



**South West** Lifelong Learning Network

# **South West Lifelong Learning Network (SWLLN)**

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**Six-Month Report to HEFCE  
August 2006 – January 2007**

**SOUTH WEST LIFELONG LEARNING NETWORK**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **a. Project progress**

The South West Lifelong Learning Network was formally approved by HEFCE in April 2006 for implementation from August 2006 – July 2009. The approved business plan sets out the vision, aims and objectives of the SWLLN.

This report reflects on the first six months of operation and provides an initial sight of the format under development for monitoring and evaluating the SWLLN so that the partners can ensure that an evidence based approach is adopted which enables us to ascertain the impacts of the intended activities. The format is modelled on the approach adopted by Aimhigher which has been commended as good practice.

The strength of existing and emerging partnerships and collaborations has been a significant factor in the progress achieved in the first six months of operation. In addition, the key post holders (some with no background in HE or FE) employed to deliver the activities and milestones have 'hit the ground running' and established good foundations for their particular strands.

The Governance and Management structures are all in place and all posts (bar one which is currently the subject of secondment negotiations) have been filled. Whilst all post holders are employed by an HEI (Arts Institute at Bournemouth, Bournemouth University, University of Exeter, Open University and University of Plymouth) representation has been secured from the FE sector and other key stakeholders on strand groups, area management attendance at consultation events.

The Strategy Board and Management Groups (including the Area Management Groups) have all met as have the Strand Groups. A number of consultation events have been held or are scheduled to ensure engagement and/or representation of key stakeholders across the three strands of the SWLLN. Detailed work plans are under development for all the Strands and the Communications Strategy is now complete. In developing the curriculum framework and progression agreement for Museums, Libraries & Archivists, the partners have secured input from Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and Museums, Libraries & Archivists (MLASW) in the form of an Advisory Group – a model that will be adopted for all developments across the stated sectors.

The establishment of the national LLNs Practitioner Forum has been a welcome development and provided new staff with an early opportunity to engage with other LLN Practitioners. This will complement our approach to bespoke staff development and ensure that relevant staff development opportunities are disseminated to staff via our website (a practitioners' webpage is currently under development) [swlln.ac.uk](http://swlln.ac.uk)

### **b. Key achievements against partnership strategic objectives**

The SWLLN activities and milestones have been the key drivers in the first six months of operation. The partners have collaborated in a productive and supportive manner to ensure that the activities and milestones for the six month period have been achieved, even where key postholders were not in place until October/November 2006. The evidence to illustrate this can be found in the manner in which all employing HEIs and their respective HR functions were able to collaborate over a block advertisement for vacant posts across the SWLLN areas. In addition, posts have been co-located, where appropriate, with

complementary activity (e.g. Information, Advice, Guidance & Learner Support posts for the SWLLN with Aimhigher postholders) to ensure that duplication of effort is avoided, good practice and lessons learnt to date are adopted and that the specific target groups remain the focus of activity.

A formal launch of the SWLLN was held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006 followed by the first meeting of the Strategy Board, chaired by Professor Mark McNair of the University of Exeter. To support the launch a film was commissioned outlining the benefits and achievements from strong collaborations across the SWLLN area – this film was also shown at the TUC Conference throughout the week beginning 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

Full details of key achievements against the specified activities and milestones can be found in section 4 of this report.

### **c. Challenges**

A number of key challenges to the outcome of the SWLLN initiative were identified during the development of the business plan. These included the geographical area covered by the SWLLN; development of common policy and practice for curriculum developments including delivery modes; progression agreements; employer engagement and the stimulation of demand for higher level skills to be addressed by HE provision. A summary is provided below of the key challenges expressed to date under each area of activity for the SWLLN:

#### **Governance & Management**

- Mechanisms for collaboration across the geographical area are, as expected, challenging in terms of resources linked to time and travel but are being addressed through the use of video conferencing and electronic communication.
- Ensuring that stakeholders are fully engaged and represented will present an ongoing challenge that we are endeavouring to meet through wide consultation and the establishment of advisory groups
- The development of baseline data for each of the key strands is underway and is critical to our ability to monitor and evaluate the impact of the SWLLN. Strands across the network will be engaged in staff development to assist reporting and in developing effective and timely reporting mechanisms.
- Robust financial arrangements are now in place but will need careful monitoring to ensure that the requirements of the individual strands are balanced and prioritised against individual institutional expectations. Agreement is already in place to ensure that staffing costs and associated non pay costs in areas of underspend are identified in a Development Fund for each strand. Plans for expenditure from the Development Fund will be subject to the agreement of the Management Group.
- The External Environment  
Key to the success of the SWLLN is the need to address changes in the external environment that have developed since the business plan was submitted and improved, e.g., the development of the Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Pilot Project (HLSPP); the Leitch Review and HEFCE's HE in FE Consultation. The need to address changes needs to be balanced with the priority to remain focussed on the aims and objectives of the SWLLN whilst ensuring any possible synergies/complementary activity between the SWLLN and any new/emerging initiatives are secured.

### **Information, Advice, Guidance & learner Support**

- The need to align the infrastructure for both East and West areas of the SWLLN as quickly as possible to facilitate the achievement of activities and milestones.
- The strand faces a common challenge to all the strands which is to ensure cohesion across the whole of the initiative.
- National IAG review recommendations are as yet unknown but will need to be factored into detailed work plans
- Inevitably timescales for advertisement and recruitment of key post holders has meant some slippage which will be addressed within the next six months of the first year of operation

### **Curriculum Framework Development & Vocational Practice Development**

- A key challenge for all education providers is the stimulation of demand as opposed to the historic practice of supply led curriculum developments
- The development of meaningful engagements with key stakeholders including employers will be key to stimulating demand led provision, this is being addressed through the creation of advisory groups (as for the Libraries, Museums and Archivists development)
- Areas under development and/or the focus of priority across the South West vary between the two areas (e.g. Public Services is the initial primary focus for the West and Heritage the initial primary focus for the East). The Curriculum Framework Development & Vocational Practice Development Strand will put mechanisms in place to ensure coherence across developments.

### **Progression Agreements**

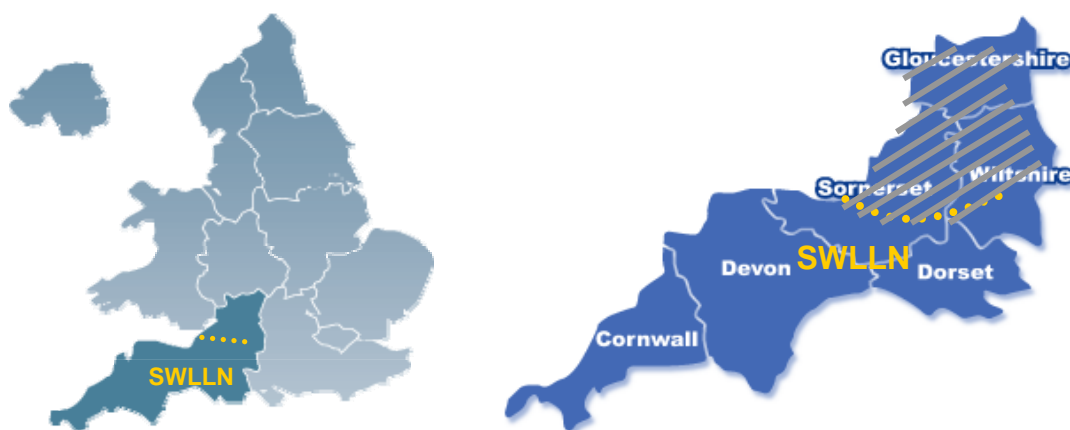
- Existing agreements between some of the HEIs in the SWLLN provide a basis for the developments required in the particular sectors expressed in the plan. The challenges in this area should not be underestimated since they are likely to involve challenging custom and practice adopted internally by HE providers. Also challenging will be the ability of HE providers to respond to changing requirements in the mode of delivery that employers may request, i.e. workbased, block modes of delivery, e delivery.

## 1. Introduction

The last two years have seen massive changes in the UK Higher Education (HE), one of which is the Joint Progression Strategy of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) with the aim to advance vocational and workplace progression into and through higher education.

The South West Lifelong Learning Network (SWLLN) as part of a national Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) strategy received full approval and funding support from HEFCE in April 2006 with effect from August 2006.

Led by Bournemouth University, the SWLLN covers, as shown in Figure 1.1, the south of the South West Region (Cornwall, Devon, South Somerset, Dorset and South Wiltshire) in partnership with HEIs, FECs and other key organisations and partnerships (as per Appendix 1 of the SWLLN Business Plan) to develop new progression opportunities for vocational learners with focus on the priority region's sectors, including Small Businesses, Public Services, Heritage, Tourism, Retail and Hospitality.



**Figure 1.1** Geographical area covered by the SWLLN  
(UK map 2006; Conferences: UK 2006)

This report, the first in a series from the SWLLN, provides:

1. A succinct and analytical profile of the South West England region in a way that can be related to the objectives and priorities set out in the SWLLN Business Plan;
2. Current situation of vocational training and education in the region;
3. Activity Monitoring – from August 2006 to January 2007.

## 2. South West Region Profile in Terms of SWLLN Context

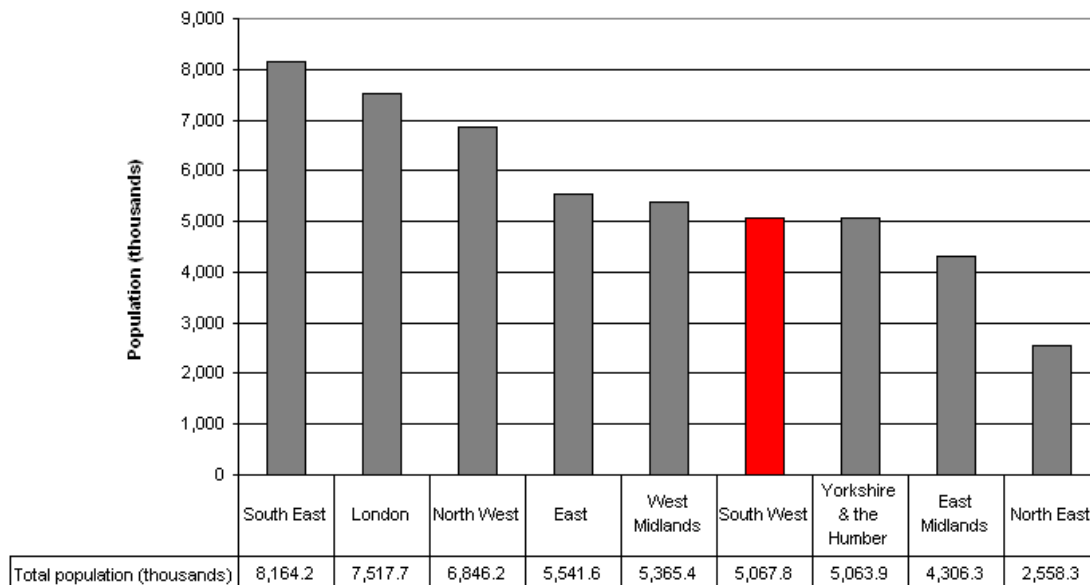
According to the report published by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (2004) the South West is the largest region in England (23,829 square kilometres), accounting for 15% of the total land area and, at the same time, one of the regions with the lowest overall population which has seen the biggest increase in the last 20 years. (South West Learning and Skills Module 2006). In mid-2004 the South West of England was home to 5 million people (National Statistics 2006), equivalent to 8.6%

of Britain's population (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006a). But the paradox is that over the past 20 years, the South West has seen the greatest population increase in England (Homelesspages 2004).

Generally speaking, people enjoy the highest quality of life of any English region. To be explicit, and thus to illustrate this point:

- according to the South West of England Regional Development Agency (2005) the region's counties are consistently ranked amongst the best places to live in the UK with low incidence of crime (State of the South West 2006);
- the region has high employment rate and good education opportunities (State of the South West 2006);
- the South West has the mildest climate in the UK, an attractive landscape with over 1000 kilometres of coastline and over a third of the region designated as National Park, which makes the region an important destination for tourists (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2005) and leads second-home buyers to the South West (Homelesspages 2004) rather than other warm-weather spots.

A graphical illustration of the total population in the English regions can be seen below in Figure 2.1 (South West Observatory 2006).



**Figure 2.1** Population in the English regions mid – 2005  
(South West Observatory 2006)

The purpose of this chapter is to promote an understanding of the situation in the South West in terms of participation and progression opportunities for potential vocational learners.

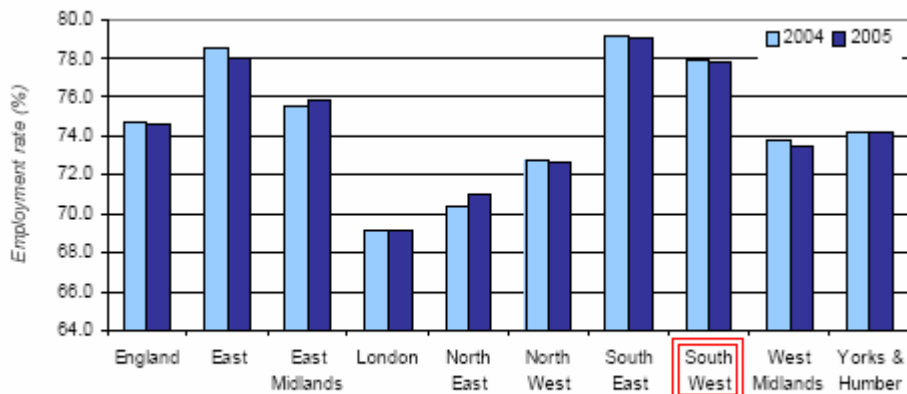
## 2.1 South West regional population characteristics and trends

Clearly the population and labour market characteristics of the region are important to gathering the information needed to study the region's LLN target groups of new learners (economically active young people and adults) wishing to make career improvements.

According to the South West of England Regional Development Agency (2006b) the region will continue to experience a high rate of population growth compared to

England, resulting in 6 million people living in the region by 2028. It is important to note that the region's population growth is entirely due to net inward migration from elsewhere in the UK (from the South East and London particularly) and has one of the smallest proportions of ethnic minority populations of all the English regions (State of the South West 2006). The South West is also a popular retirement destination, however it is now well accepted that about 65% of people who move to the South West are of working age (South West Learning and Skills Module 2006).

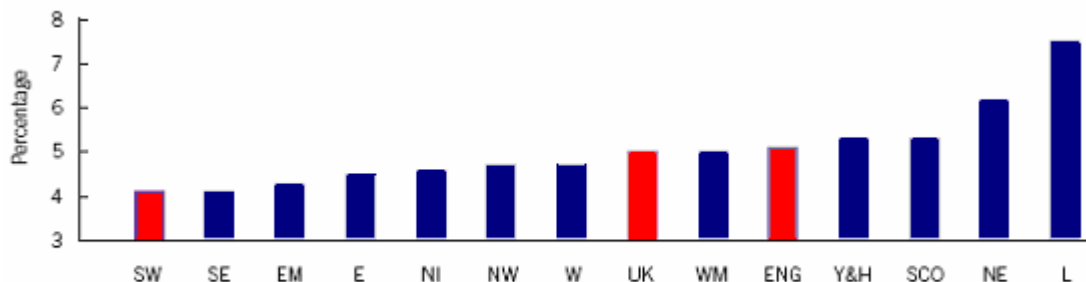
The State of the South West 2006 (2006) has shown that people of working age constituted 60% of the region's residents in 2004 (compared to 62% for England). Employment rates for working age people in the South West region (2004 and 2005) in comparison to the other English regions are illustrated in Figure 2.2 (South West Learning and Skills Module 2006a).



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, NOMIS data service, 2006

**Figure 2.2** Working age employment rate by region, 2004 & 2005

Moreover, the Labour Force Survey for March to May 2006 (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006c) showed that the South West England employment (proportion of the working age population in employment) and unemployment (proportion of economically active people seeking work) rates are still amongst the best in the United Kingdom. The employment rate for people of working age is the second highest in the UK (78.0% versus a national average of 74.6%) and the regional unemployment rate, as shown in Figure 2.3, is still the lowest (3.8% compared with 5.4% nationally).

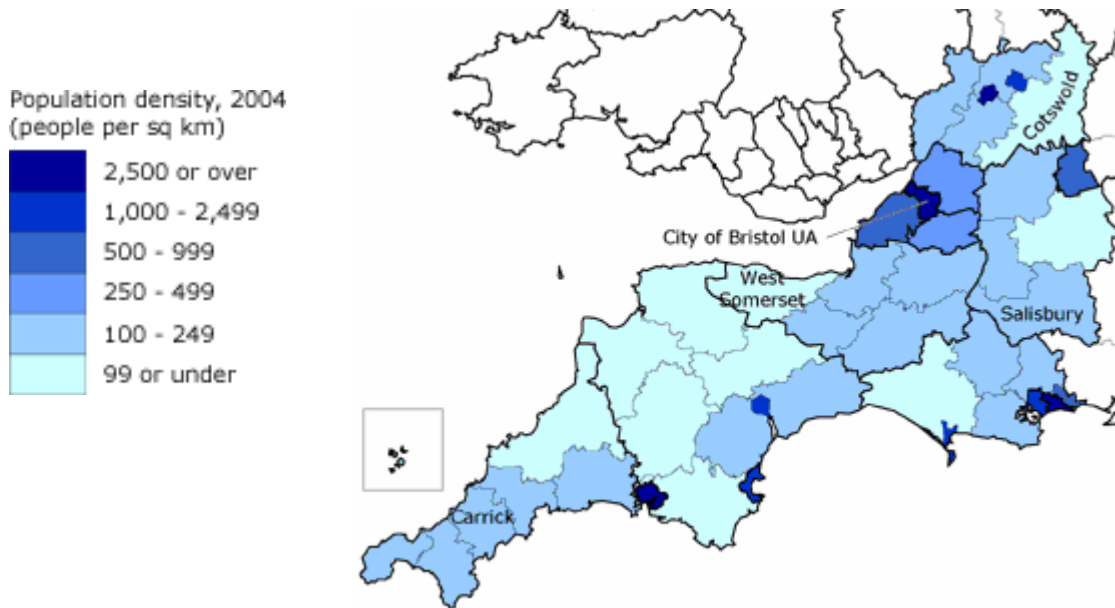


Source ONS, Labour Market Statistics 2006

**Figure 2.3** Regional rates of unemployment working age (October – December 2005)

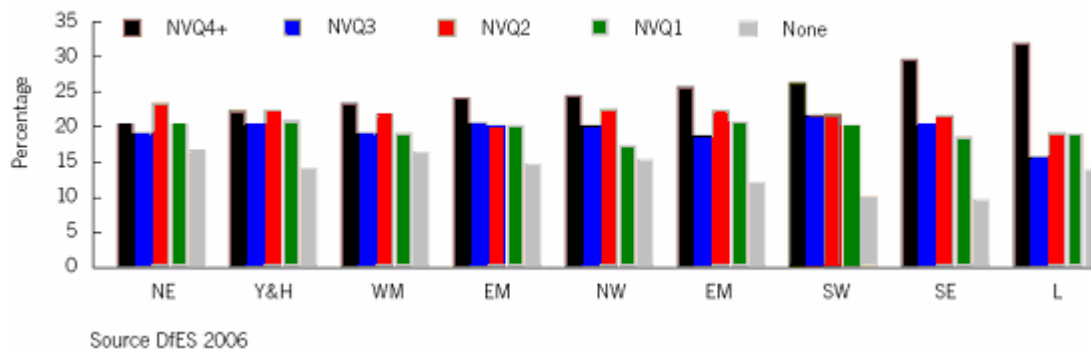
Moreover, in analysing 'Local area labour markets' (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006c), which provides labour indicators by local authority, it is necessary to remember that South West England has the narrowest (3.3%) spread of unemployment rates (from 2.1% in Purbeck to 5.4% in Plymouth). In addition, the region has a higher than average employment rate for people who are over 50.

80% of the South West residents lived in towns or cities at the time of the 2001 Census (The State of the South West 2006). However low population density (in fact, the least of all the English regions) and the high percentage of people living in rural areas make the South West the most 'rural' region in England. This dispersed population has clear implications for the SWLLN in terms of access to a range of services, including transport, education etc. This paper refers to the results of the "South West population density: by local or unitary authority, 2004", published on 23 May 2006 (National Statistics 2006). As shown in Figure 2.4 population density varies considerably across the region: from Bournemouth with the highest population density (3540 people per sq km) to West Devon with the lowest population density (40 people per sq km).



**Figure 2.4** South West population density: by local or unitary authority, 2004 (National Statistics 2006)

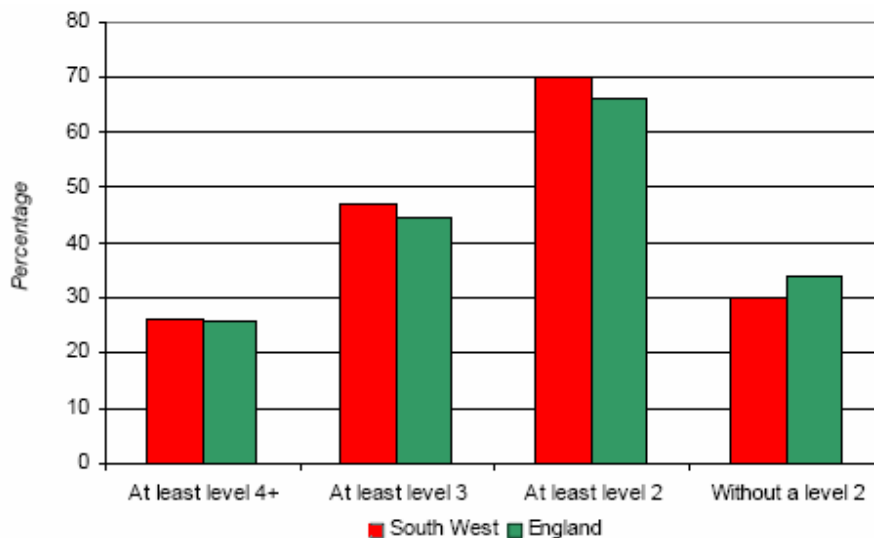
What is often forgotten is that the South West contains one of Europe's highest qualified workforces – 27% of residents in the region (which is one of the highest proportions in the UK) are qualified to degree level or above (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2005; South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006d). The proportion of adults with National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level is illustrated in Figure 2.5 (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006e).



**Figure 2.5** Education rates (2004) (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006e)

As can be seen clearly, the most striking feature of the graphs in Figure 2.5 is the fact that South West England has the third highest proportion of population with NVQ4 or higher, the highest rate with NVQ3 and the second lowest proportion of persons with no qualifications (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006e).

Similar conclusion can be made from the comparison of qualifications of the adult population of the region and national average (Figure 2.6). But the high percentage of people with Level 2 or lower as illustrated above has clear implications for the SWLLN.



Source: APS, ONS, NOMIS data service 2006

**Figure 2.6** Qualifications of the adult population, South West and England, 2004  
(South West Learning and Skills Module 2006)

In addition, it should be noted that recent study shows a very high level of participation in training and vocational learning amongst people across the region. According to South West Learning and Skills Module (2006) the level of participation in education or work-based learning for 16 and 17 years old in the region is in line with the national average and in learning by adults – the second highest level amongst the English regions.

It's important to understand that the picture is not quite so rosy:

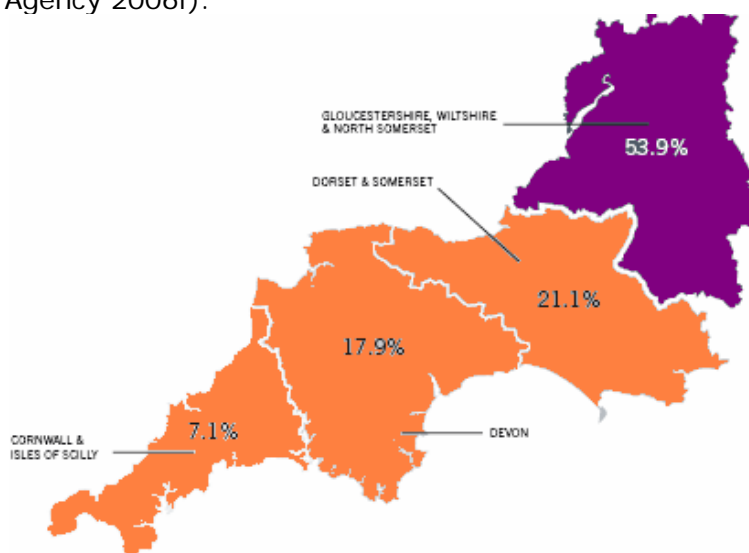
- The South West still remains a net exporter of potentially skilled and educated young people aged 16 to 24 (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2001);
- The productivity of the region is lower than one would expect if one were to judge from the region's highly qualified workforce (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006a);
- The rapid growth of the ageing population in the region will affect the patterns of demand for goods and services and employment (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006f).

However, despite these evident limitations, or because of them, the SWLLN has a great potential in supporting the Joint Progression Strategy to promote progression to higher education for higher level skills work-based and vocational learners and meeting the requirements of different industries should not be a problem for the region.

## 2.2 South West regional economic profile

Together with the population profile of the region comes the South West economy has tended to perform slightly better than the UK average, particularly in certain sectors.

The South West provides a highly strategic business location that is relatively strong in terms of output and employment growth. It is important to note, however, that the region has a strong disparity in terms of contribution to regional Gross Value Added (Local area GVA is calculated as the sum of income earned from the production of goods and services within an area). The sub-regional share of Gross Value Added within the South West is illustrated in Figure 2.7 (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006f).



**Figure 2.7** Sub-regional share of the South West GVA, 2003  
(South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006f)

As can be seen from the Figure 2.7, in 2003 the Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and North Somerset sub-region (that is almost equal to the area covered by the Western Vocational LLN) contributed 53.9% of regional GVA, whereas Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset, which is the SWLLN area, all together contributed the lower percentage of 46.1%. It should be pointed out that comparison of these percentages reflects also relative workforce productivity.

Employment in different regional activities compared with the UK average is shown in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1** Employment by broad industrial group (2004/05)  
(South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006f)

| Employment stock | Great Britain, % | South West England, % |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Agriculture      | 1.3              | 1.9                   |
| Production       | 14.5             | 14.3                  |
| Distribution     | 26.5             | 27.3                  |
| Public Sector    | 28.3             | 28.8                  |

As can be seen from the table, the differences are largely insignificant.

It is important to note that South West England has the highest proportion of small business (0-49 employees) of any region in the UK and the lowest proportion of firms classified as medium-sized enterprises (50-249 employees). Tourism business, for example, typically is smaller than those in other sectors. In fact, 76.7% of the region's enterprises employ 0-4 people compared with 75.3% nationally (Portrait of the Regions 2005).

According to the South West of England Regional Development Agency (South West RDA) there are eight priority sectors (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006g), which are crucial for increasing economic growth in the region:

1. Advanced Engineering (includes Aerospace)
2. Food and drink
3. ICT
4. Leisure and tourism
5. Marine
6. Bio-Medical and Healthcare
7. Creative industries
8. Environmental technologies

The SWLLN will develop opportunities for vocational learners by improving the relatively weak activities as well as enhancing the relatively strong activities at least in two of these sectors:

1. Public services (Health, Social care, Local Government, Fire Services, Police and those working in Museums, Galleries and Archives)
2. Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality and associated small business.

In fact, the SWLLN sector focus (in terms of potential employment and career development) is quite understandable:

- according to the South West RDA Economics Review (South West of England Regional Development Agency 2006c) public sector employment has grown steadily over the last three years at about 3% per year (twice the average rate) and added over 50,000 new jobs;
- the region is Britain's leading holiday destination and tourism is one of the largest industries in the South West.

In conclusion it can be noted that the South West has enormous potential to take advantage of the workplace progression into and through higher education for vocational learners in the identified sectors.

### **3. Current Situation of Vocational Training and Education in the Region**

#### **3.1 Information, advice, guidance and support**

Vocational information, advice and guidance (IAG) in the SWLLN area is provided by a range of organisations as well as by providers of education; structures for provision of IAG vary widely across the 5 counties in SWLLN and can appear fragmented and incoherent to potential learners and those advising them.

There is no single source relating to vocational opportunities in HE. IAG for younger learners moving from school to HE is more consistent and more readily available than IAG for vocational learners and people aged over 20. In the SWLLN area thousands of students are already studying vocational HE within FE colleges, but the vast majority have been recruited as full time students and internal college structures for IAG have largely been developed to meet the needs of this client group. In national surveys,

many adults say their main source of IAG about learning and career development opportunities is the workplace.

Workplace IAG structures vary across the area, with Cornwall, Devon and South Wiltshire being ahead, due to having been Employer Training Pilot areas since 2004 and pathfinder Train to Gain areas since April 06 (Learning and Skills Council 2006) as have Somerset and Dorset. Links between IAG providers and the growing network of trades union learning representatives have been growing over the last 4 years.

In the SWLLN area there are over 100 organisations that have the matrix quality standard for advice, including almost all the FE and HE SWLLN network members, but the matrix award often only relates to a part of the institution, not necessarily that with which a potential vocational learner interfaces.

### **3.1.1 Information provision**

Information about learning opportunities, entry requirements, qualifications, labour market information and careers is plentiful but is atomised, incomplete, formats are inconsistent. Often it is not in a context so remains information without sufficient mediation to become knowledge. Much of it is only useable by those already on a learning journey.

Aimhigher has supported production of a number of well used careers information resources for potential vocational learners, targeted at younger people (Watton and Collings 2006). For potential adult learners it can be hard to gain access to these resources.

"It seems like you have to know what you are looking for before you look for it" (Adult learner in Dorset).

"People have to dig for information and advice and it is not where they expect to find it" (Adviser in Somerset).

Information about funding for learning and overcoming other barriers to participation such as disability and childcare is generally well publicised by providers but can be very complex.

Information about career opportunities in the SWLLN three focus sectors is variable, in part because the Public Sector is very large and diffuse with several sector skills councils. A recent review (Sector Skills Council 2006) of the role of SSCs in IAG has indicated that they are at various stages of service development and mainly focus on providing labour market information and offer training to advisers in its use.

### **3.1.2 Publicly funded advice services**

Public resources are focussed on people below level 2 or already at University. There is an inconsistent pattern of services for people with level 3 qualifications but this is generally recognised as being the key gap for face to face services, with many adult learners being referred to the national 'learn direct' advice line which is less constrained by eligibility criteria.

The Open University offers free outreach IAG services across the South West for adults wanting to enter learning, but resources are limited. Young people can access advice via Connexions but for people aged 20+ (which includes SWLLN target groups), free services vary across the area and change frequently with funding regimes. Services are therefore fragmented and not readily available at the point at which individuals feel the need to contact them.

Learning providers are the most substantial providers of IAG services. Within education institutions structures vary and there is a wide range of staff involved in providing advice. Part time learners are least likely to interact with IAG services apart from at pre-course advice and enrolment points. In the SWLLN area, many front-line staff in FE have received IAG accredited training over the last 5 years as part of the drive for quality improvement led by LSC funding and Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspection. Significant numbers still remain untrained. Impartiality in advice giving remains an issue for some institutions and advisers, as is referral to other learning providers.

### **3.1.3 Guidance services**

There is very limited availability of publicly funded guidance for people outside full time education. Access to careers education and guidance for HE learners in FE is variable. Some SWLLN FE institutions provide access for all their learners to their guidance services, regardless of age or status.

Some free services, such as Skills Coaching, are available for Job Centre clients or for people in specific "social exclusion" target groups in certain areas within SWLLN, and contracted out to a range of specialist suppliers.

The Learndirect national telephone guidance pilot has attracted 70, 0000 clients in 2006 (SWLLN area figures cannot yet easily be disaggregated from data). Commercial career counselling and guidance services are not widely available, are unregulated though some hold the matrix standard, and are usually expensive for individuals but used extensively by employers.

### **3.1.4 Learning skills support**

Several providers within the SWLLN area have separately developed diagnostic and support materials that are only available to a limited audience. Development of the PdP process has also been subject to institutional discretion, and many different models are in operation. The capacity of the e/portfolio to support career planning and to facilitate credit transfer and tracking has not been widely exploited.

For non-traditional entrants, providers have identified the need to provide bridging programmes as well as learning skills support pre course, on course and for progression. Some resources have been produced and could be more widely shared and be made directly available to the (potential) learner. There are some mentoring and support schemes for workbased learners in place, for example through trades unions, and good practice in this area could be further supported and shared.

In summary whatever the levels of provision the overall picture is of a range of dispersed services of varying quality and accessibility.

## **3.2 Vocational curriculum development and vocational practice development**

The aim of the SWLLN is to develop flexible programmes that will be designed to meet the needs of new, non-traditional HE learners who are either:

- unemployed or in vocational training and who aspire to employment in the public services, heritage, tourism, retail and hospitality;
- currently employed in the above sectors and who wish to upgrade their skills and knowledge for career progression.

The public services in this context embraces the Uniformed Public Services (Fire, Police and Emergency Services); Local Government (including Public Museums, Galleries, Libraries and Archives); Health and Social Care, and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Activities across the area of Public services will build upon the outcomes achieved by the Accessing Higher Education (AcHE) Project (sponsored by the Universities of Plymouth and Bournemouth, and co-funded by the European Social Fund) that has brought together staff from affiliated Colleges and representatives of employers in the Justice Sector (facilitated by Foundation Degree Forward and the Skills for Justice Skills Council), the Health Sector, and the Voluntary and Community Sector. It has also established an extensive network of local public authorities (in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset) and regional agencies (particularly in the Justice Sector).

Heritage Services includes a range of programmes linked to archaeology, geology, heritage conservation but the initial focus of the SWLLN is on the work undertaken by libraries, museums archives. Libraries provide individuals and communities with access to information, ideas and experiences through a wide range of media for personal, professional and community development. Museums and archives largely focus on the acquisition and preservation of the histories of communities and in developing strategies for enabling communities to access those histories in a number of ways.

Closely aligned to this provision is the tourist industry and the importance that this has for our heritage services cannot be underestimated. The South West has a unique and diverse heritage. There are a number of fascinating historic houses, beautiful gardens, intriguing castles and a rich and varied literary and industrial heritage. In addition there are many ancient sites in the Region including the UNESCO World Heritage sites of the Jurassic Coast, Bath and Stonehenge.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council developed a Workforce Development Strategy in collaboration with the professional associations, Regional Agencies, Devolved Administrations, central government and the Sector Skills Councils. It identifies a range of actions designed to enhance and support the sector's workforce. Its aim is to enable museums, libraries and archives to become learning organisations which develop a motivated, appropriately skilled, diverse and outward-looking workforce capable of delivering high-quality services and information to all users.

The sector has an ambitious and essential vision for change. In order to realise this vision it needs to recruit and develop a diverse, appropriately skilled workforce. Employers need to invest in skills development to enable them to deliver the modernising agenda for the sector. Individuals need the opportunity to acquire skills that will enable them to further their career in an employment market that is constantly changing.

As the SWLLN business plan identifies Further Education Colleges as the deliverers of any newly created Foundation Degree potential providers need to be identified during the next stage of the plan. The plan also states that the current HEI/FEC relationships are to be respected; therefore developments need to be considered in terms of a Western and Eastern region, with strategies responsive to the nature of the partnerships currently operating within these sub-regions.

### **3.3 Progression framework**

Some transferable credit and progression agreements already exist between HEIs in the South West and these will form the basis for further development across the SWLLN region and contribute to the SWLLN credit framework.

Historically credit transfer arrangements, of major importance to ensure seamless, transfer/progression for the learners within the SWLLN area, have been difficult to negotiate across the HE Sector hence the focus on developing this area when the SWLLN business plan was put together. Key factors for success therefore include:

- the willingness of HEIs to make it work – which exists in the SSW – and this will be demonstrated through the inter-institutional agreements which will be signed for the SWLLN;
- the opportunity to design new programmes and review existing programmes so that they map on to more than one progression route for learners.

Certain mapping of vocational progression pathways and work based learning routes has been explored with Sector Skills Councils, Schools and employers through Aimhigher Partnerships. However, this work has been largely focussed on the identification of school curricula, raising awareness and aspirations for pathways to careers in identified areas. In seeking to build on previous experience and on achievements to date the SWLLN proposes to take a realistic view of what can be achieved within the constraints of timeframe and resources. A credit structure 'shell', based on a currency of twenty credit units, is already under development and will be tested for 'fit' across the SWLLN partners (and may have some relevance for the proposed Shell Framework under development as part of the Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Pilot Project). A demonstrator pilot for an information and library management pathway is being developed.

#### *Broad Public Services Sector*

Provision for this sector is more developed than the others as it builds on the work of recent initiatives. A suite of foundation degrees in various Public Services (local government, justice, uniformed services, etc.) were jointly validated by University of Plymouth and Bournemouth University in 2006, all with progression opportunities to Level H. Formal mapping of all provision and progression across the SWLLN region for these broad Public Services is underway and will be completed by the end of April 2007.

#### *Tourism, Heritage and Associated Small Businesses Sector*

Within this sector, there has been an initial focus on Museums, Libraries and Archives. A detailed mapping report will be completed in March 2007 outlining the needs of all groups, the current level of provision (anticipated to be relatively scant) and progression opportunities currently available and identifying the gaps.

There are various pockets of provision and progression across the region which meets the needs of services coming under the heading of Heritage and Tourism. A similar mapping exercise has commenced for these groups.

It is anticipated that the mapping referred to above will be completed by the end of March 2007.

The SWLLN will work on achieving the above in an achievable and sustainable way by demonstrating opportunities for alternative progression, using clear developmental routes for learners identified through HE provision (as it relates to key employment sectors). Successfully demonstrating that progression agreements can work will be key to securing "buy in" by academic staff in the longer term.

Existing arrangements, whilst expanding opportunities for some learners and providing examples of good practice, can be further extended to provide accessible, seamless and equitable progression for vocational learners in the S.W. This will need to be linked to an enhanced information, advice, guidance and learner support service being developed through the relevant strand of the SWLLN.

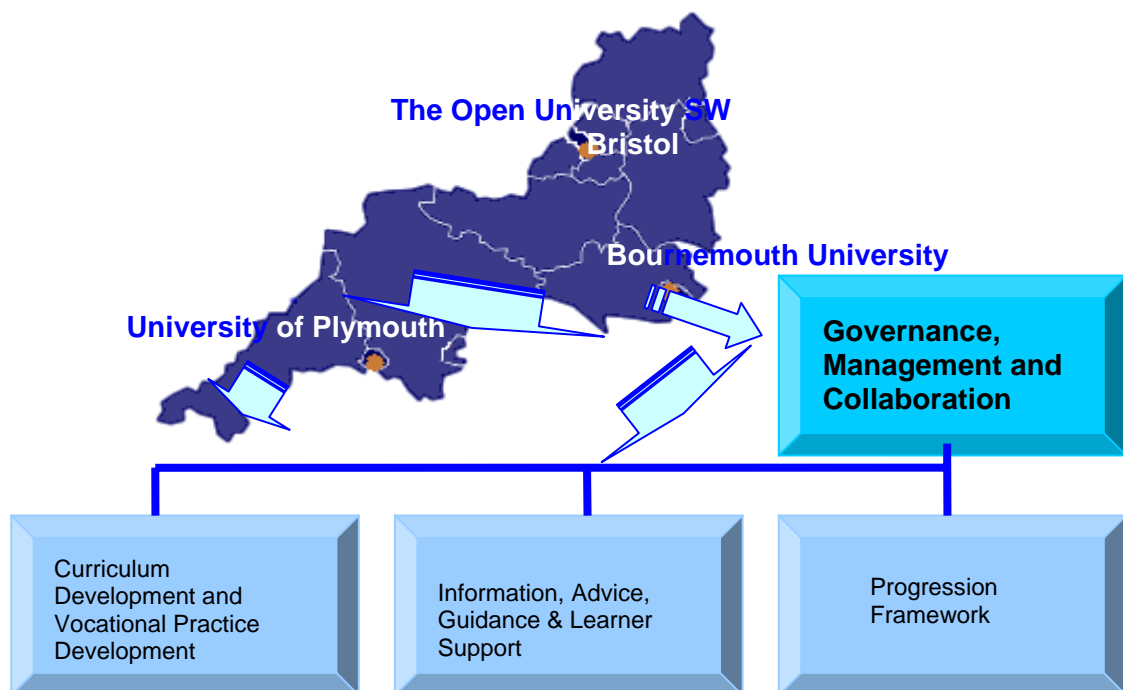
Two levels of activity are proposed which will be demonstrated through the SWLLN Progression Framework:

1. Credit and transferability of credit acquired through formal learning through Progression Agreements.
2. Credit for learning outside formal teaching acquired through experience and work based learning through AP(E)L and Progression Agreements.

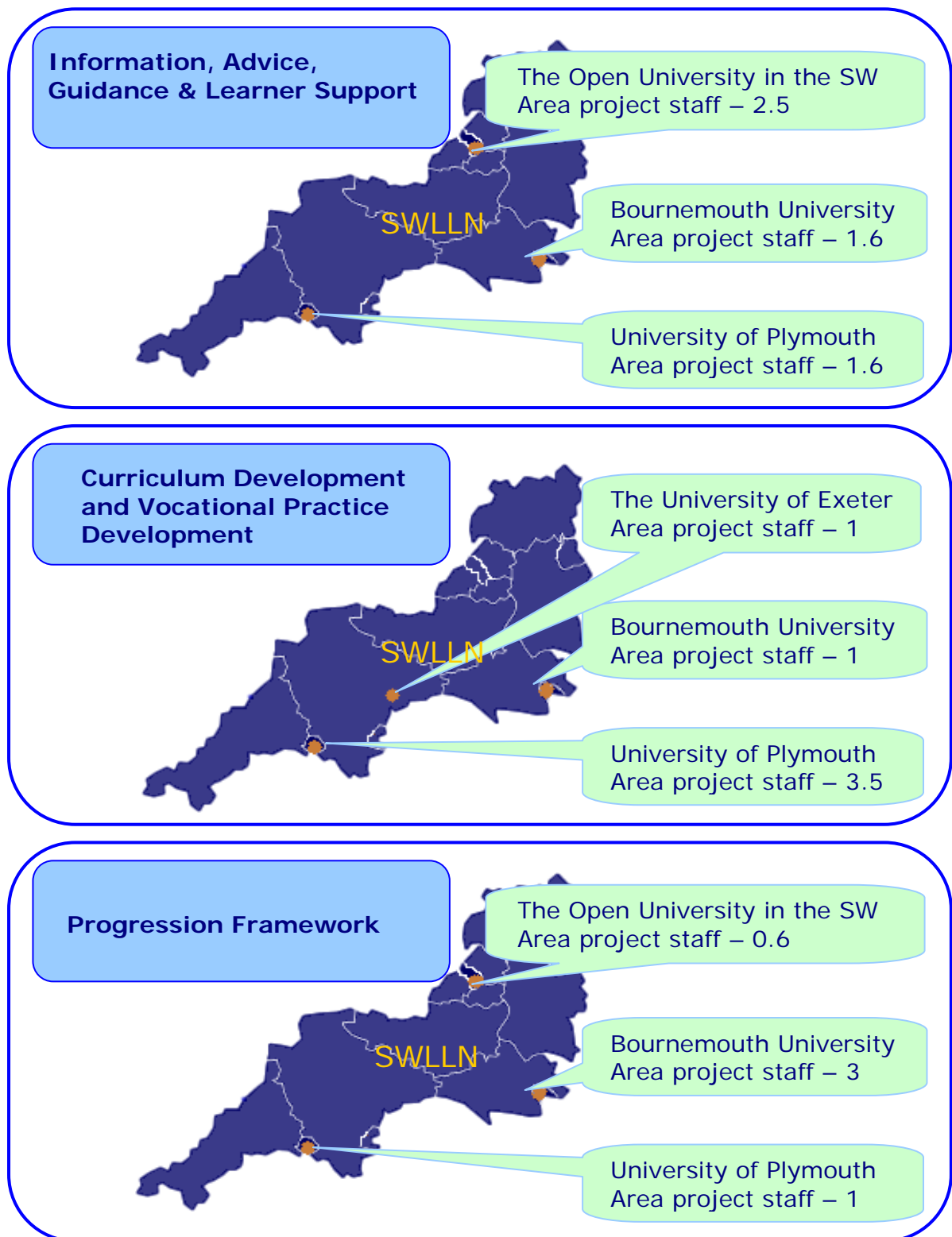
These areas of activity will be integrated into the developments of curriculum frameworks.

#### 4. Activity Monitoring – from August 2006 to January 2007

Since the launch of the SWLLN, appointments have been made and the three Strand Working Groups established and are represented in schematic form below (Figures 4.1; 4.2 and Table 4.1)



**Figure 4.1** SWLLN Task Groups



**Figure 4.2** SWLLN Task Group staffing  
(Structure and number of full-time equivalents)

#### 4.1 Management, Governance & Collaboration

| Strand title  | Activities indicators  | Progress report  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Management, Governance &amp; Collaboration</b><br><br><b>Aug 06 – Jan 07</b> | Established SWLLN Strategy Board and confirmed Chair and membership/electronic mail base established                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategy Board established and first meeting held following the launch of the SWLLN on 12/9/06.</li> <li>▪ Electronic mail base established.</li> <li>▪ Membership confirmed and Chair appointed (Professor M McNair from the University of Exeter).</li> <li>▪ Interim meeting scheduled for 31/01/07 to take receipt of first monitoring report.</li> </ul> |
|   | Establish SWLLN Management board confirmed Chair and membership/electronic mail base established and hold a minimum of 3 meetings        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Management Group established, membership confirmed, Chair appointed (SWLLN Co-ordinator).</li> <li>▪ Electronic mail base established.</li> <li>▪ Two meetings held to date. (additional meetings to those scheduled are being arranged as necessary to support emerging activity).</li> </ul>  |
|   | Financial management protocols and phased funding plan confirmed   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial management protocols in place in broad outline, some fine tuning taking place to ensure robust practice adopted for re-deployment of any under spends.</li> <li>▪ Phased funding plans in place, claims procedure in place.</li> </ul>  |
|   | Overseen establishment of area based Management groups and Strand Groups ensured cross cutting themes are addressed                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ East and West Area Management groups in place, membership secured, first meetings held prior to December.</li> <li>▪ Strand Groups in place following appointment of Strand Leaders and project staff. Cross cutting membership to ensure coherence across the three strands and understanding of developments.</li> </ul>                                    |
|   | Reporting structures established   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Structures in place, some detail still to be confirmed.</li> </ul>  |
|   | Co-ordinate monitoring, evaluation and reporting structures and reports to HEFCE for Year 1 and amend plans for Years 2 & 3 as necessary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First monitoring report completed, further development on base line data for future monitoring and evaluation underway.</li> </ul>  |
|   | Prepare draft Communications and Marketing Strategy for consideration by Management Group  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communications Officer in post, draft strategy written, currently in consultation process for endorsement of strategy.</li> </ul>   |
|   | Organise 3 staff development events following recommendation from Management Group   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Induction event held in December for all SWLLN staff.</li> </ul>  |
|   | Populate website in liaison with website manager   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Website up and running, populated on an ongoing basis by the Communications Officer and Website Manager <a href="http://www.swlln.ac.uk">www.swlln.ac.uk</a></li> </ul>   |

## 4.2 Information, Advice, Guidance & Learner Support

| Strand title   | Activities indicators   | Progress report   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Information, Advice, Guidance &amp; Learner Support</b><br><br><b>Aug 06 – Jan 07</b> | Recruit, locate and induct LLN project staff  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completed Dec 06.</li> <li>▪ Recognised need to adjust staffing to allow for more short term staffing appointments for specific activities later.</li> <li>▪ 5 staff recruited, appointed, located and staff inducted.</li> </ul>  |
|  | Scope the location, range and mode of IAG, careers provision and related projects in the LLN area, identifying gaps and inequalities in provision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advisory group membership expanded to facilitate contacts and networking for scoping.</li> <li>▪ Agreed best way to achieve results from the scoping exercise with team members.</li> <li>▪ Planned ways to survey learner experience of IAG.</li> <li>▪ Solution to scoping in Somerset found.</li> <li>▪ Examples of good IAGLS practice sought from within partnership.</li> <li>▪ Audit of existing self-help IAG information resources (prospectuses, websites etc) for the focus sectors locations and target clients underway.</li> </ul>   |
|  | Identify 2 existing work-based IAG initiatives for collaboration and establish boundaries for provision (to include Aimhigher)                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commenced.</li> <li>▪ 4 Staff co-located with Aim Higher staff; 2 staff formerly with nextstep. Exploration of common areas and boundaries with Aimhigher commenced.</li> <li>▪ Discussions opened with training providers nextstep workplace delivery projects and workhigher.</li> </ul>   |
|  | Commence development of hubs, building on current FE/HE provision   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research to identify potential pilot locations.</li> <li>▪ Capacity building model (rather than direct delivery model) for hubs agreed.</li> <li>▪ Definition of "hub" activity explored with IAG team and criteria for selection established.</li> </ul>  |
|  | Define the IAG+S 'offer' in terms of the range of services provided, with associated headline standards for delivery                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Services to hubs</b> will include providing funding and consultancy support to building their capacity re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Information</i> about vocational HE provision and pathways;</li> <li><i>Processes</i> that affect the learner e.g. signposting, referral, admissions, credit transfer and APEL;</li> <li><i>Skills</i> – impartial advice giving;</li> <li><i>Learner support</i> – transition from vocational level 3 and access of non-standard adult learners; use of pdp/e-portfolio for portability;</li> <li><i>Continuous Quality Improvement</i> –how to bring about change in IAG within Institution's existing quality improvement systems.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <b>The offer to wider SWLLN network</b> members will include input to staff updating, access to materials via the SWLLN website and an improved signposting and referral service for potential learners.</li> <li>▪ <b>The offer to potential learners</b> will include guides to empower them in navigating the through the "maze".</li> </ul> |
|  | Design and pilot the staff training programme within the 'hubs'   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contact with 2 pathfinder LLNs and nextstep for model of a suitable TNA to be used across a range of IAGLS roles.</li> <li>▪ Identified training competence within IAGLS staff team.</li> <li>▪ Training content and dates to tie in with training delivery of progression and CVDPU strands.</li> </ul>   |
|  |   |   |

### 4.3 Curriculum Development and Vocational Practice Development

| Strand title  | Activities indicators   | Progress report   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Curriculum Development and Vocational Practice Development</b><br><br><b>Aug 06 – Jan 07</b> | Recruit and locate development staff  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completed Dec 06.</li> <li>▪ Staff appointed, inducted and located (Appointments: BU, UoP and UoE).</li> </ul>   |
|   | Work with providers and employers to scope development of new provision                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Employer Engagement</b><br/> <i>Public Services:</i> 90 Senior Management Interviews and a Focus Group conducted;<br/> <i>Tourism and Hospitality, and Heritage:</i> Preparation for an employer's forum.</li> <li>▪ <b>CFE engagement</b><br/> <i>Public Services:</i> Foundation Degrees in Public Services established in 15 institutions in the SW. Existing provision has been mapped.</li> <li>▪ <i>Tourism and Hospitality, and Heritage:</i> Communications with affiliated CFEs has begun. Existing provision being mapped.</li> </ul> |
|   | Develop communities of academic practitioners drawn from target sectors to drive forward priorities of work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public Services: An academic community exists within the UoP network of CFEs (Public Services Subject Forum under HELP CETL).<br/> <i>Tourism and Hospitality, and Heritage:</i> Members of appropriate academic practitioners being identified.</li> </ul>  |
|   | Identify existing provision and progression routes  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public Services: Established network of Foundation Degrees approved by BU and UoP, all with a designated progression route and cross-institutional progression agreements are in place.</li> <li>▪ <i>Tourism and Hospitality, and Heritage:</i> Currently being mapped.</li> </ul>  |

#### 4.4 Progression Framework

| Strand title   | Activities indicators  | Progress report   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Progression Framework</b><br><br><b>Aug 06 – Jan 07</b> | Recruit and locate progression framework staff   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completed Dec 06 bar UoP post (secondment to post be confirmed January 2007). Agreement that some Project Worker roles will cover both curriculum and progression.</li> </ul>  |
|  | Confirm 2 demonstrator pilot sectors and confirm partner participants<br><br>Design and test credit framework model in 2 agreed sectors and with participating providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 demonstrator pilot sectors are:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public services: broad public services;</li> <li>- Tourism/heritage, museums, libraries and archives.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Development of undergraduate credit model underway.</li> <li>▪ First formal consultative event to take place 31.01.07 to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share proposed credit model;</li> <li>- Confirm partner providers and (re)convene task group.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
|  | Identify existing credit progression in selected areas and identify groups for development<br><br>Identify areas for 'roll out' of demonstrators in Year 2               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mapping of provision, progression and need underway in two identified areas:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- broad public services: local government, uniformed services, armed forces, justice services;</li> <li>- Local authority information, library and archive services.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Mapping also commenced for heritage and tourism, and education (potential Year 2 demonstrator areas).</li> <li>▪ Engaging with Sector Skills Council and professional body:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK);</li> <li>- Museums, Libraries and Archives South West (MLA SW);</li> <li>- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP).</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Advisory Group set up including LLUK and other professional bodies.</li> <li>▪ Institutional contacts for credit/progression identified at main SWLLN HEIs.</li> <li>▪ Surveys of main partners re: existing AP(E)L, credit transfer processes and progression agreements underway.</li> </ul> |
|  | Ensure coherence in development with Curriculum Framework and IAG Task Groups across the SWLLN area  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Curriculum and progression work integrated through project worker roles.</li> <li>▪ Agreement that Strand Leaders attend (or deputise) meetings of other Strands.</li> </ul>   |

## 5. Key achievements and challenges

| Strand title  | Key achievements against the SWLLN strategic objectives   | Challenges   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Information, Advice, Guidance &amp; Learner Support</b>        | <p>Full staff team in place, dedicated to IAG strand and forging cross strand links</p> <p>Good networks being established to ensure coherence with existing providers and opportunities for joint developments</p> <p>Scoping, gap analysis and hub service definition under way</p>   | <p>East and West areas of SWLLN are at different stages of IAGLS infrastructure development which will be addressed in the next 6 months.</p> <p>Employer engagement strategy for the target sectors to be co-ordinated with other strands.</p> <p>National IAG review recommendations not yet known causing uncertainty in the external environment</p>   |
| <b>Progression Framework</b>                                      | <p>A strong team of skilled, experienced staff has been appointed enabling some integration of curriculum and progression work areas.</p> <p>Provision, progression and need mapping across different sectors is well underway and builds on previous work.</p> <p>Relationships have been enhanced and networks developed with learning providers, employers, SSCs and other agencies in the target sectors</p>  | <p>Recruitment completed by October/November 2006 resulting in challenging timescales which are largely being addressed.</p> <p>Coordinating activities and approaches across a large region with historical boundary points</p>   |
| <b>Curriculum Development and Vocational Practice Development</b> | <p>The identification of the competencies required at various levels of employment, particularly in the public sector, differentiated by sub-sector, which is a precondition for the conduct of an audit of the scope and capacity of current professional development activity in the region that target the development of those competencies in young people seeking or in employment in the Public Services and Heritage and Tourism sectors.</p> <p>The establishment of links with employers, particularly in the public sector, which is a precondition for ascertaining their perceptions of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the value placed on vocational higher education as a pre-employment qualification;</li> <li>▪ their need for vocational higher education as a vehicle for developing the competencies of their staff;</li> <li>▪ the mode of learning delivery that would best meet their organizational and staff development needs;</li> </ul> <p>their demand (willingness to pay) for vocational higher education.</p> | <p>The building of an <i>adequate demand</i> for vocational higher education that prepares full-time students for employment in the Public Services and Heritage and Tourism sectors or gives part-time students opportunities to enhance career prospects in the South West.</p> <p>The building of an <i>effective partnership</i> between employers in the Public Services and Heritage and Tourism sectors and the providers and sponsors of vocational higher education that will support the provision of vocational higher education designed to enhance the public sector employment prospects and career development prospects of people in the South West.</p> |

## 6. Finance and Staffing Numbers

| Financial Monitoring               |                             |                                    |                                  |   |                      |             |                  |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|----------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 6 months ending - 31 January 2007  |                             |                                    |                                  |   |                      |             |                  |
| Strand                             | Allocated funding 2006/07 £ | Virement between/ within strands £ | Revised allocation (B) 2006/07 £ | Anticipated spending (A) 6 m/e 31.01.07 £ | Under/(over) spend £ | % spent A/B | Comments         |
| <b>Governance &amp; Management</b> | 154,292                     | (6,493)                            | 147,799                          | 66,482                                    | 81,317               | 44.98%      | One vacant post. |
| <b>CVPDU</b>                       | 384,000                     | (48,718)                           | 335,282                          | 90,745                                    | 244,537              | 27.07%      |                  |
| <b>IAG&amp;LS</b>                  | 342,000                     | (76,295)                           | 265,705                          | 75,259                                    | 190,446              | 28.32%      |                  |
| <b>Progression Framework</b>       | 210,125                     | (60,114)                           | 150,011                          | 39,011                                    | 111,000              | 26.01%      |                  |
| <b>Development Fund</b>            | 0                           | 191,621                            | 191,621                          | 0   | 191,621              | 0.00%       |                  |
| <b>Total</b>                       | 1,083,542                   | 0                                  | 1,083,542                        | 271,497                                   | 812,045              | 25.06%      |                  |

| Code  | Number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) |                 |                |       |       |
|---|--|-----------------|----------------|-------|-------|
|   | Coordinators/Strand Leaders            | Project workers | Administrative | Other | Total |
| <b>Governance &amp; Management</b>                                  | 1.00                                   | 1.00            | 1.00           |       | 3.00  |
| <b>CVPDU</b>  | 1.00                                   | 3.00            | 1.50           |       | 5.50  |
| <b>IAG&amp;LS</b><br><i>(incl consultancy over life of project)</i> | 1.50<br>0.5                            | 3.20            | 1.00           |       | 5.70  |
| <b>Progression</b>  | 1.00                                   | 1.60            | 1.00           |       | 3.60  |
| <b>Total</b>  | 4.50                                   | 8.80            | 4.50           |       | 17.80 |

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## Appendix 1 - PARTNERS INVOLVED

The partners involved and consulted in the business planning process include:

| Employment sector   | HEIs  | FECs  | Other key organisations and partnerships  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Local Employers throughout the South West through Peninsula and LIFE Partnerships Business Link Business Link Wessex Work Based Learning Training Providers e.g. Paragon ITE Sector Skills Councils* LSC SWMLAC Jurassic Coast Partnerships Local Authorities Voluntary and Charitable Organisations Salisbury NHS foundation Trust | Bournemouth University University of Exeter University of Plymouth The Arts Institute at Bournemouth The Open University SW College of Saint Mark and Saint John University College, Falmouth Dartington College of HE CETLS Screen Academy | Bicton College Bournemouth and Poole College Bridgwater College (incorporating Cannington College) Cornwall College Penwith College East Devon College Exeter College Kingston Maurward College North Devon College Plymouth College of FE Plymouth College of Art & Design Salisbury College Somerset College of Arts and Technology South Devon College Truro College Weymouth College Yeovil College COVEs | The local LSCs in the sub-regions, Learning Partnerships and LSPs HERDA-SW SW RDA Aimhigher Partnerships (SW, LIFE and the Peninsula) The Enterprise Centre at AIB Western Vocational Learning Network Foundation Degree Forward JISC (and PDP4Life) The Higher Education Academy Connexions Learn Direct (Next Steps and Tribal is the provider) Job Centre Plus South West Sector Skills Alliance* Sure Start Partnerships Rural Renaissance Partnerships Market & Coastal Towns initiative Relevant Trade Unions (Regional TUC to be contacted) NIACE OCNSWR GOSW/RSP Voluntary & Community Sectors HEFCE – David Noyce Association of Colleges Chambers of Commerce |

\*The South West Sector Skills Alliance have participated in the preparation of the Business Plan for the LLN and specific Sector Skills Councils have been engaged when the sectoral focus has been determined as part of the detailed business planning process. This consultation was facilitated by GOSW.

Some schools in Cornwall may be involved, where there is no natural FE partner with which to work.