Sustainable Development in London's Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges

Good practice and recommendations for further action

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This report was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Development Agency's (LSDA) London Region during the consultation phase of the Learning and Skills Council's Sustainable Development Strategy in February 2005. The Learning and Skills Network (formerly the Learning and Skills Development Agency) and London Sustainability Exchange led the project, with Nigel Rayment, a specialist in the field.

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Preface

Most of us are now aware of the urgency of addressing issues such as climate change, air pollution, and social justice at a global level. We now have policies in place to start to address these problems. As part of this, the Learning and Skills Council has produced *From Here to Sustainability: the Learning and Skills Council's Strategy for Sustainable Development*, a good starting point for the further education sector to take action.

London, as we know, is different. It is a diverse, densely populated city in which poverty and disadvantage jostle with wealth and privilege. It has an ecological footprint more than twice the size of Great Britain[2]. There are massive regeneration and urban developments planned, for example for the London 2012 Olympics, that will offer unprecedented employment and development opportunities.

This timely study effectively provides us with:

› a London FE and Sixth Form college perspective on translating national policy into practice, with some current examples of good practice

› some barriers that exist to implementation

› recommendations on the way forward, for the variety of organisations involved.

Overall, this report invites us to see sustainable development as a way of improving service delivery, by achieving environmental, social and economic goals simultaneously.

This will require a number of strategies to work well, including cross disciplinary and departmental working, skilling up in what sustainable development means to a college, and allowing time and flexibility for planning and investment.

We welcome the findings and recommendations in this report and look forward to working with partners to deliver change and broadcast our successes in London.

David Hughes

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Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Development Agency's (LSDA) London Region during the consultation phase of the Learning and Skills Council's Sustainable Development Strategy[1] in February 2005. The report's key aims are:

› to explore attitudes to, and raise awareness of, the sustainable development strategy in FE and Sixth Form Colleges in London.

› to highlight and share existing good practice.

› to recommend practical actions to take the strategy forward.

An action research methodology was used, involving 21 out of a possible 49 Sixth Form and FE colleges in London, representing a 43% response rate.

Overall, we find that colleges are willing to engage with sustainable development. They want to contribute to the economic, social and environmental development of their communities. However, the majority of colleges do not yet see sustainable development as 'all embracing'. For example, while there are many examples of good practice, colleges sometimes do not recognise them as contributing to sustainable development. Moreover, many colleges see sustainability as secondary to more urgent matters, such as inspection regimes and funding issues.

The following key recommendations aim to address this, by building skills within Sixth Form and Further Education institutions to achieve an integrated approach to sustainable development:

For Colleges

› Develop a *whole* college understanding and vision for SD. Include staff development at all levels and across all areas of activity, to ensure SD is understood as an adaptive process, rather than the one-off achievement of externally determined and departmentally isolated goals.

› SD should inform all CPD programmes, and training should be incorporated into induction for new staff so the knowledge base is maintained. This would build upon the recent White Paper on Further Education[20].

› Carry out audits of SD in the curriculum. Such an audit would establish the linkages between curriculum areas, optimise learning resources and build institutional knowledge within the staff team. The results of the audit should be shared widely and imaginatively within the college and tied to future targets.

› Create opportunities for informal learning by demonstrating good sustainable development practice.

› Foster linkages at senior and middle management level between those responsible for estates, curriculum and community engagement. Report on SD activity at management meetings and to governors.

› Regularly review and improve college knowledge transfer and communication systems to ensure that key initiatives are widely replicated both within individual colleges and between institutions.

For Stakeholders

› Build upon the Learning and Skills Council strategy and carry out the actions within it.

› Avoid contradictions in implementing and monitoring (for example by inadvertently setting conflicting targets).

> Use accessible terminology when discussing SD and publishing guidance or case studies.

> Consider more creative ways to consult around key policies. For example, by taking the action research approach and timing the publication of policy to fit in with college priorities when possible.

> Develop policies that put a continued emphasis on the rationale and business case for SD.

> Ensure that the curriculum is employer driven; often employers have an understanding of the business case for SD. Sector Skills Councils are beginning to take forward this agenda, and there are further recommendations in a recent report by Forum for the Future: *Skills for Business and Sustainability*[20].

> Embed sustainable development further into the core curriculum (QCA).

> Understand the implications of this work. Inspection frameworks should require the achievement of SD standards, in conjunction with the LSC criteria (OfSTED).

> Incorporate SD into college three-year development plans, once the performance indicators by which these will be assessed have been developed and communicated clearly. This will require a strategic approach to provision of information and communicating links with funding provision (LSC).

> Make available materials and case studies of projects appropriate to the learning and skills sector.

> Establish a support programme, including SD 'suppliers', in a similar way to the Disability Discrimination Act roll-out (DfES).

> Consider allowing time and flexibility in funding streams for colleges to plan to invest strategically for longer-term efficiencies, for example, within new build and refurbishment programmes (LSC).

> Publicise existing centralised purchasing consortia more widely and effectively to colleges, perhaps with the support of London agencies such as London Remade and the Mayor's Green Procurement Code.

> Proactively market support available to colleges for developing green travel plans. Investigate new ways of getting information out and increasing take-up of this support.

> Make available appropriate levels of resources, to eliminate funding as a barrier to innovative application of the strategy.

> Give a higher profile in the sector to the London Sustainable Development Commission and Greater London Authority policies, frameworks and toolkits. Closer cooperation between the Mayor's office and the Learning and Skills Council may help to deliver this.

> Encourage and incentivise, wherever possible, cross-disciplinary working and engagement with the community and local markets, through mechanisms such as Local Strategic Partnerships.

For Sustainable Development Practitioners

> Develop case studies that are replicable, demonstrating their value for moving towards SD in colleges and share good practice widely.

> Use clear, plain English and ensure familiarity with the content, criteria and requirements of LSC, OFSTED and QCA requirements when carrying out training or audits within a college.

> Benchmark specific areas, such as waste management and energy use, in the sector as it is now, and put indicators and targets in place for the future. This would ensure that existing pockets of excellence become more joined up through a more structured application across London.

Introduction

This report was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Development Agency's (LSDA) London Region during the consultation phase of the Learning and Skills Council's Sustainable Development Strategy[1] in February 2005. The report's key aims are:

› to explore attitudes to, and raise awareness of, the sustainable development strategy in FE and Sixth Form Colleges in London

› to highlight and share existing good practice

› to recommend practical actions to take the strategy forward.

The work builds upon the Learning to Last in London network, co-chaired by LSDA London Region and London Sustainability Exchange, which held a series of seminars and meetings during 2003 – 2005. More information on the network and proceedings from the events may be found at www.lsx.org.uk.

From Here to Sustainability: The Learning and Skills Council's Strategy for Sustainable Development[1] was finalised in September 2005, (henceforth known as 'the Strategy') with a vision that:

"the learning and skills sector will proactively commit and contribute to sustainable development through its management of resources, the learning opportunities it delivers and its engagement with communities".

This paper contributes to two of the Strategy's four key actions for positioning the sector as follows:

› **Capacity building**: raise awareness and understanding of the sustainable development (SD) strategy among colleges, learning providers and within the LSC.

› **Baseline audit**: do a baseline audit of SD activity within the sector. Collect appropriate examples of good practice in order to help those colleges and learning providers not already engaged in the SD agenda.

By engaging a diverse steering group and through the individual networks of the project team, we also aimed to contribute to a third:

› **Influence and persuade**: influence and persuade other learning and skills organisations to modify their programmes, frameworks and qualification systems in ways that encourage sustainable development policies and practices.

The draft Strategy (which was available at the time of this study), the final version and the comprehensive supporting document are available here: www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/ConsultationsandResponses/ Completedconsultationsandresponses/default.htm

Policy context

The headlines daily bring us news of the urgency in addressing issues of climate change. Government at both national and London levels have taken steps to put in place substantive policy to give a framework for action.

The Department for Education and Skills' *Action Plan for Sustainable Development*[3,4] builds upon *'Learning to Last'*, the draft sustainable development strategy presented to government by the Sustainable Development Education Panel in 2003. It is based around the following four key objectives:

› all learners will develop the skills, knowledge and value base to be active citizens in creating a more sustainable society.

› we will pursue the highest standards of environmental management across all the properties owned and managed by the Department and its associated bodies.

› we will encourage and support all publicly-funded educational establishments to help them operate to the highest environmental standards.

› we will make effective links between education and sustainable development to build capacity within local communities.

Securing the Future[5], the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy published by Defra in 2005, provides the overarching framework. The Skills White Papers *Getting on in business, getting on at work*[6] and 14-19 *Education and Skills*[7] are attempting to address the skills needs of the nation through a range of initiatives including sector skills agreements, skills academies and capacity building. The White Papers are available here: www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/skillsgettingon/

The London Sustainable Development Commission, an independent body appointed by the Mayor, has produced the *London Sustainable Development Framework*[8]. The framework aims to provide a vision of a sustainable world city, and was published with a set of indicators, against which London's progress is measured each year. Details of the framework and latest reports are available here: www.london.gov.uk/londonissues/sustainability.jsp

There is also a suite of Mayoral strategies, including the London Plan[9] (or Spatial Development Strategy) and the Economic Development Strategy[10], as well as strategies on air pollution[11], energy[12], waste[13], biodiversity[14] and food[15]. They are all monitored and kept under regular review, and are available at the link above. At the time of writing, the Mayor's powers are out for consultation, concerning issues including his formal involvement in the Learning and Skills Council governance. The outcome of this review could have a significant impact on the sector's adoption of sustainable development.

In interviews for this research, where a definition for SD was requested, it was given as, 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'[16]. Commonly referred to as the Brundtland definition, this derives from the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), and is one of the definitions selected by the LSC to underpin its strategy document.

"Although the idea is simple, the task is substantial. It means meeting the following four objectives at the same time, both in the UK and world as a whole: social progress which recognises the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment"[17]

Research methodology

The research was carried out between April 2005 and January 2006. It was commissioned by the LSDA's London Region, funded by the LSC and project managed by London Sustainability Exchange (LSx).

A steering group was established, with representation from FE Colleges, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Awarding Bodies, LSC, LSDA, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) consultants, and LSx. The remit of this group was to direct the project, offer insights and promote the findings within members' own networks and organisations.

A project action group was appointed to carry out the interviews, conduct the analysis and write up the findings.

The membership of these two groups can be found in Appendix 1.

Letters introducing the project were sent out to all FE and Sixth Form Colleges in London, asking for an hour-long meeting to capture their views and experiences of SD. Nineteen colleges responded positively to the request, and were interviewed using a semi-structured format.

Both one-to-one and group interviews were carried out with senior managers representing buildings or estates, curriculum and corporate functions (see table 1). A small number of interviews with middle managers was also carried out.

Respondents	Number of Interviews
Principals	6
Vice Principals	10
Assistant Principals	2
Directors	5
Assistant Directors	2
Others	3
Totals	28

Table 1

Several of the 28 interviewees had responsibility for a range of activities, while some, particularly Principals, had no specifically identified areas. The breakdown of the responsibilities of respondents is represented in table 2 below.

Area of Responsibility	Senior Managers	Middle Managers
Administration	1	
Business and Community	2	
Curriculum	2	
Estates	5	1
Quality	1	
Finance	3	
Health and Safety		1
HR	2	1

Table 2

Respondents were slightly weighted towards buildings and estates, which reflects the common perception of sustainability relating mostly to environmental issues.

One college returned a written response and one responded with a brief telephone conversation, giving views from 21 Colleges out of a possible 49, representing a 43% response rate. A list of the responding colleges appears in Appendix 2.

As part of the interview script, where appropriate, the researcher introduced the definitions and/or the Strategy. (See the earlier section on Policy Context). The purpose was to raise awareness and inform the debate. A copy of the script appears in Appendix 3.

Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews on college premises, and colleges were receptive to this approach. It also provided an opportunity to explore responses in detail, and so build capacity.

Sustainable development in London's Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges

Research findings

1. Reflections of sustainable development in the college's vision and mission

1.1 *In the majority of cases, organisations' mission and vision statements are informed by principles which could broadly be defined as in keeping with sustainable development. For example:*

"To transform access to higher education…the college is working with teachers to define what the ultimate inner city London teacher looks like. The aim is to provide a nourishing route to the development of social and cultural capital." (College P)

"…to enrich personal, cultural and social development and ensuring [learners] succeed and progress to participation in economic life." (College F)

1.2 However, these colleges did not always recognise that they were doing anything related to sustainable development, which illustrates a lack of appreciation or awareness of the concept in its entirety.

1.3 There was often a tendency to link sustainability solely with the environment, rather than its broader definition of progressing social, economic and environmental goals simultaneously. For example, some interviewees mentioned their environmental policies in response to this question, which were often comprehensive.

1.4 There is a clear willingness on the part of the colleges, through their mission and vision statements and overall philosophy, to contribute to sustainable communities. What is less clear, and outside the remit of the study, is how well they are equipped with the necessary skills to achieve this.

1.5 Some colleges are not thinking creatively about how sustainable development can deliver against mission objectives for three reasons: the pressure of immediate demands, working within current funding cycles and a tendency for 'short termism'.

1.6 Colleges did identify that thinking through what the Sustainable Development Strategy could mean for the would be a useful starting point, sometimes with the aid of outside facilitators or specialists.

Recommendation:
Colleges should have easy access to specialist SD expertise which should be combined with external drivers, to ensure successful implementation of the Strategy.

2. Perceived benefits of integrating sustainable development into a college

2.1 Most of the colleges saw the benefits in terms of cost savings, primarily in relation to energy and waste recycling. However, for some colleges, cost savings are a factor, but not the chief motivator:

For example, while the Finance Manager of College G referred to *"tangible savings in energy bills"*, she also described efforts to oblige college contractors to pay their employees the enhanced minimum wage for London as calculated by the Living Wage Unit. She said that the impact of this would be felt beyond the narrow confines of the institution, and would make a positive contribution to the local workforce and community.

College R spoke of the benefits of *"satisfying staff demands for responsiveness to SD agenda"*, while several othe mentioned the contribution of SD's activities to student motivation.

2.2 Around 25% of the institutions recognised the marketing and reputational gains associated with enhanced sustainable development credentials.

College E said it was *"gaining a reputation for innovative green solutions and its ethical business approach"*. Links were made to social responsibility in the business sector and *"promoting the college as an environmentally sound institution."*

However, one otherwise positive Principal could see no significant marketing opportunities, saying it *'wouldn't be a seller'*.

2.3 One respondent talked about economic sustainability with regard to funding bids. Three colleges gave considered responses spanning the full breadth of SD, with examples from estates, curriculum areas and engagement with the community. One college explicitly mentioned the 'moral imperative' – the precedence of wider benefits to the community over benefits to the institution.

2.4 A small minority of colleges did not perceive any benefits at all.

Recommendations:
Colleges need access to some practical, replicable examples of cost savings, reputational gains and other broader benefits which could accrue from adopting a whole college approach to sustainable development .

Policies should put continued emphasis on the rationale and business case for sustainable development.

3. Examples of existing delivery in London colleges

Overall, colleges are demonstrating a range of innovative and practical projects that should be disseminated as good practice. The next section groups these examples around the three key sections in the LSC's draft Strategy: Buildings and Estate, Curriculum and Community.

In keeping with this approach, we have organised findings for each of these categories according to the sub-divisions employed in the final version of the LSC's Strategy for Sustainable Development.

We did this to enable readers to readily locate examples of good practice. However, because of the cross-cutting nature of SD initiatives, most examples could have been reported under a variety of headings.

3.1 Buildings and Estate

3.1.1. Environmental Management Systems

1. Energy Efficiency and Management

There are a number of initiatives that are being rolled out and piloted in London. Among them are Energy Action Zones, the London Energy Partnership's commitment to renewables targets, and the London Borough of Merton's trail blazing work.

So it is perhaps not surprising that respondents demonstrated the highest levels of awareness around this theme. Much advice on carrying out energy audits is available to colleges. A significant proportion of colleges are working towards energy consumption reduction targets.

Examples of good practice

› At College L, an institution spread over 4 sites, the College Management Group monitors the performance of each site's progress towards a target to cut gas, electricity and water usage by 10%.

› College E's Environmental Policy calls for the continuous monitoring of energy use, so that wasteful systems can be identified, modified or replaced with new systems when funds become available.

› College N makes use of energy saving software.

2. Waste management

60% of all colleges interviewed referred directly to waste management schemes, mainly comprising minimisation and disposal strategies.

Examples of good practice:

› College J runs a recycling scheme for IT equipment, which donates redundant laboratory equipment to a school in Sierra Leone.

> College F has created two recycling officer posts, ring-fenced for applicants with severe learning difficulties.

Issues:

> College L complained about contradictions in the system – *"we had a project to send PCs to Sri Lanka, but have had to cancel it because we can no longer guarantee that they will ultimately be disposed of in a responsible way."*

This contrasts with experience of College J above and makes the case for centralised waste management or at least a single information point, and a quality control system.

> One recycling scheme was no longer operational. The Director of Estates explained that *"the scheme collapsed because the former organiser left, - and it was restricted to white waste paper… recycling comes at a cost".*

This adds to the evidence found elsewhere that initiatives are often not yet embedded. The Director of Estates is now looking at contracting a local firm to provide a total waste management solution. Given the increasing enforcement of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive that demands responsible disposal and recycling of such goods, this approach is likely to become more widespread.

Recommendations:
Joint commissioning of services and products could enhance the efficiency of the number of waste management initiatives across the FE sector in London. The profile of schemes in existence should be raised and membership marketed effectively.

It would be useful to benchmark waste management in the sector as it is now, and put indicators and targets in place for the future. London Remade, WRAP and others could help with this in the context of the emerging London wider waste strategy.

Good practice in colleges needs to be embedded through formal policy agreements and reporting structures.

3.1.2. Buildings and Design

Almost 75% of colleges talked about recent, current or imminent new build activity. All but one of these referred to the incorporation of elements of good sustainable practice. This seems to back up the observation made by the Principal of College P that there is *'a much greater consciousness about energy consumption.'* The Principal of College D enthusiastically advocated the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method [BREEAM], believing that the whole sector could benefit from its application to new build projects.

Examples of good practice:

❯ College S ensured a range of sustainable design features were being incorporated into its new building. These included an environmental management system, zonal control over heating and lighting, greywater harvesting, heat sinks, interstitial blinds and changing facilities for cyclists.

❯ College N showed consideration of the wider impact of new build projects, stating that all its recent new Campus builds were sustainable in terms of materials, flexibility of use and inclusive, participative design.

❯ College C said it had selected timber from renewable sources for the refurbishment of two blocks that needed renewal.

Issues:

❯ College E said that agencies and government should realise that funding support is necessary to make the *'sums add up'*. Otherwise, sustainability will not be built in because it is too expensive or cannot be justified in terms of financial pay back.

❯ College R stated that funding bodies do not anticipate the rising costs of a project, and when things go over budget, sustainable development is one of the first considerations to go.

❯ College J described difficulties obtaining environmentally friendly hard wood. Difficulties in sourcing it caused the project to overrun, and had negative financial and service delivery consequences.

Recommendations:
Difficulty in sourcing materials could be reduced by the existence of a central supplier database.

Funding bodies should review the impact of their expenditure cycles.

A support programme such as the one for the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act could help colleges to implement the Strategy.

3.1.3. Procurement and contracting

Approximately 50% of colleges referred directly to sustainable and/or ethical procurement and contracting arrangements. Some of these arrangements are more formal than others. College N, for instance, has hosted its local borough's Sustainable Procurement Group meetings. At the other end of the spectrum is a range of ad hoc arrangements, such as the provision of fair trade coffee for meeting rooms, and localised responses. College J spoke of having *"a partial eye on the procurement of environmentally responsible and recycled materials – we are self critical in terms of only achieving compliance"*.

Examples of good practice:

❯ College F monitors its policy commitment to *"introduce environmental criteria to guide the procurement of all goods and equipment and ensure that these requirements are reflected in all standard contracts conditions"*.

❯ College R has a strategic approach to its work with local SMEs, that exemplifies the holistic nature of effective sustainable development. When it needed electrical contractors in the past, the college would appoint firms from as far away as Leeds. More recently, the college finds contractors through its database of employers that run Modern Apprenticeships or work experience schemes, wherever possible. This cuts down the need for travel, helps sustain the local economy and develops employer/college relationships.

❯ College M is a member of an energy purchasing partnership, inherited from the days when the college was under Local Authority control.

Recommendations:
Existing centralised purchasing consortia should be publicised more widely and effectively to colleges, perhaps with the support of London agencies such as London Remade, which runs the Mayor's Green Procurement Code[18].

Internal cross departmental purchasing or procurement groups can also be effective.

3.1.4. Biodiversity

20% of the colleges referred to existing projects or activities, which could be defined as contributing to local biodiversity.

The number of colleges referring to bio-diversity projects seems relatively small. This is interesting given that the colleges' definitions of sustainable development, and their knowledge and activity around energy, waste and new build, indicate that they tend to see SD as being about "green" issues.

Examples of good practice:

› College E has implemented a programme of tree planting on the college site and has allowed some areas to grow 'wild' - thus increasing bio-diversity. It consulted with the local Residents Association, staff and students: as a result they collaborated to enrich the site with a wooden fence planted with pyrocantha and a new low wall with adjacent trees. Partly as a result, the college gained local recognition for innovative green solutions.

› College J engaged a local design firm, 'Urban Space Management', to provide some classrooms constructed from former shipping containers. These containers usually end up rotting on the seabed. In this case the containers were joined together and deliberately designed to insulate the classrooms and save energy. The containers' roofs are planted with sedum blankets, which is a form of natural roofing.

3.1.5. Travel

25% of colleges said they had a green travel plan or a statement relating to travel within their broader environmental policy. A majority of colleges indicated that they see travel issues as relevant to SD.

Examples of good practice:

› College A has electric power bikes and a fuel efficient car which staff members can use to move between sites. Bikes and the car are badged with college logos, and the college sees them as an opportunity for marketing.

› College O has recently installed lockable bike sheds and separate entrances for cyclists.

› College H has reduced car parking spaces, and College J has removed all car parking except that reserved for people with disabilities.

Issues:

› Although College O has provided a secure cycle shed to promote cycling, it has kept a large number of staff parking spaces. Staff would be unhappy to see this reduced, as there are *"issues of community safety in the area"*.

› College S expressed frustration at the lack of support available in preparing green travel plans. The interviewee also expressed doubts about people's willingness to cycle along busy roads, and the fact that people might be put off by the 10 minute walk from the station.

Recommendations:
Support available to colleges for developing green travel plans should be proactively marketed. New ways of getting information out and increased take-up of this support should be investigated.

It should be recognised there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Colleges are all different and need to take account of their unique circumstance and geography when designing their plans.

3.2. Curriculum

3.2.1. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

a. Formal curriculum

60% of colleges provided examples of SD learning taking place within the formal curriculum. Courses in which SD forms part of the curriculum were identified as:

> Construction
> Design Technology
> Electrical engineering
> ESOL (English as a Second Language)
> Fashion
> Horticulture
> Hospitality
> Health and Safety Units of all courses
> Motor vehicle courses
> PHSE (Personal Health and Social Education)
> Religious education
> Sport and recreation
> Travel and Tourism

Examples of good practice:

> College E's environmental policy requires curriculum staff to promote SD to learners, and encourage them to take a responsible attitude towards protecting the environment.

> An example of 'teaching for and through' as opposed to 'about' SD occurs at College D, where the Principal described the Egan Review on Skills for Sustainable Communities as a driver behind the college's introduction of the wider key skills to most 16-18 courses.

Issues:

> Valuable information about SD curriculum initiatives often rests exclusively within discrete departments.

> College C stated that so long as a group of SD champions were active at the College, work was undertaken to embed SD across the curriculum, but that the initiative lapsed once these individuals progressed to jobs elsewhere.

Recommendations:
Effective champions programmes should be underpinned by formalised policy to embed practice.

Sector skills councils should promote SD, and awarding bodies should integrate elements of SD into their qualifications. This will help ensure colleges deliver and assess these aspects as a matter of course.

Colleges should explore opportunities for accreditation for SD learning through, for instance, NCFE's Certificate in Sustainable Development.

The contribution of e-learning opportunities to SD needs further exploration.

b. Enrichment Activities

Education for sustainable development (ESD) provides rich opportunities to engage learners in the informal curriculum. College R, for instance, has specific focus weeks, which often involve students looking at global issues. In many cases, though, where colleges described enrichment initiatives, they appeared to be small and localised rather than concerted and cross-college. A second observation is that interviewees did not always recognise activities as SD related, when in fact they were.

Examples of SD forming part of Enrichment Activities include:

❯ British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) projects
❯ Recycling projects
❯ Millennium Volunteer programmes, engaging students in the community
❯ In-college projects and charity based activities
❯ Healthy eating drives

Issues:

❯ SD is not fully understood to refer to environmental, social and economic behaviours, sometimes leading colleges to underestimate their existing engagement.

❯ Initiatives are often overly dependent upon individuals, insufficiently embedded and ineffectively recorded for future reference.

Recommendations:
There is a need for Continuous Professional Development which clarifies the meaning of sustainable development.

In some colleges, environmental working groups led on initiatives and policies but in others they were dependent upon individual "champions". This reflects findings elsewhere and supports the LSC Strategy's action *"to identify and train champions for sustainable development so that every college, learning provider and each LSC has at least one knowledgeable and committed champion who promotes sustainable development"*. While fostering champions is commendable, further knowledge transfer and embedding is needed to avoid losing the impetus and the intellectual capital if the champion, or team of champions leave, or become otherwise employed.

Existing pockets of excellence could be enhanced by being more joined up through a more structured application across London. This would offer more opportunities to deliver a high impact with optimum effort and replication.

3.2.2. Learning Materials

› We did not look for evidence relating to learning materials as part of this project. However, College F reported that following its curriculum greening bid it was planning to develop teaching methods, materials and curricula on environmental education within vocational courses.

› The Principal of College O expressed interest in using ESD learning materials for enrichment weeks, but stated that *"so much material is targeted at primary and secondary schools and not much at FE"*.

Issues:

› There is a perceived lack of access to appropriate ESD learning materials.

Recommendation:
Guidance produced by UK sustainability charity Forum the Future and others on embedding sustainable development into the Curriculum is a useful starting point, in terms of offering some support to course leaders and lecturers on how to handle these issues and turn challenges into opportunities. A selection of these guidance documents appear in the Further Reading section.

3.2.3. Healthy College programme

› Several interviewees made reference to their institution's movement towards becoming a healthy college.

› The principal of College D suggested that the small amount of work around the healthy living agenda was the only contribution to SD in his college's enrichment programme.

› College C refered to its Estates Department's mission, which is *"to provide a clean, welcoming, friendly, safe and healthy learning / working environment."*

› Initiatives were sometimes linked to the food agenda. College F undertook *"to explore the prospects of providing the option of organically-produced food in college refectories"*.

› Two colleges described healthy food-based activities for learners. College J has a 'healthy eating drive' aimed at learners, while Colleges O and P have enrichment programmes in which health is an important element.

Recommendations:
Whilst health is a key component of sustainable development, the opportunity should be taken to think about local sourcing, fair trade, and organics to illustrate the food miles/slow food concepts, and use the momentum to broaden initiatives so they embody sustainable development.

If these goals are written into 3-year development plans they will be easier to achieve simultaneously, and less likely to conflict.

3.3. Community

Of the 20 College mission or vision statements recorded 9 make direct reference to community engagement and a further two, while not specifically using the word 'community', make reference to partnership activity with employers or local boroughs.

3.3.1. Community Engagement

Examples of good practice:

❯ College T reported a high level of *'community engagement'*, with formal and informal links existing between most divisions and elements of the local community. The college develops and maintains community relations via its "College Watch" group, which brings together representatives from college, staff unions, local police and residents. The group meets termly to discuss any relevant issues. In this spirit, the College decided to erect temporary buildings only after consultation with local residents' association, individual neighbours, staff and learners. Additionally, the college's Training and Community Partnership Unit aims to improve levels of employability within the local community through initiatives such as a Single Regeneration Budget project involving Job Centres and new local employers.

❯ College J is heavily involved in its local borough's summer university, which has over 40 operational partners. As part of this project, it has collaborated with community relations charity Tolerance in Diversity to offer programmes leading to accreditation for volunteering and civic involvement. One of the programmes equips young people to become active on local registered social landlord boards.

❯ Each of the college L's four sites has its own Community Council. These are focus groups, made up of local stakeholders, and chaired by a member of the college's senior leadership team. Typically these include representatives from the local council, local schools, community groups, businesses, NGOs and interested others. The Community Council helps to inform what the local curriculum offers.

❯ College A is working with its borough council to provide a *"community campus, which will offer fully integrated advice on health, employment and education."*

❯ College N incorporates the local public library, whilst College O allows local community groups and schools to use its swimming pool outside of college hours. Respondents suggested that this contributed to social cohesion.

3.3.2. Volunteering

Specific questions about volunteering were not asked. However, 30% of colleges gave a variety of examples of volunteering, which they clearly saw as contributing to SD. Sometimes these involved collaborative work with organisations such as Millennium Volunteers, the Princes Trust or the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV). See "Enrichment activities" under section 3.2.

Examples of good practice:

❯ In College G, 60 learners act as mentors to younger learners in local Saturday schools.

❯ College S is involved in a BTCV project for students with learning difficulties.

❯ Elsewhere volunteering has been independently brokered, as in the case of College Q, where art and design learners have worked on local community murals, and at College J, where work has been focused on peer mentoring. Here, young people learn to act as advocates for one another, and to join formal bodies where their voices can be heard.

4. Sustainable development initiatives, which colleges may find relatively easy to implement

4.1. The most cited opportunities for "easy" implementation of SD initiatives were in the areas of new build, energy management and construction skills. But some colleges, especially those already involved in local regeneration partnerships, also see opportunities from the Olympics developments, and from the Egan Review of Skills for Sustainable Communities[19].

4.2. Recycling, waste management, energy savings, partnership, enrichment, procurement and 'all of the above' were cited as "little or low cost" projects. Some colleges have taken the initiative and managed to either profit from the initiatives in terms of cost savings, or integrate the costs of eco-build, for example into original project budgets.

4.3. The findings suggest that where there is an awareness and understanding within the colleges, initiatives can be delivered at low cost. But in areas where skills and expertise are lacking, there may be more resistance. Pressures on colleges to maintain existing provision, and barriers to implementing change, were also raised.

Recommendations:
The London Sustainable Development Commission and Greater London Authority policies, frameworks and toolkits should be given a higher profile in the sector. Closer cooperation between the Mayor's office and the Learning and Skills Council may help to deliver this.

Cross disciplinary working, both within and outside the college, and engagement with the community and local markets through mechanisms like the Local Strategic Partnership (particularly with their recently extended remit), can be immensely beneficial and should be encouraged and incentivised wherever possible.

Conclusions

Colleges seem to be willing to engage with sustainable development. They want to contribute to the economic, social and environmental development of their communities. However, the majority of colleges do not yet see sustainable development as 'all embracing'.

❯ While there are many examples of good practice, these are not always recognised as sustainable development.

❯ There is knowledge of SD in colleges, but colleges' knowledge management and communication systems do not always reflect this.

❯ Sustainable development is not yet embedded in colleges, and often depends upon a single champion.

❯ There are significant perceived barriers to implementing SD, including initial costs and restrictive funding cycles not allowing for a return on investment.

❯ Colleges do not see SD as a priority over more urgent matters, such as inspection regimes, funding issues and LSC requirements.

❯ A small number of colleges see sustainable development as an 'add-on' for which they don't have the capacity.

❯ Action research is a good way to raise awareness. For example, 12 colleges (60%) reported that they first learnt about the LSC's consultation on SD through this project.

❯ Many colleges are contributing to SD, but some felt this could be more effective if supported by external agencies such as QCA, awarding bodies, inspectorates and funding agencies.

Recommendations

These recommendations aim to address the key findings, by building skills within FE colleges to achieve an integrated approach to sustainable development. The research uncovered a number of barriers to this, so we suggest ways of overcoming them here. We have grouped them according to the type of organisation they apply to.

For Colleges

❯ Develop a *whole* college understanding and vision for SD. Include staff development at all levels and across all areas of activity, to ensure SD is understood as an adaptive process, rather than the one-off achievement of externally determined and departmentally isolated goals.

❯ SD should inform all CPD programmes, and training should be incorporated into induction for new staff so the knowledge base is maintained. This would build upon the recent White Paper on Further Education[20].

❯ Carry out audits of SD in the curriculum. Such an audit would establish the linkages between curriculum areas, optimise learning resources and build institutional knowledge within the staff team. The results of the audit should be shared widely and imaginatively within the college and tied to future targets.

› Create opportunities for informal learning by demonstrating good sustainable development practice.

› Foster linkages at senior and middle management level between those responsible for estates, curriculum and community engagement. Report on SD activity at management meetings and to governors.

› Regularly review and improve college knowledge transfer and communication systems to ensure that key initiatives are widely replicated both within individual colleges and between institutions.

For Stakeholders

› Build upon the Learning and Skills Council strategy and carry out the actions within it.

› Avoid contradictions in implementing and monitoring (for example by inadvertently setting conflicting targets).

› Use accessible terminology when discussing SD and publishing guidance or case studies.

› Consider more creative ways to consult around key policies, for example, by taking the action research approach and timing the publication of policy to fit in with college priorities when possible.

› Develop policies that put a continued emphasis on the rationale and business case for SD.

› Ensure that the curriculum is employer driven; often employers have an understanding of the business case for SD. Sector Skills Councils are beginning to take forward this agenda, and there are further recommendations in a recent report by Forum for the Future: *Skills for Business and Sustainability*[21].

› Embed sustainable development further into the core curriculum (QCA).

› Understand the implications of this work. Inspection frameworks should require the achievement of SD standards, in conjunction with the LSC criteria (OfSTED).

› Incorporate SD into college three-year development plans, when the performance indicators by which these will be assessed have been developed and communicated clearly. This will require a strategic approach to provision of information and communicating links with funding provision (LSC).

› Make available materials and case studies of projects appropriate to the learning and skills sector.

› Establish a support programme, including SD 'suppliers', in a similar way to the Disability Discrimination Act roll-out (DfES).

› Consider allowing time and flexibility in funding streams for colleges to plan to invest strategically for longer-term efficiencies, for example, within new build and refurbishment programmes (LSC).

› Publicise existing centralised purchasing consortia more widely and effectively to colleges, perhaps with the support of London agencies such as London Remade and the Mayor's Green Procurement Code.

› Proactively market support available to colleges for developing green travel plans. Investigate new ways of getting information out and increasing take-up of this support.

› Make available appropriate levels of resources, to eliminate funding as a barrier to innovative application of the strategy.

› Give a higher profile in the sector to the London Sustainable Development Commission and Greater London Authority policies, frameworks and toolkits. Closer cooperation between the Mayor's office and the Learning and Skills Council may help to deliver this.

› Encourage and incentivise, wherever possible, cross-disciplinary working and engagement with the community and local markets, through mechanisms such as Local Strategic Partnerships.

For Sustainable Development Practitioners

› Develop case studies that are replicable, demonstrating their value for moving towards SD in colleges and share good practice widely.

› Use clear, plain English and ensure familiarity with the content, criteria and requirements of LSC, OFSTED and QCA requirements when carrying out training or audits within a college.

› Benchmark specific areas, such as waste management and energy use, in the sector as it is now, and put indicators and targets in place for the future. This would ensure that existing pockets of excellence become more joined up through a more structured application across London.

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Further Reading

Learning to Last Website: www.learning2last.org/

The Sustainability Integration Group, SIGNET, facilitated by sustainable development charity Forum for the Future and funded by Defra: www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/education/signet_page106.aspx

Sector Skills Development Agency, Skills for Business Network incorporating sustainability principles: www.ssda.org.uk/ssda/default.aspx?page=580

Learning to Last in London, resources and network facilitated by London Sustainability Exchange: www.lsx.org.uk/programmes/l2ll_page1294.aspx

The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges: www.eauc.org.uk/

Practical guides to green travel planning, purchasing and integrating sustainable development into the curriculum: www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/education/heps_page107.aspx

Regeneration and all that: Learning and Skills for Sustainability; Learning and Skills Development Agency (now Learning Support Network) 2004. www.lsneducation.org.uk/pubs/index.aspx

LSDA Responds: From Here to Sustainability; Learning and Skills Development Agency response to the LSC sustainable development strategy; LSDA; 2005 www.lsneducation.org.uk/pubs/index.aspx

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Appendix 1: List of steering and action group members

Trixi Blaire	Learning and Skills Development Agency
Lindsey Baker	Learning and Skills Development Agency
Mike Barrett	Learning and Skills Council
Gayle Burgess	London Sustainability Exchange
Ann Ceeney	Consultant
Judith Cohen	Learning and Skills Development Agency
John Fincham	EdExcel
Jayne Morgan	Lewisham College
Phil Myers	EdExcel
Nigel Rayment	Consultant
Jane Scott	London Sustainability Exchange
Corinne Spencer	Learning and Skills Council
Dylan White	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Appendix 2: List of Participating Colleges

Barnet College
Capel Manor College
Carshalton College
City of Westminster College
Croydon College
Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College
Enfield College
Greenwich Community College
Hackney Community College
Lewisham College

Merton College
Richmond Adult Community College
Sir George Monoux College
Southgate College
Southwark College
St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College
Stanmore College
Tower Hamlets College
Westminster Kingsway College

Appendix 3: Interview script

Research into London FE Response to LSC Sustainable Development Strategy Consultation Interview questions for discussion

Points of reference for introduction:

❯ Introductions / thanks on behalf of the project partners for agreeing to the interview

❯ Assurance that comments made to the researchers will not be attributed and contributions to the research will be anonymous

❯ Background to the project including reference to work over the past 2 years with the Learning to Last in London network www.lsx.org.uk/programmes/l2ll_page1294.aspx

❯ Briefing on contextually relevant policies and initiatives such as the DfES Sustainable Development Action Plan www.dfes.gov.uk/aboutus/sd/ and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURLID=27234&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

❯ Project was initiated following the publication of, and consultation on, the recent Learning and Skills Council Sustainable Development Strategy www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/ConsultationsandResponses/Currentconsultations/sutainable_dev.htm

❯ Project partners are keen to explore attitudes towards sustainable development within the FE sector in London through action research

❯ Aims of the project include: to capture and develop imaginative ways of embedding sustainable development both into the curricula and the ways in which your college is managed, for overall benefit to students, staff and the wider community, as well as to map, and raise levels of awareness and engagement with the education for sustainable development agenda in London

❯ Results will be fed back to interviewees and a research report will be available in the Autumn

❯ Any questions?

Re: The interviewees / their institution

Name/s:
Position/s:
Organisation:

1. Could you (each) please outline what you understand to be your institution's vision/mission? *(Discussion points could include: is there any overt/covert reference to sustainable development? Is anyone in the organisation charged with addressing this? Is progress monitored in any way? If so how is it reported? Is SD discussed at Governing Corporation/Staff meetings? Is there any staff development on SD? Would the interviewee be able to give you a copy of relevant documents at all?)*

Re: Awareness of sustainable development

2. How familiar are you with the concept of sustainable development / education for sustainable development? (The LSC strategy quotes the *'Brundtland' definition of sustainable development: "Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*)

3. How do you feel your institution could benefit from delivering sustainable development? *(E.g. savings on the bottom line, explore awareness of evidence base for the same, etc)*

4. What does your organisation already do in terms of sustainable development in estates, curriculum and community?

5. To what extent do you feel students/staff understand the connection between what is being done and sustainable development?

6. What other sustainable development initiatives do you think would be easy to implement in your organisation and why? *(An example might include students/staff working with the local community to create a market garden from a local greenspace. An challenges/barriers identified in discussion?)*

7. Are there any examples of sustainable development initiatives delivered in your organisation with little/no resources?

8. How do you feel the LSDA or organisations like LSx could most effectively support your institution in implementing sustainable development initiatives? *(Possible answers might include: intellectual resources / expertise / capacity building for senior or other representatives within the college / action planning, etc)*

9. How do you feel the awarding bodies or other agencies and levers could most effectively support your institution in implementing sustainable development initiatives? *(Does the interviewee feel that their organisation will only deliver sustainable development when legislative drivers are used/initiatives are embedded in college 3 year development plans/progress is assessed through the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, etc?)*

Re: The LSC Strategy

10. Before you heard about our project, how aware were you of the LSC's draft sustainable development strategy?

11. How did you find out about the strategy?

12. Were you aware colleges were invited to return comments on the strategy?

13. Did you or your organisation consider submitting a response to the strategy consultation?

14. If yes, what were the barriers that prevented you from doing so? If no, why not?

15. What do you feel are the key outcomes and objectives of the strategy? *(E.g. is the interviewee familiar with the three themes of estate, curriculum & community / the timeframe, etc? If so, the interviewer could use the opportunity to address the key consultation questions for the strategy)*

16. How do you feel the LSC could most effectively support your institution in implementing this strategy? *(Possible answers might include: Financial resources / funding / intellectual resources / expertise / capacity building for senior or other representatives within the college / action planning, etc)*

17. What other factors do you feel will be key to the successful implementation of this strategy in your institution?

Re: Other

18. Does your organisation have a policy to respond to all / specific consultations?

19. If so who is responsible / what is the process?

20. Any other comments?

Acknowledgements

About the Learning and Skills Network

The Learning and Skills Network (LSN) is an independent not-for-profit organisation committed to making a difference to education and training.

We aim to do this by delivering quality improvement and staff development programmes that support specific government initiatives, through research, training and consultancy; and by supplying services directly to schools, colleges and training organisations.

About London Sustainability Exchange

London Sustainability Exchange (LSx) provides organisations and networks of individuals with the motivation, knowledge and connections they need to put sustainability into practice.

Our mission is to accelerate the transition to a sustainable London by connecting and motivating people. Our vision is of London as the most sustainable world city.

LSx was founded in 2001 by the Corporation of London and a group of influential partners who continue to shape its development. Our lead partner is Forum for the Future, recognised as the UK's leading sustainability charity www.forumforthefuture.org.uk

About the Learning and Skills Council

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. It has a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to make sure we have a workforce that is of world-class standards.

The LSC is responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. Its vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a fiercely competitive workforce.

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Bengali

আপনি যদি আপনার ভাষায় এই দলিলের প্রতিলিপি
(কপি) চান, তা হলে নীচের ফোন্ নম্বরে
বা ঠিকানায় অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Chinese

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Gujarati

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી ભાષામાં
જોઇતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી આપેલ નંબર ઉપર
ફોન કરો અથવા નીચેના સરનામે સંપર્ક સાધો.

Hindi

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज की प्रति अपनी
भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निम्नलिखित
नंबर पर फोन करें अथवा नीचे दिये गये
पते पर संपर्क करें

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ
ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਹੇਠ
ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਰਾਬਤਾ ਕਰੋ:

Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinizde
hazırlanmış bir nüshasını
edinmek için, lütfen aşağıdaki
telefon numarasını arayınız
veya adrese başvurunuz.

Urdu

اگر آپ اِس دستاویز کی نقل اپنی زبان میں
چاھتے ھیں، تو براہ کرم نیچے دئے گئے نمبر
پر فون کریں یا دیئے گئے پتے پر رابطھ کریں