

EMPLOYMENT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Back to
Main

The Employment Service (ES)

The ES is a Government executive agency which runs a network of over 1,000 Jobcentres throughout Britain. Its Chief Executive reports directly to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. The objective is to help unemployed people into work and to pay benefit to those who are entitled to it. ES submits many people to training programmes and provides a range of other assistance for unemployed people, geared to improving their job finding skills. In 1996-97 it placed 1.6 million people into jobs and 600,000 into training opportunities. In Northern Ireland, the Training and Employment Agency provides similar services through its own network of local offices.

Lifelong Learning

Adults can access education and training at any stage of their working lives. By international standards, a high proportion of students at British higher and further education institutions are mature students. A key factor is that education and training should be available at work, at home, in part-time or full-time study, at times and places which suit individual needs. Developments in Britain which have made education and training flexible include:

- open and distance learning;
- flexible modes of study. There are over 500,000 part-time students in Britain of all ages. There has been significant growth in numbers following short, post-degree vocational courses to update skills, mainly in business, science and education;
- modular courses.

University for Industry

The University for Industry will bring new learning opportunities to the home, the workplace and the community through the creation of a national multi-media learning network. Its purpose is to improve the quality and availability of learning materials and widen access for individuals and businesses (particularly small businesses), in part through the use of new technologies. Its position in the education and training infrastructure will be unique but it will not itself directly deliver courses. It is still at an early stage of development and design and implementation advisory groups have been established to drive this work forward.

National Telephone Helpline- 'Learning Direct'

Learning Direct is one of the Government's first steps in developing the University for Industry. Learning Direct in Scotland was launched in September 1997 and in England, Wales and Northern Ireland early in 1998. Learning Direct offers adults a free, impartial and confidential service providing advice on a wide range of learning opportunities, information on how to pay for learning and advice on related child care opportunities.

Tax Relief and Training

Cost is often identified as one of the principal reasons for not undertaking training. In Britain there are tax reliefs available for training, which can help to reduce the cost. Individuals who pay for their own vocational training may claim under the Vocational Training Relief scheme. For employers and self-employed people, the costs of training may be allowable as a business expense.

Individual Learning Accounts

Developing a culture of lifelong learning is a priority for the Government. A specific commitment includes the introduction of Individual Learning Accounts which will help individuals to acquire relevant and useful skills through investing in their own development. The precise form of the accounts will be determined in a White Paper on lifelong learning, but initially the Government has decided to support up to one million accounts to help priority groups undertake training they would not otherwise have experienced. This targeted approach will link into a wider national framework of accounts for all.

The Open College

The Open College provides individuals and employers with open learning courses and support materials. It has a wide range of courses, ranging from basic technology skills to management, many of which give credits towards a recognised qualification. It also provides other services, such as training needs analysis for companies and company-specific training schemes. The Open College was initially funded by the Government but is now self-financing.

The Open University

Since it was established in 1969 the Open University has pioneered open and distance learning at university level in Britain and has grown to become the country's largest single teaching institution. Its courses are also available in other European countries. No formal academic qualifications are required to enrol on undergraduate courses, but the standard of its degrees and other qualifications are as high as those of other universities. The Open University Business School is the largest provider of management training in Britain, offering a range of opportunities at different levels, from short, practical courses for both organisations and individuals to higher degrees. In 1995 more than 150,000 students were registered with the Open University, over 10,000 at postgraduate level.

Basic Skills Agency

The national agency for literacy, numeracy and related skills in England and Wales. Its aim is to improve standards in basic skills for all age groups by promoting and developing innovative learning strategies and programmes.

Training Provision

Training in Britain takes place in a free market. Employers and individuals decide what investment to make in skills. Employers have developed a standard for effective investment in skills-**The Investors in People Standard**-which links investment in training to the needs

of the business. The Government encourages employers to commit themselves to achieving the Standard.

Individuals are encouraged to take the initiative to develop their own skills, in a culture of lifelong learning. Competence-based qualifications (NVQs and SVQs in Scotland) certify an individual's ability to meet the skills standards required at work.

Training is available from a wide range of private and public sector providers and funding structures encourage training providers to be responsive to the market. Access to training is available irrespective of age, while developments in open access and distance learning enable employers and individuals to meet their training needs in a wide variety of settings.

The Government's main role is to provide guidance and to fund an institutional framework at national, sectoral and local level in which training decisions can be taken. It also funds work-related training, especially for young people, unemployed people, and people with disabilities or special needs. Similar arrangements are made in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Training is usually aimed at providing skills and knowledge applicable to a particular job or occupation. The majority of all work-related training is provided or paid for by employers for their own employees.

Key elements in the training framework include:

- the National Education and Training Targets which set out targets on foundation and lifetime learning. In Scotland, the Advisory Scottish Council for Education and Training Targets (ASCETT) sets separate education and training targets;
- Career Development Loans which help individuals invest in their own vocational education and training, and tax relief on individual training expenditure;
- Training for the Unemployed.

A range of help is available through the Government's Training for Work and 'New Deal' programme (see chapter 3, 'work-based training').

Employer Investment in Skills

British business recognises that training and developing people is critical to business success. The Investors in People Standard is an externally accredited Standard developed by employers, to improve business performance by linking the training and development of employees to business objectives. The Standard is externally accredited and quality controlled by Investors in People UK. In England and Wales assessment is undertaken by TECs and in Scotland by Investors in People Scotland.

At a sectoral level, a network of employer-led National Training

Organisations monitor skill needs in their specific industry sectors, set skill standards and encourage employers to invest in training.

At a local level, Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs)-known as local enterprise companies (LECs) in Scotland-are a network of employer-led private companies set up in 1990, under contract to the Department for Education and Employment in England, the Welsh Office in Wales, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in Scotland, to bring business know-how to bear on the development of training strategies to meet local skill requirements. They are also responsible for managing the delivery of training for unemployed adults and young people.

There are 79 TECs in England and Wales and 22 LECs in Scotland. Although some TECs/LECs deliver training directly, it is more usual for them to contract with local training providers.

In Northern Ireland the Training and Employment Agency is responsible for training and enterprise measures. It helps to support both inward investors and local companies with the provision of training and provides a comprehensive network of job brokerage services through a network of local offices. Key training and work experience programmes include: the Jobskill Training programme; the Youth Training programme and the Action for Community Employment programme, which provides training for the long-term unemployed.

Skills for Business-a Local Competitiveness Budget offers flexible arrangements to enable TECs and local partners to work with organisations, including small firms, to achieve Investors in People. It also targets other key areas, such as developing owner and management training to national standards, devising company training plans, and developing key workers to act as in-house training champions.

National Targets for Education and Training

Aim

To improve Britain's international competitiveness by raising standards and attainment levels in education and training to world-class levels by ensuring that:

- all employers invest in employee training and development to achieve business success;
- all individuals have access to education and training

- all education and training develops self-reliance, flexibility and breadth, in particular through fostering competence in core skills.

Targets are regularly reviewed and consultation has been taking place on how best to update these targets. A separate consultation will take place on the future of Scottish targets.

opportunities, leading to recognised qualifications, which meet their needs and aspirations; and

Foundation Learning

- By age 19, 85 per cent of young people to achieve five GCSEs/Scottish equivalents at Grade C or above, an Intermediate GNVQ/GSVQ or an NVQ/SVQ Level 2.
- 75 percent (70 per cent in Scotland) of young people to achieve Level 2 (Level 3 in Scotland) competence in communication, numeracy and information technology by age 19; and 35 per cent to achieve Level 3 competence in these core skills by age 21.
- By age 21, 60 per cent (70 per cent in Scotland) of young people to achieve two GCE A Levels/Scottish equivalents, an Advanced GNVQ/GSVQ or NVQ/SVQ Level 3.

Lifelong Learning

- 60 percent of the workforce to be qualified to NVQ/SVQ Level 3, Advanced GNVQ/GSVQ or two or more GCE A Levels/Scottish equivalents.
- 30 per cent of the workforce to have a vocational, professional, management or academic qualification at NVQ/SVQ Level 4 or above.
- 70 per cent of all organisations employing 200 or more employees, and 35 per cent of those employing 50 or more (and, in Scotland, 15 per cent of those employing fewer than 50) to be recognised as Investors in People.

Quality and Standards in Training

The government is committed to the establishment of a new Training Standards Council which will monitor the quality of training offered by providers of Government-funded training. The Government also contacts with TECs to achieve a range of performance measures and comparative tables of performance measures are published annually in England and Wales. Funding mechanisms are designed to ensure that TECs focus on priority schemes and groups. These include Training for Unemployment Adults, Youth Training and those at a disadvantage in the Labour Market.

Training for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities have priority on Government training programmes where they are eligible and suitable. The Access to Work (ATW) programme, in 1995/96, helped over 13,000 people overcome barriers to employment arising from disability. For 1996/97, the budget for the programme was £19 million.

Qualifications

Ensuring the quality of qualifications is important as these provide an external check on the quality of training institutions. The Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is responsible for maintaining the standards of both vocational and academic qualifications. In Scotland, responsibility rests with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). *See Chapter 4*



[\[Introduction\]](#) [\[Structure\]](#) [\[Pre-school to 16\]](#) [\[16-25\]](#) [\[Framework\]](#)
[\[Lifelong\]](#) [\[Technology\]](#) [\[Links\]](#) [\[Contacts\]](#)