton – and delivers it in the workplace. It is also working with the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management to develop apprenticeship routes in this growing sector.
- Hackney Community College, at the request of the Association of Community Business Advisors is to deliver ESOL in the workplace to Turkish and Vietnamese speaking employers of small businesses.
- South Thames College is delivering job related ESOL to 40 employees on the premises of two employers.
- Barnet College is working with a major European hotel chain, a London art gallery and other employers to develop bespoke ESOL provision that will be delivered in the workplace early in 2008.
- Tower Hamlets have begun marketing pre-employment and workforce development initiatives as a single comprehensive package to employers, with a new Course Guide for Employers and a dedicated single point of contact for all employers.

This improved dialogue is in some cases leading to more tangible business benefits for employers. It is not clear how much training is now being delivered at full (or part) cost to the employer, and this would be a useful indicator to explore at the next evaluation point.

Examples in action:

- REWIND, a creative industries employer, not only works with the College of North East London on the design of a pre-employment training programme, but also offers work placements and delivers part of the training to individuals. This has had a very positive impact on clients and at the same time motivated REWIND staff as they have become more aware of their skills. Delivering training has now become a new area of potential business for the company, in addition to the recruitment benefits of being involved with the training of prospective employees.
- Croydon Skills & Enterprise College has used its EDP to develop its employability provision at its outreach construction training centre - based in one of the most deprived wards in the country - involving local contractors, one of which has seconded a manager to work as a tutor. This programme is providing added value for employers, and increased their competitiveness, by enabling them to recruit local employees and work with local contractors, thereby fulfilling requirements for local contracts. The college is planning similar employer-led programmes for the other two Croydon priority sectors – retail and hospitality.

- Newham College is delivering work focused ESOL with work experience for people with 'entry level' language skills. Bovis Lend Lease is using this as a recruitment opportunity to help fulfil their contract requirement for employing local people to build the 2012 Olympic Park.

Colleges are generally aware that if they want to build employer relationships, they need to have consistent and thorough employer contact and feedback systems so that they can capture employer views to inform pilot and wider programme development, as well as manage employer contact and work placement arrangements more effectively. Many are in the process of establishing these systems and predict that they will be able to provide more detail on employer impact at the next evaluation point in March 2008.

Whilst it is vital that colleges develop dialogues with employers to provide sustainable job outcomes for clients, and give the essential input into programme design, some are also trying to work with intermediary organisations that are specialists in the field, including job brokerage organisations, Jobcentre Plus and others.

More could be made of these opportunities, for example, having dialogues with JCP Employer Engagement Managers who are in a unique position in terms of understanding employers' needs. Increased awareness of, and involvement in key initiatives such as the Local Employer Partnerships and London Accord are also essential.

This type of development is important if an IES system that makes best use of all available resources is to be established. Future developments should be informed by the Government's business support simplification programme, as skills brokerage is more closely integrated with mainstream business support.

A significant number of ETF pilots report delivery to employees which is a very positive development. For some, it is clear that provision is tailored to enable employees to access it without the involvement of their employer ie: out of work hours. This is very helpful for the individuals concerned, but raises the difficult issue of the lack of employer support and payment for ESOL training. It is assumed that employees are not contributing to the cost of provision because they are in low paid jobs, but it is not clear how this is being assessed by providers.

Changing how colleges work

On the whole, colleges that have benefited from the additional support provided through EDP development show greater progress in establishing employment focused activity. This is not unexpected. Indeed, it would be disappointing if the significant financial and human resources that have been invested in the EDPs were not beginning to show visible impact. The EDP 'model' is being used by many colleges to inform wider 'mainstream' developments. However, progress is still patchy and a minority of evaluation reports do not provide enough detail to judge real progress.

Whilst it is early days for 'non EDP' ETF pilots, indications are that pilot activity tends to be viewed by a number as curriculum development, rather than the 'whole organisation' change that is required to really make progress towards embedding ESOL as part of an integrated skills and employment system. Some providers would benefit from further support to understand the extent and nature of the developments that they need to make, and to implement the resulting changes. EDPs are developing activity "*inspired by*" each others' successes, promoting inter college development – it would be very helpful for ETF colleges to share in this peer support. To promote greater support and recognition for the 11 'non EDP' ETF pilots, they should be viewed as 'specialist' EDPs.

Mainstreaming employability

The majority of pilots appear to be stepping up the pace of change for employment focused activity that was 'waiting in the wings'. They are also helping to develop and broaden established 'pockets' of employment focused activity, including through greater integration of business development unit activity into the mainstream work of colleges.

A number of EDP pilots highlight the development of cross college employability strategies, indicating that at an organisational level employability is being brought into the core of college planning. This is being prompted by a number of factors including colleges having a better understanding of employers and how to respond to them and recognising that individuals want to get jobs as well as gain skills and qualifications. The seriousness with which this agenda is being tackled by some colleges is evident in the frequent reporting of significant staff development to enable tutors and other staff to develop new skills sets, as well as work to embed employability skills into existing and new curricula.

The replacement of the Individual Learning Plan with tools that are employability and employment focused and the introduction of employability screening and assessment also signal changes in college culture that supports the integration of learning/skills and employment aims. Many have also developed work focused marketing materials and are exploring how IAG services can take into account the need for advice about jobs, not just courses. This progress and the lessons learnt in getting there could be very useful in the development of the Skills Health Check and AACCS as part of the wider development of the IES.

Examples in action:

- City and Islington College has developed an employability checklist to identify the employability elements in existing ESOL curricula. This means that they can help tutors to deliver ESOL in ways that combine employability skills development. It's planned to use the checklist to review a range of other curricula.
- Hackney Community College has been mapping employability against its vocational programmes which has enabled them to embed employability skills in Business Administration programmes.

Reviewing employability from a strategic angle has helped colleges to identify where their existing structures and processes do not promote good employment focused responses for individuals and employers. One college highlighted that the EDP has helped them recognise that they are not making the most of their existing employer contacts and work experience arrangements. As well as developing a college wide strategy to address this, the college is also establishing a more systematic approach to work placement. This kind of activity is reported in around two thirds of the pilot colleges.

Pilot work has enabled a number of colleges to understand the need to mainstream the work of their business development units and to develop 'pipelines' from pre-employment programmes into Train to Gain. About half of EDP colleges have specifically reported organisational developments in these areas.

From the evaluation reports, it is not clear if the ETF pilots are having an impact on ESOL take up through Train to Gain, although other anecdotal evidence suggests that this is happening in some colleges. For the pilots to gain momentum and have full impact, it is critical that this type of strategic activity is stepped up in the next few months. This is not least because colleges will need to take serious business decisions in view of the shift from

grant funding to investment in Train to Gain. It would be helpful for LSC Partnership Teams to give additional support to providers to encourage the joining up of employability pilots and programmes with Train to Gain.

It also raises the issue of the sustainability of pilot activity (EDP and ETF). Creating much more visible and firm links between pilots and mainstream mechanisms and funding streams will increase the likelihood not only of roll out, but also of the sustainability of new and successful ways of increasing employability. Public agency staff, in particular LSC Partnership Teams have a pivotal role to play in getting this message across.

In order for employability to be fully embedded across a whole college, significantly more development work needs to take place. Most colleges and their Corporations will need further convincing of the changes in LSC commissioning. It will therefore be important for progress in the development of an IES system, and its implications for the future direction of college strategies, to be clearly communicated from the highest levels. It may also be helpful for the LSC to engage college governors as well as principals in supporting business planning.

Making more of the bigger picture

As reported earlier in the paper, colleges report improved relationships with a range of delivery partners including JCP offices and other organisations. This progress in developing employability pathways that make best use of existing resources is welcome and reflects the key principles of Licence to Skill. However, it is interesting to note that major providers of skills, specifically JCP Prime Contractors and work-based learning providers, appear to be largely absent. Although there is competition for funding between providers, there are business opportunities for partnership development that can be mutually beneficial and should be explored.

The City of Westminster College has such a relationship with a4e and is delivering a work focused programme which it is hoped will develop further through a Local Employment Partnership with Charing Cross Hospital. However, this programme is DWP funded and it is not clear if there is a link with the College's ETF pilot.

The principles for Local Employment Partnerships and the London Accord, attracting employers to recruit workless people by offering bespoke train-recruit-train packages, including through Train to Gain, are directly in line with those of the EDP and ETF pilots. Colleges would benefit from making more of this potential opportunity, particularly in providing the 'sandwich filling' of programmes which work with community based providers who engage and prepare people for training and work based learning or JCP prime contractors that deliver specialist pre-employment training.

The public agencies are keen to open up the market to new providers. DWP is consulting on its commissioning arrangements and the LSC has an imperative to deliver on Train to Gain, Skills for Jobs and other employability programmes. In this climate, colleges should nurture their specialisms and forge strong alliances with partners that complement them.

The other key element in the developing landscape is the increasingly important role of Local Area Agreements. These Agreements set the key goals for boroughs and are to be delivered through the activities of the agencies – LSC, LDA and JCP. Whilst pilot development should not be constrained by borough boundaries, it is vital that colleges have ongoing dialogues with their local authorities to understand the economic imperatives – for individuals and for local businesses.

The challenges ahead

As part of the interim evaluation, colleges were asked to identify what they felt the key challenges are in taking forward their pilots in 2008. The headline challenges raised include:

- **Flexibility/“breaking the rules”:** the success of the pilots for individuals depends partly on delivery partners’ ability to “break the normal rules”. This has major implications for the design of the IES system.
- **Evidencing job outcomes and progression:** tracking individuals, particularly once they have moved into a job can be particularly difficult and resource intensive. This is easier with those that continue their skills development after job entry - e.g. through Train to Gain - since this guarantees continued contact with the college, but systems are needed to track the progress of others both at the level of the pilots and as part of an IES system.
- **Further development of employability pathways:** there is a clear acknowledgement that this is difficult work, particularly where individuals have a wide range of needs or have very poor skills, including ESOL skills. This flags up the importance of increasing the relationships with external organisations that can offer additional and complementary services and achieving clarity about who delivers what part of the service, including the routeway broker role.
- **Engaging employers:** many colleges highlighted this as the most difficult challenge, although evidence suggests that they are making significant efforts to tackle it. Drawing on the experience of, and working more closely with, employer facing organisations – job brokerage, business support etc. could help. This needs to be considered in the context of developments on skills brokerage and the Government’s business support simplification programme.
- **Mainstreaming employability across the college:** this includes challenges in training and supporting staff, as well as making the structural and organisational changes required. How to balance funding requirements with the employability agenda is also a key concern. Employability can appear more risky than mainstream provision and finding mechanisms for colleges to assess and manage this risk is important. This needs to be considered in developing the IES system and is something on which the LSC may want to engage college governors since it implies major changes in strategic direction.
- **Working effectively with Jobcentre Plus and DWP providers:** although many colleges report an improvement in their relationships with local offices, a significant number have concerns about getting referrals and making arrangements for particular client groups so that they have easier access to programmes. There is also a need at regional and national levels to define and communicate the linkages between DWP funded employment programmes and Train to Gain and other LSC funded programmes, and the Government’s expectations about partnership working between DWP and LSC funded providers. This will become more significant as Pathways to Work, Flexible New Deal and the Train to Gain Plan for Growth roll out.
- **Balance of resource allocation between skills provision and assessment, coaching and brokerage:** in the existing mainstream skills system, far more resource is available for skills delivery than for the processes of initial assessment, coaching and brokerage. The pilots have demonstrated that redressing this imbalance increases people’s employability. This could have important implications for the design and funding of an effective IES system.

Proposals for action

Drawing on the experience to date and to support the achievement of the specific objectives and targets set out for each individual pilot, the following proposals and actions are suggested. These are not intended to be exhaustive, but to act as a starting point for public agencies and providers to continue to develop and roll out successful approaches and key strategic actions.

Proposals should be considered in the context of the wider developments resulting from the LSEB's strategy, specific actions for ESOL provision that may arise from the event on 12th February and other key developments.

Proposal	Suggested action and lead
<p>Additional support to maximise the impact of the ETF pilots, particularly those being delivered by 'non EDP' organisations. This should include awarding 'specialist EDP' status to the ETF pilots.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development session with the 10 'non EDP' ETF providers to provide intensive input to bring them up to speed on developments to date and tools (Licence to Skill, Employability Evaluation Framework). • Information exchange and ideas building workshop for all 21 deliverers of pilots (building on the forthcoming session between the LSEB and pilot providers). • In response to identified provider support needs, workshops and masterclasses to share successes and solutions to challenges. • Development of 'buddying' arrangements between colleges where this is identified as helpful. • Fully establish the pilot evaluation process (ETF and EDP) within the LSC and regularly share outcomes with the LDA, JCP and other key agencies. This should include processes for qualitative and quantitative data. <p><i>Actions should be taken forward in partnership between the agencies (LSC, LDA & JCP) and providers. For these actions to be effective, providers must have ownership of them and drive planning through identified development needs.</i></p>
<p>Support college business development strategies to maximise the opportunities presented by employment focused funding, particularly Train to Gain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge colleges which have not already done so to develop employability to Train to Gain pathways which maintain skills development in work and boost Train to Gain performance. • Request greater detail at the next evaluation point about the sustainability of pilot approaches across all pilots. • Engage college governors and their principals in business development and planning sessions that focus on the opportunities and imperatives presented by the reduction in grant aid and increase in Train to Gain investment. This should begin with the 21 EDP/ETF colleges and then could be widened to include other colleges and other organisations as appropriate. <p><i>Colleges to lead in getting the buy in of their governors. LSC to lead in preparing and supporting Partnership Teams to deliver key messages to providers and to input into business development sessions.</i></p>

Proposal	Suggested action and lead
<p>Support the further expansion of employer dialogue and sustainable job outcomes.</p>	<p>Through the existing support and reporting mechanisms that are in place for EDPs, and including 'non EDP' ETF providers in the development activities, place additional emphasis on identifying and developing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective employer engagement strategies, drawing on the experience of business support organisations, Sector Skills Councils and DWP providers. • Pipelines into Train to Gain, including through engagement in Local Employer Partnership activity. • Training delivered in the workplace, and that is being fully or partly paid for by the employer. <p><i>Providers to lead, with agencies (LSC, LDA & JCP) supporting particularly on drawing in experience from other sectors and on engagement with LEPs.</i></p>
<p>Step up the progress towards developing pathways for individuals and employers as the basis for an effective, IES system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All colleges to consider adopting 'individual employment plans' as a development from individual learning plans. It may be useful to explore standardisation of the core elements of these plans. • Continue to develop employability pathways, using the new Licence to Skill starter kit to help identify more clearly the contributions of partner organisations and the role of the routeway broker. This should include all types of LSC provision (First Steps, Family Learning, Foundation Learning Tier, SfL, Employability Skills Programme, Skills for Jobs, Train to Gain etc.), as well as that funded by LDA and DWP. • Step up engagement with key employer focused initiatives including Local Employer Partnerships and the London Accord. • Identify how the pathways can be used in developing an IES system for London. <p><i>Providers to lead on first and second actions, with agencies (LSC, LDA & JCP) leading on the third.</i></p>
<p>As part of the ongoing work of the public agencies for the development of the implementation plan for the LSEB's Strategy, explore the role of shared targets in relation to joint investment planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a shared understanding of the progression 'markers' that could be used in addition to qualifications. • Establish how each component that leads to the achievement of a progression marker can be recognised and rewarded in joint investment processes. <p><i>Public agencies to lead in building ideas, supported by LSEB as appropriate.</i></p>

Organisations delivering pilots

Employability Demonstration Pilots and ESOL Transition Fund pilots

- College of North West London
- Croydon College
- Hackney Community College
- Lambeth College
- South Thames College
- Southwark College
- College of North East London
- Tower Hamlets College
- Merton College
- City & Islington College
- Capel Manor College (**EDP only**, not ETF)

ESOL Transition Fund pilots

- Barnet College
- Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College
- Greenwich Community College
- Harrow College
- Kensington & Chelsea College
- Lewisham College
- Newham College of Further Education
- Waltham Forest College
- Westminster Adult Education Service
- City of Westminster College
- Westminster Kingsway College

Note: These are the **larger** providers of ESOL Transition Fund activity. In total, over 60 organisations are involved in delivery across London.