

## Sector Impact Assessment – Lifelong Learning Networks

<b>Name of policy/initiative</b>	<b>Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs)</b>
What are the aims of this policy/initiative?	The overall objective for LLNs is to improve the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through higher education.
<b>Regulatory impact assessment</b>	
1. Will this policy require HEIs to pay for or carry out additional work in response to our demands?	Yes. The additional work comprises the establishment of systems and processes within institutions designed to identify individuals and programmes which can benefit from LLN activity. Institutions are involved on a voluntary basis and were encouraged to consider the full economic costs in submitting their bids for funding. Institutions are expected to commit to action at their own priority and discretion. Some LLNs also have HEFCE's Additional Student Number process to go through and there may be additional data requirements as well.
2. If so, do the benefits outweigh what we have asked HEIs to do?	The assumption is 'Yes', but it is too early to judge this properly. There are many benefits from HEFCE's perspective including fairer progression systems and enhancements to our efforts to widen participation. The initiative also encourages collaboration between institutions.
3. If yes, how have you arrived at this judgement? Please refer to the results of consultation and other supporting evidence.	This was a 'bottom-up' policy initiative. Those institutions involved have been able to design their own approach to meeting our objectives. Results from the internal audit report, monitoring results and anecdotal feedback so far indicate strong support for what we have done. Our monitoring and evaluation regime is not particularly light touch, but reasonably proportionate to our need to oversee a complex area.
<b>Equality</b>	
4. Which individuals or groups are likely to be affected by this policy?	All groups of students on vocational programmes and many FEC/HEI staff should be affected by the implementation of the LLN initiative. While the specific aim of LLNs is not to increase or widen participation from particular target groups, the nature of LLNs is such that LLNs are likely to have the greatest impact on lower socio-economic groups and may also have an impact on gender representation, eg attracting more women into engineering and increasing male participation overall. Impact on minority ethnic groups may not be as significant. LLNs will also increase engagement with part-time, adult and work-based learners and with learners on non-traditional routes into HE such as apprenticeships. LLNs will be tracking learners, the LLN evaluation will consider the impact of LLNs in terms of equalities, and data analysis will look at student characteristics. The outcomes of these will determine any future action.
5. What is the likely impact on these groups (is it positive, negative or neutral)?	The impact should be generally positive as improved progression pathways are likely to impact on widening participation, fair access and disadvantaged groups in particular. Thus, although the LLN initiative is not particularly explicit on the impact on diversity, equality and similar issues, these principles are embedded in it.

6. If negative, what actions have been taken to mitigate the impact?	N/A
7. Can this policy be used to promote equality? If so, how?	Yes – there are opportunities to more actively promote equality and possibly even measure aspects of this in the evaluation. This would require more work from the LLN team and possibly require some equality training. There is also scope to incorporate more equality information in LLN guidance and/or use it as a business case criterion.
<b>Sustainable development</b>	
8. What is the likely impact of this policy on sustainable development? Is it positive, negative or neutral?	Some LLNs are widely dispersed, potentially resulting in some travelling. However this may be small due to the increasing trend for distance and e-learning resulting in students being able to study at home or at work. Some LLN funding has a capital element with all the impacts on sustainability that new buildings can bring, both positive and negative. In the long term, it is hoped that a more educated population will have a beneficial effect on sustainable development, eg through greater efficiency of the economy, although there is scope for these to have a negative effect too. These effects are intangible and immeasurable.
9. If negative, what actions have been taken to mitigate the impact?	Giving HEIs autonomy and flexibility in how they deliver LLNs encourages them to do so efficiently and in a way which suits them. It is assumed that much work is done via PC networks.
10. How can this policy be used to positively promote the sustainable development agenda? Please indicate how you have maximised these opportunities or why you have been unable to do so.	Apart from the various economic benefits associated with a more highly educated population, this was not explicitly considered. There is very little capital funding associated with the programme and so opportunities to promote sustainable development are limited. When the programme is reviewed it will be possible to consider sustainable development issues in more depth and this might include for example, encouraging student programmes to consider the sustainable development agenda, or considering the sustainable development implications of any capital developments. However, there would be limited value in examining this in any depth across all LLNs.
<b>Certification by director</b>	<p>I have concluded that the balance of costs and benefits appears to provide a good justification for this activity and that the proposed measure is well designed to minimise burden to HEIs. I also conclude that due consideration has been given to issues of equality and sustainable development and that the policy has been designed as far as possible to promote these areas.</p> <p>Signed</p> <p>Date</p>

Or

From the assessment undertaken, the following additional issues should be considered in order to fully justify the proposed policy/initiative.
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