

**LSC NW ESF Co-Finance Plan 2007-10 Consultation****Date of issue** 3 July 2007**LSC office** North West Region**Publication intent** Public**Name:** Jim Wilkie**Organisation:** Wirral Council**Type of organisation:** (please choose one)

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|---|--|
| <b>FE provider</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Regional Partner</b> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| WBL provider <input type="checkbox"/>       | Sector Skills Council <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| VCS <input type="checkbox"/>                | Other (please state) Local Authority             |

**Address:** Wallasey Town Hall, Brighton Street, Wirral, CH44 8EDResponses are invited by **17 August 2007** on the following document:

**European Social Fund**  
**LSC Draft Co-financing Plan for the Northwest of England**  
**For the period January 2007 to December 2010**

For an electronic version please access the following web address:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthWest/ESFCFP>**This questionnaire should be returned to** [nwesf@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:nwesf@lsc.gov.uk)**Further queries, please contact** [matthew.bird@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.bird@lsc.gov.uk)

***Please note: Wirral's response is overwhelmingly in line with the Merseyside response – with the addition of a small number of comments.***

**The LSC intends to develop a single Co-Finance Plan with sub-regional sections including a separate section for the Merseyside phasing in area.**

*1) Are you supportive of this approach?*

Wirral welcomes the LSC approach to have separate sections for each sub-region. As a Phasing-in region – with a ring-fenced allocation – it is important that this is reflected through separate analysis of the special situation in Merseyside. We also welcome the inclusion of local level issues where appropriate.

*2) What else might the LSC do to ensure that activity meets sub-regional and local needs?*

Important to build on local level priorities – these are clearly set out within LAAs and potentially through MAAs. We are content that LSC have been well engaged in the development of the Merseyside/Liverpool City Employment Strategy and that they have a thorough understanding of our sub-regional needs.

## **Actions for Employment**

**The LSC intends to work closely with Job Centre Plus and alongside City Employment Strategy consortia to develop a more integrated approach to raising the level of skills and employment in the North West**

*3) What else might we do to achieve this ambition?*

We welcome the LSC's close involvement with the City Employment Strategy (CES) and see the development of a Single Investment Framework for the CES as a good starting point in developing an integrated approach especially around employment. In terms of skills more work is needed between LSC and Merseyside partners on higher level skills issues – especially in light of the flexibility Merseyside has to spend more than 5% of our ring-fence on NVQ level 4 and above.

We do have some concerns at the lack of synergy in terms of timescales for development of CF Plans with DWP/JCP – particularly given the spend profile up to 2010 and the pressure to commission and deliver activity before then. Wirral would like to see a strong commitment to the Borough Skills Plans so that co-financed and complementary ESF can sit alongside each other at a district level as well as at the Merseyside level.

*4) Are there particular activities which we might undertake to achieve this?*

As partners involved in higher level skills are brought into the new City Employment & Skills Board we would hope this integrated approach to skills would be developed.

We would welcome further joint work with DWP/JCP – eg to streamline PQQ and ITT processes.

**The LSC is seeking to develop integrated skills and employment progression routes.**

*5) What practical steps might we undertake to help establish consortia?*

CES partnership sets out clear aims for retention and progression in employment.  
Essential to effectively engage with employers.  
Important to work closely with DWP/JCP, given indication that a significant proportion of JSA claimants move in and out of short term employment and benefits.

6) Is the proposed allocation of resources to this activity appropriate? (if not, please explain why and give examples).

No Comment

*7) Is the methodology used to determine the allocation of resources to the sub-regions appropriate (if not, please suggest other examples of how this rationale can be improved and other information sources which could be used)?*

Important to use accurate and robust data on levels of worklessness, NEET etc. This will also be important when monitoring impact and progress.

*8) Are their additional target groups which the LSC also needs to consider?*

Some consideration needs to be given to 'pre-NEET' and also those young people who fall outside of NEET data.

*9) What additional activities might be needed?*

Pre-engagement and outreach activities are extremely effective in engaging 'hardest to reach' groups and those most economically/socially excluded.

*10) What other outcomes and milestones should be introduced to ensure that the programme is meeting the needs of the target groups?*

Important to be able to measure 'distance travelled' – perhaps through use of 'softer' targets.  
Also want to be able to track retention and progress and avoid 'revolving door' approaches to training.  
Need to pro-actively address equalities impact eg gender, race to ensure can measure progress.

## **Tackling NEET**

**The LSC intends to focus activity on areas with persistent high levels of NEET working through 14-19 groups.**

*11) Are you in favour of this approach?*

Yes – this is in line with the national ESF Operational Programme and acknowledges the significant concentrations at the sub-regional and local level.

*12) Are there particular activities which we might undertake to add value to current interventions?*

More in-depth interventions are necessary for this hard to reach group – which may mean higher unit value projects. Outreach and engagement activities are effective.

**At least 23% of ESF funding under priority 1 must support NEET activity**

*13) Is the methodology used to determine the allocation of resources to the sub-regions appropriate?*

The use of Connexions figures on volume and percentage size of NEET population seems sensible.

Important to acknowledge that there are also numbers of 16-18 year olds whose activity is not known.

Also essential to address linkages between NEET and adult worklessness

*14) What should be the balance of activity between interventions with those aged 14 or 15 and those aged 16-18?*

See question 9

*15) Are the proposed activities appropriate?*

These activities seem appropriate

*16) What additional activities might be needed?*

Enterprise activities have a role in this agenda

## **Priority 2**

**Developing a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce**

*17) Is the methodology used to determine the allocation of resources to the sub-regions appropriate?*

Use of proportions of population with demand for basic skills, level 2 and level 3 seem appropriate. Some analysis of the supply side – i.e. employer needs may also be useful.

*18) Are the proposed target sectors and types of employers appropriate?*

Specific Merseyside sectors – Maritime and Tourism should be included. Professional and Financial Services should also be included.

*19) Are their additional targets groups which the LSC also needs to target?*

Level 4 and above for specific sectors – e.g. bio/medical and digital

*20) Are the proposed activities appropriate?*

See answers to 18 and 19

*21) What additional activities might be needed?*

As above

**Training to Level 3 to address skills shortages; helping workers to improve their enterprise skills, especially those who face redundancy, low skills workers, and workers in sectors with skills gaps or weak training records**

*22) Is the proposed methodology to allocate resources to this activity appropriate?*

The methodology seems to be appropriate

*23) Should the approach to Level 3 training be addressed regionally?*

Wirral, along with our Merseyside partners, would want to ensure that any regional approach to level 3 training is aligned to **sub-regional or local** sector skills agreements and agreed through the City Employment & Skills Board.

*24) Are the key sectors which have been identified appropriate?*

Maritime, Tourism and Financial Services should be included

*25) Are the proposed activities appropriate?*

Yes, they support vulnerable people who are in work to ensure that they have the skills for sustainable employment.

*26) What additional activities might be needed?*

No comment

**Providing technical, leadership, management and enterprise skills training in small enterprises (up to 50 workers to compete in a knowledge based economy**

*27) Is the proposed allocation of resources to this activity appropriate?*

Yes – it is important to provide this support to these enterprises

*28) What additional activities would be appropriate?*

No comment

## **Innovation**

*29) How can we ensure that innovation is built into the programme?*

Merseyside partners have identified the need for a complementary strand of ESF to ensure new or innovative projects can be tested prior to funding through Co-financing. We would expect LSC to support successful projects delivered through the complementary strands, through co-financing when appropriate

*30) Are their particular issues or areas of activity where further innovation is necessary?*

Important to understand economic growth sectors and to aim for demand led activity

## **Sub-Regional budget allocations**

*31) The notional allocations are based upon need. Are you supportive of this approach?*  
As long as this is approached in a consistent way.

*32) Do you support the approach that would allow for the movement of budgets between sub regions?*

Clearly no money from the Merseyside ring-fenced allocation could be moved to another sub-region. Outside of the Phasing-In area we appreciate the need for flexibility – especially in terms of adult skills development – but would expect any recommendations for budget movements to be discussed and agreed by the Regional ESF Committee.

*33) If budgets are to be moved between the sub regions, how might this be organised?*

No comments (see above)

*34) What might be done to ensure that the spending profile will be achieved?*

Regular monitoring and progress reports to the Phasing-In Board and Regional ESF Committee, with the early identification of any problems, will be expected. Within Merseyside the steep spend profile will require careful management from Merseyside partners to ensure LSC, JCP and the complementary strand of ESF all deliver to target

## **Monitoring and Reporting Progress (Section 5)**

*35) Are you supportive of the overall approach to reporting progress within the CFP?*

We welcome LSC's commitment to agree reporting requirements to the Merseyside Phasing-In Board, in addition to the Regional ESF Committee. The Phasing-In Board will be particularly keen to receive regular progress reports, on spend and outputs against agreed targets, given the challenging spend profile within Merseyside.

We would want to ensure that some of the LSC reporting is on a local spatial basis – i.e how the LSC Co-financing Plan addresses the issues within the Merseyside districts and within DAF areas.

We would want to ensure that the monitoring systems used by LSC – especially if national systems – are operational early and provide relevant information for Merseyside as a Phasing-In area. Finally, we welcome the production of six monthly progress reports for stakeholders

*36) What else might the LSC do to improve support to providers?*

Regular meetings with providers to ensure effective delivery of activities – early identification of problems – would be welcomed.

### **Provider Selection and Tendering Arrangements**

*37) What further action might the LSC undertake to effectively engage organisations in the development of its prospectus?*

No comment

*38) What are your preferred mechanisms for communication with the LSC in terms of the PQQ and ITTs?*

Use a range of options – web-based, newsletters, through stakeholder events, established partnerships, provider networks etc. Also through LSP, LAA and Community Networks

*39) In addition to the activities we propose to undertake to brief providers what else might we do?*

See above

*40) What changes to the application process would add value?*

It is important to ensure that VCS organisations are consulted and engaged with so that they can effectively participate within PQQ. Further co-ordination and integration PQQ and ITT processes with DWP would be welcome.

### **Other issues**

*41) What actions might the LSC take to enhance the overall effectiveness of the ESF Co-Finance Plan?*

We welcome the LSC's attempt to align their Co-financing Plan with the City Employment Strategy. There also needs to be alignment with the Merseyside Inward Investment strategy, Enterprise initiatives (especially LEGI), Merseyside Tourism Plan and Sector Skills.

Merseyside partners share the LSC's concern that the spend profile in Merseyside will be difficult, especially given the current LSC commitments from the Objective One Programme. Continued openness and dialogue with Merseyside partners is key. With a challenging spend profile up to December 2010, LSC must continue to work with Merseyside partners to ensure we use this window of opportunity for the successful delivery of employment and skills activities in Greater Merseyside


## **Sub Regional Issues**

*Please indicate the sub-region you are commenting on.*

Cheshire and Warrington ☐

Cumbria ☐

Greater Manchester ☐

Merseyside 'phasing in' area   
Lancashire ☐

*Are their particular issues or needs which needed to be added to the sub-regional assessments?*

No comment

*42) Are their particular target groups or proposed activities which should be added for the sub-region?*

No comment