

SOUTH WEST OBSERVATORY

Skills and Learning
Intelligence Module



Findings and messages for policy and practice

A report of the SWRSP Research Programme
2005 - 2007

Produced by SLIM

On behalf of the South West Regional Skills
Partnership

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FOREWORD

The South West Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) Research Forum, supported by SLIM, has facilitated and enabled key partners within the region to work together on a range of research and development priorities.

These activities have expanded our knowledge of the labour market, learning and skills needs in the region and provided an evidence base for the work of the RSP and its partners. The 2005-2007 Research Programme, which is the subject of this report, and which has supported the RSP drew to a close on 30 November 2007. So this is a good time to reflect on the programme and ask, “what did we learn”?

This report presents some selected highlights from our work. Of course if you feel moved to read the source reports, then all of these can be found on the SLIM website – www.swslim.org.uk. Further references appear throughout this report.

Whilst the Research Programme has come to an end, this does not mean that the interesting and valuable research work into skills issues will be discontinued. The RSP has a new set of priorities and SLIM will continue to work closely with the Partnership and individual partners to ensure that the evidence base for skills and learning is maintained.

This report is therefore intended as a record of achievement and also to stand as testament to the crucial partnership approach and the hard work of those involved in directing and carrying out the research on behalf of the region. SLIM would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have co-operated in research activities for their valuable contribution to the work that has been produced.

Chris Evans
Director
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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the report of the work of the South West Regional Skills Partnership (RSP)¹ Research Forum and its programme of research 2005 - 2007. The Research Forum brought together research experts from the key partners and stakeholders in the region (see acknowledgement section for list) to monitor the health of the labour market in the region, assess the effectiveness of current policies and programmes, and to co-ordinate research required to deliver the RSP. The Forum's primary remit was to provide the RSP and its Task and Finish groups with a robust evidence base and advice on skills, learning and employment research matters.

SLIM provided the secretariat to the Research Forum and managed the research programme on its behalf. The research programme was enabled thanks to the Research and Knowledge Fund, set up in December 2004 with the support of £250,000 Technical Assistance over a 3 year period from the European Social Fund (ESF). Match-funding contributions were also secured from the South West of England Regional Development Agency (RDA) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Additional match-funding was obtained from Exeter University (via SLIM) and the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). Funding from the LSC Train to Gain Capacity Building programme also enabled a programme of research and development on skills brokerage, a key priority for the RSP in its first phase. SLIM mainstream funding (from the RDA) further contributed to the work programme, particularly in relation to labour market analysis.

Following the production of the South West Regional Skills Enterprise and Employment Analysis 2007/2008, SLIM produced the RSP Statement of Priorities, which outlined new regional priorities for the SWRSP for 2007- 2010. The RSP Research Forum came to an end in the November 2007 and has now been replaced by the Performance Monitoring Group which brings together responsibility for monitoring RSP and partner activities, whilst maintaining an overview of research needs. This will ensure that future research work will, as has been the case since the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA), be closely aligned with the RSP priorities.

The purpose of this report is to review the Research Programme, its contents and impact. What did we learn and how did it support the work of the RSP and its partners? This is a record of what has been achieved.

The report is presented as follows: Section 2 provides some of the background and role of the Research Forum; Section 3 outlines the projects, funding and contracting arrangements; Section 4 draws out the lessons learned; Section 5 contains the overarching conclusions. Details of the projects are provided in Annex A.

¹ The RSP was formerly known as the SWESA, a development from the South West Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA). The RSP will be used throughout this report to refer to the existing partnership and its predecessor bodies.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Role of the Research Forum

The Research Forum was established in 2003 to bring together key research expertise from across the region in the field of skills and learning, and replaced the SW Labour Market Research Network. It formed an integral part of the FRESA and developed to support the work of the RSP, with SLIM providing the secretariat.

The functions of the Research Forum have developed alongside that of the RSP itself. At a regional level, the role of the RSP is to offer strategic validation in relation to:

- Evidence of the problems and challenges facing the skills and enterprise market in the region;
- The setting of regional priorities and objectives taking into account the objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy and, in particular, support for important sectors;
- The co-ordination of regional activities on skills and enterprise;
- Assessing progress and achievements; and
- Representing the views of the regional skills and enterprise agenda within and outside the region.

The role of the RSP was also to provide:

- Strategic direction;
- Identifying barriers to success and leading the development of responses;
- Developing data and measures of performance;
- Commissioning research to inform strategy;
- Overseeing the implementation of the strategy;
- Reporting on progress; and
- Creating task and finish groups as required.

The Research Forum supported this by:

- Consulting the RSP, the core Partnership, the Working Groups and Activity Groups on research needs and advising on methods;
- Identifying gaps in research to inform and develop the Regional Skills Strategy;
- Reviewing the health of the labour market;
- Initiating and managing research activities on behalf of RSP and partners;
- Undertaking performance monitoring;
- Highlighting strategic issues, based upon research evidence;
- Disseminating research findings to other audiences within the SW region in support of the strategy; and
- Co-ordinating research activity between Research Forum / RSP partner organisations.

In addition, in response to the recommendations of the *Demand and Supply Report*, the Research Forum took responsibility for:

- Streamlining and improving the coherence of labour market intelligence;

- Improving the relevance of data;
- Better co-ordination of the region's research resources.

It is important also to note that the research climate within the region has changed dramatically during the period of the Research Forum and the capacity of the key organisations to support research has been severely impeded. The existence of this Research Programme and the partnership approach which has underpinned it has provided a consistent platform for the skills and employment research agenda during a time of change.

2.2 Financial Arrangements

The 2005-2007 Research Programme was resourced by three main funding sources:

- South West RSP Research and Knowledge Development Fund (R&KD);
- LSC Train to Gain Capacity Building Programme (TtoG);
- SLIM mainstream contract (SLIM).

Details of these funding streams are set out below:

2.2.1 RSP Research and Knowledge Fund

Funding research activities is always a challenge. The initial approach of the Forum was to bid for funds to support research projects on an ad hoc basis. However, this proved time consuming and militated against effective planning.

On behalf of the Forum therefore, SLIM made an application for ESF Objective 3 funding for a three year period, to secure support for RSP-related research and knowledge dissemination activities.

The total fund budget was £572,727, (see Annex B for the annual financial profile), with ESF Objective 3 Technical Assistance providing around £250,000 over a three year period. Commitment to match funding was provided by the RDA, LSC and the LSDA in the following amounts:

SW RDA	£225,000
SW LSC	£60,000
LSDA	£30,000

The bid allowed for an annual Healthy Labour Market Review and supported the Research Forum in delivering its remit to:

- consult the RSP and its working groups on research needs;
- Identify gaps in research;
- Advise on research methods;
- Initiate and manage research and development activities;
- Disseminate research findings.

2.2.2 Train to Gain Capacity Building Programme

A total of £300,000 was made available to develop a series of research and capacity building activities in support of the Train to Gain skills brokerage service. As skills brokerage was a priority for the RSP, this enabled a programme of research on skills brokerage and contributed to the overall funding of the research programme.

2.2.3 SLIM Mainstream Contract

SLIM is funded by the RDA and ESF Technical Assistance to provide a range of analysis and dissemination services to the partners in the South West. Those resources directed towards research work and learning themes is therefore reported as a contribution to the Research Programme. The exact sums have not been disaggregated here.

2.2.4 Total funding

Combining the funding sources highlighted above, the breakdown of funders is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Research Programme Funders

Funder	
European Social Fund	£ 358k
South West of England Regional Development Agency	£ 220k
Learning and Skills Council	£ 298k
Exeter University	£ 89k
Learning & Skills Development Agency	£ 10k
Connexions	£ 8k
Acas	£ 3k
Total	£ 986k

2.3 The Role of SLIM

From its inception, SLIM was responsible for providing the secretariat for the Research Forum and Research Programme. SLIM and the Research Forum were charged with responsibility for agreeing and monitoring progress on all of the projects undertaken within the Research Programme. In addition they were responsible for the allocation of funding through the Research and Knowledge Development Fund.

SLIM was the project budget-holder and accountable body for the Research and Knowledge Development Fund. On behalf of the Research Forum, SLIM developed an annual research planning process in order to synchronise with the planning cycles of the main funding agencies, to ensure that the research results were integrated with resource allocation.

SLIM worked closely with the RSP and its working groups to identify a need for research or intelligence support, proposed a methodology and budget for the project and established a cross partnership steering group. Once agreed, SLIM developed the project specification for each project into an invitation to tender (ITT) for the work. Where the Research Forum felt that a project was best delivered internally by SLIM then the work was undertaken on an 'ESF costs' only basis.

The project Steering Groups oversaw the delivery of projects along with the all dissemination and mainstreaming activities. These costs (publications, mailings, workshops, dissemination events) were built into budgets for each contracted project. A project update was delivered to the RDA and the Forum on a monthly basis.

Project outputs depended on the nature of the work being undertaken. Many resulted in published reports which were widely disseminated. Other projects were scoping studies where the report was for the internal use of the commissioning agency, such as the Workplace Employment Relations Survey report for ACAS. Many of the Skills Brokerage activities have contributed directly to ongoing training and development requirements and further capacity building through workshops.

Section 3 lists the projects and resulting outcomes.

3. RESEARCH PROGRAMME - PROJECTS

3.1 RSP Priorities

The Research Programme supported the key priorities of the RSP, which, over the period of the programme, included the following themes:

- Leadership and Management
- Joint Planning
- Skills for Life
- Skills Brokerage

From April 2007 these became:

- Leadership and Management
- Enterprise Skills
- Creativity and Innovation
- Level 3 skills and above to meet sector needs

Sub-priorities

- Migrant Workers
- Information Advice and Guidance
- Young People not in Education, Employment or Training

In addition to these priorities, partners were able to propose common research interests that could be included in the programme if the need was established.

3.2 The approach

To maximise the impact of the work it was essential to engage partners and stakeholders in agreeing the critical questions, investigating the existing evidence base and advising partners on research gaps. The project specifications were then developed in consultation with key stakeholders and potential consumers of the research and Steering Groups established with cross-partner membership, to oversee the research. Research was then either commissioned externally or where agreed with the Research Forum or by funders, conducted by SLIM. The final stage was to disseminate the findings through reports and briefings, the SLIM website, workshops, seminars and presentations.

Some of the projects were conducted as SLIM Learning Themes. Learning Themes focused on a particular issue which was prominent nationally and/or regionally and provided an opportunity to develop an evidence base and gain an understanding of stakeholder views. Collaboration with practitioners and policy-makers in the region therefore underpinned the Learning Theme approach. Literature reviews, mapping of good practice, e mail debates, and interviews with experts and stakeholders formed the basis of the Learning Theme activities, culminating in a regional workshop and final report. The actions and recommendations were then fed back to the RSP Board or Task Group and disseminated widely to organisations in the region.

The Research Programme projects have been diverse, ranging from reviews of the South West labour market and economy (e.g. Healthy Labour Market Review), the South West Regional Skills Enterprise

and Employment Analysis 2007/2008 and Level 3 research. More focused projects have also taken place where more insight has been requested by partners reviewing specific issues, such as a view of Enterprise Education (14-19 age group) in the South West; a look at embedded skills for life; and generic employability skills.

Published reports were accompanied by an Executive Summary which was distributed widely to organisations in the region, the main reports being available for download.

In the case of the Skills Brokerage work, many of the projects were training and development activities where the emphasis lay on knowledge dissemination.

3.3 List of projects

The funding has enabled some 40 identifiable research and development projects to take place.

The table below references the projects by theme and also details the timing of the research, budget source and provides details of how to access any final outcomes or reports produced where appropriate.

The majority of the projects have been carried out in-house by SLIM but specific activities have been sub-contracted (specifically those funded through the Research and Knowledge Development Fund). The following table provides a breakdown of who carried out the research.

Full details of individual projects are contained in Annex A, including a short abstract, rationale, methodology and key findings.

Table 2: List of 2005-2007 Research Programme Projects

Research and Knowledge Projects Project Title	Theme	Timing	Contractor	Budget source/ source/	Final Outcome/ Report
1.1 Sector Balance Sheet 1	Joint Planning	April 05-Dec 05	Step Ahead Research	R&KD £27.5k	Balance sheet available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/labourmarket/sectors/sector-balance-sheet.asp
1.2 Dynamic Performance of the South West Labour Market	Joint Planning	Aug 05 – Sep 06	University of Bristol	R&KD £19k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/swesrf/280605-dynamism.pdf
1.3 Learning Theme: Regional Implementation of National Sector Skills Agreements.	Joint Planning	Sep 2005 to report in Dec 2005	SLIM	SLIM £33k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/themes/lt11-report.pdf
1.4 NESS 2005 Regional and Local Reports	Joint Planning	Mar – Nov 2006	BMG Research	R&KD TtoG £46k	Reports available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/ness05-report.pdf http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/ness/05/regional/somerset.pdf http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/ness/05/regional/bdp.pdf http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/ness/05/regional/westofengland.pdf http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/ness/05/regional/gloucestershire.pdf http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/ness/05/regional/devoncornwall.pdf http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/ness/05/regional/wiltshireswindon.pdf

1.5 ESF Impact Study	Joint Planning	Mar – Aug 2006	EKOS Consulting	Obj 3 RC bid £45k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/sl2411.pdf
1.6 Sector Balance Sheet 2	Joint Planning	April 06-July 06	Step Ahead Research SLIM	R&KD £45k	http://www.swslim.org.uk/labourmarket/sectors/sector-balance-sheet.asp
1.7 Healthy Labour Market Review 2005 and 2006 (update)	Joint Planning	April 06 –Dec 06	SLIM	SLIM	Access to all HLMR reports: http://www.swslim.org.uk/research/hlmr/index.asp
1.8 Business Link Core Data	Joint Planning	Apr 06 – Jun 06	Innovacion Research	R&KD £7k	Not published – Internal use only
1.9 Learning Theme: – Level 3	Joint Planning	Aug 06- Apr 07	SLIM	SLIM £45k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/themes/themes-past.asp?theme_ID=22
1.10 Gap Analysis	Joint Planning	Sep 06 - Apr 07	SLIM	SLIM R&KD £40k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/labourmarket/swrsp/gapanalysis/index.asp
1.11 Workplace Employment	Joint Planning	Jan 07 - May 07	Crews Associates	R&KD £4.5k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/research/slim-reports.asp

Relations Survey					
1.12 Objective One ESF Impact Assessment	Joint Planning	Jan 07-Mar 08	SLIM	Oj1 ESF £85k	Interim report available from SLIM
1.13 Balanced Scorecard (replaced by Performance Monitoring Scorecard)	Joint Planning	From 05	SLIM	SLIM	Reports available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/labourmarket/swrsp/index.asp
1.14 RSP Performance Monitoring Framework	Joint Planning	Jun 07, reporting quarterly to 2010	SLIM	SLIM	Report available from SLIM
2.1 Train to Gain Broker Regional Awareness Workshop Programme	Brokerage	Apr 06 - Oct 06	SLIM Learning South West	TtoG £100k	Only available on Broker Website.

2.2 Skills Utilisation	Brokerage	May 06	Gareth James	TtoG £15k	Ref: http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/gapanalysis/skillsutilisation.doc
2.3 Train to Gain Regional Case Studies	Brokerage	May 06	Gareth James	TtoG £17.5k	Broker website only
2.4 Labour market knowledge	Brokerage	May 06	SLIM	TtoG £15k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/TheLabourMarketHandbook.pdf
2.5 Train to Gain managers strategic event	Brokerage	May 07	SLIM Howard Jones	TtoG £12.5k	Internal LSC document
2.6 Broker Website	Brokerage	Oct 06	SLIM	TtoG £5k	Broker Website
2.7 Train to Gain Skills Audit (1) and (2)	Brokerage	Oct/Nov 06 Nov 07	SLIM Marylin Hartwell	TtoG £10k	Internal LSC document
2.8 Train to Gain LSC/BL Away Day	Brokerage	Feb 07	SLIM	TtoG £12k	Internal LSC document
2.9 Higher Level Skills Intermediaries	Brokerage	27 Jun 07	SLIM	TtoG £7k	Internal LSC/HERDA document

Induction event					
2.10 South West Skills Brokers Regional Conference	Brokerage	June 07	SLIM	TtoG £23k	Broker website only
2.11 LSC Partnership Managers and Provider events	Brokerage	Sept 07	SLIM	TtoG £2k	Internal LSC document
2.12 Integration of Brokerage Services	Brokerage	Feb 07	SLIM	TtoG £20k	Project yet to be completed
2.13 LSC/BL Away Day on Plan for Growth	Brokerage	Dec 07	SLIM	TtoG £1.5k	Internal LSC document
2.14 Large and medium size companies research	Brokerage	Jan 07 – Mar 07	SLIM	TtoG £14	Project yet to be completed
3.1 Review of Leadership and management	Leadership and Management	March 2006-July 2007	SLIM	R&KD £15k	Internal RDA document

4.1 Employer perspectives of Skills for Life	Skills for Life	Oct 2007	The EPS Team	R&KD £36k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/sl2560.pdf
4.2 Embedded Skills for Life	Skills for Life	Mar 07	SLIM	South West Skills for Life Unit £9.5k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/SL2558.pdf
5.1 Enterprise Skills	Enterprise Education	July 2007, ongoing	SLIM	R&KD £55k earmarked but not spent	Yet to be published
6.1 Learning Theme: Migrant workers	Migrant Workers	Oct 05-Apr 06	SLIM	SLIM £23k	Report available at: /themes/themes-past.asp?theme_ID=21
6.2 Migrant Workers in the South West	Migrant Workers	Nov 07	SLIM Redbox Research Crews Associates	R&KD £20k	Report available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/sl2563.pdf
7.1 Learning Theme: Young People: Employment	Employability	Apr 05-Oct 05	SLIM	SLIM £21k	Report available: http://www.swslim.org.uk/themes/themes-past.asp?theme_ID=19

Without Training					
7.2 Flexible Training Solutions	Employability	April 05-Feb 06	Host Policy Consultancy Anne-Marie Warrender	R&KD £39k	Toolkit available at: http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/sl2559.pdf
7.3 Employment without Training Connexions project	Employability	June 2006-Dec 07	SLIM University of Exeter	R&KD £66k	To be published Feb / March 2008
7.4 Generic Employability Skills Phase 2	Employability	Jul 06 – Jan 07	Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning, University of Nottingham	R&KD £39k	Report available on http://www.swslim.org.uk/research/ges/
8.1 LSRN Conference	Other	Apr - Jul 07	SLIM LSRN	R&KD £10k	Successful event held.
8.2 ESRC/ Regional Skills Partnership Conference	Other	Jun 05	SLIM	R&KD £59k £32k net	Successful event held. £27k income generated.

4. WHAT WE LEARNED?

The real measure of the RSP's Research Programme is the extent to which it extends our knowledge and informs policy and practice. Measuring impact can take time and it may only become obvious some time after the project is completed. It is important to note that some of the projects within the programme are recently completed and therefore the impact is yet to be felt. This section considers the contribution that the Programme made to our understanding of the issues and to the development of the RSP priorities.

4.1 Joint Planning

Joint planning requires a shared analysis and understanding of the region's skills and employment needs. Commissioned by SLIM, the Healthy Labour Market Review process has, on an annual basis, provided a review of the key labour market indicators. The indicator Framework was originally designed by a team from the Institute of Employment Studies at Sussex University. This framework was then the subject of scrutiny and debate by a team of respected academics.

The resulting indicators were then grouped into:

- **Broad outcome indicators** – output and productivity, economic activity, population and migration;
- **Closer to policy indicators** – Businesses Generation, Enterprise & Innovation, Vacancies Labour Turnover, Redundancies; and
- **Learning and Training indicators** – Participation, Qualifications, and Skills for Life.

SLIM has since maintained and developed the indicator Framework, reporting any significant changes to the RSP Board on an annual basis. The Review has painted a picture of a region which continues to enjoy a high degree of labour demand, a well-qualified workforce, and efficient and equitable functioning between the demand and supply sides of the market. On these indicators, this region appears to be more 'healthy' than any other region with the exception of the South East.

Yet despite this relatively rosy picture, a number of indicators point to the fact that the region is operating in a low-skills equilibrium. Productivity is low, and lower than one would expect given the region's highly qualified workforce. Employers report few skills gaps within their workforces, and little difficulty recruiting the skills they need from the external workforce.

A significant problem is presented by the markedly differing fortunes of the region. Low output per head, low earning levels and relatively high unemployment dominate the picture for the west of the region, while the reverse is the case for the north and the east of the region.

In 2006, with a new Chair and Director in place, the RSP sought a root and branch review of the labour market, including a better understanding of both the region's needs and the responses of the regional partners to these needs. What became known as the 'Gap' analysis, the *South West Regional Skills, Enterprise and Employment Analysis 2007/8*, led to the development of a set of new strategic priorities for the RSP for 2007-2010 (see Section 3.1).

Three key themes emerged from the analysis of the needs of the region, all of which were closely linked to the region's competitiveness. They were:

- Productivity – to ensure that South West businesses have access to the right skills and business practices to improve their productivity;
- Progression – to ensure the availability of effective routes for progression to enable people to maximise their potential within the workforce, addressing issues of equality and diversity;
- Sustainability – to ensure that the development of the region is sustainable, maximizing the impact of the public resources that are deployed, encouraging investment by individuals and businesses, and planning for the future.

The Government skills strategy had placed a requirement on RSPs to undertake a review of Level 3 skills in the region. Conducted as a Learning Theme, SLIM undertook a Level 3 review, published alongside the Gap analysis. The Review found that skill shortages and gaps at Level 3 were heavily focused in a number of sectors, and were closely linked to problems in skilled trades. If future demand for Level 3 skills is to be met, it would require a significant shift in policy towards support for Level 3 skills and this has since been confirmed by the Leitch Report and the Government's response to it. The Review identified priority sectors for Level 3 skills and this work is a continuing priority for the RSP.

Key to the understanding of labour market need is knowing the needs of employers. To what extent are employers in the region suffering skills shortages and skills gaps? To answer this question, and with the support of the LSC, SLIM commissioned a detailed regional and local review of the National Employer Skills Survey (NESS). Undertaken on a bi-annual basis, this provides the most up-to-date and detailed picture of employer skills issues in the region and is used not only by the RSP but also by the LSC for regional planning purposes.

European Funding is a critical resource for the region, providing funding for its skills, employment and enterprise activities. As the region moved to new arrangements with the new Competitiveness and Convergence Funds, it was important to reflection the lessons learned from the previous Fund arrangements, both to underpin the development of the new programmes and inform new evaluation strategies. Two pieces of work have significantly added to our understanding here. The Objective 1 Impact Analysis, whilst due for completion in 2008, has gathered a wide range of evidence from reviews of evaluation studies, stakeholder feedback, focus groups and project data and are currently being analysed; interim findings were disseminated in autumn 2007 and are being considered as the new programme develops.

The *ESF Objective 3 Impact Analysis* identified a range of key success factors for the implementation of competitiveness funding in the 2007 – 2013 period. The report produced recommendations for the region to feed into the National Strategic Reference Framework Document, which set the framework for South West programmes. The project also identified a range of funding priorities that the region wished to see taken forward under the new programmes including: within the workless population, those who required more support before they are ready to access mainstream provision such as New Deal; skills for people irrespective of age; NVQ Level 3, irrespective of age, where there are skills shortages e.g. construction; Leadership and Management skills; workforce development in areas not covered by Train to Gain i.e. not first Level 2 qualification; and in-depth support for people wishing to start their own business, especially where this addresses social priorities such as worklessness.

Finally, monitoring the performance and impact of the RSP and its partners has become an increasingly important feature of the work. Together with regional partners, SLIM managed a Balanced Scorecard approach to review the performance of the RSP. This has now been replaced by

the Performance Monitoring Framework which brings together a set of indicators allowing both the RSP priorities and those of its partners to be regularly appraised and analysed. This, too, is being produced by SLIM.

4.2 Brokerage

Skills Brokerage was a priority for the RSP in its initial phase and continues to be an issue of importance being pursued by an RSP Brokerage Task Group. The launch of the Government's Train to Gain programme brought with it a commitment to develop a national skills brokerage service to provide impartial advice to employers on their business and skills needs. Within the South West, the LSC commissioned the service and the contract was awarded to a Business Link consortium.

The Train to Gain Capacity Building programme provided funding to support capacity building within the skills brokerage services, as well as for training providers. SLIM was awarded a contract to support these activities and at the same time to support the skills brokerage priority of the RSP.

The work commissioned was a combination of research and training and development activities aimed at improving the understanding and therefore effectiveness of skills brokers.

A key feature of the work was the development of a series of Regional Awareness Workshops attended by all the region's skills brokers. The purpose of the workshops was to: brief skills brokers on the key features of the South West skills market and also to provide them with the knowledge and skills to maintain this knowledge base; to support brokers in preparing for the Broker standards; to introduce brokers to key regional partners and gain an understanding of agreed ways of working and protocols; to raise awareness and understanding of skills for life and diversity issues in the region; and to provide an up-to-date evidence base for the business case for skills/training and skills utilisation.

All brokers completed their training and met the broker standards. To support ongoing CPD activities, SLIM conducted two skills audits, one at the end of 2006 and one a year later. These identified areas for continued skill development. The LSC has used the audits to support Business Link with their CPD activities and Business Link itself designed a programme of activities to support the identified needs.

A range of research projects contributed to the materials for the broker training, including research into skills utilisation, the development of a labour market handbook, a range of employer case studies and a toolkit on skills for life. The skills utilisation work found that leaders and managers, at all levels, have a major influence on skills utilisation and that it is useful for brokers to be able to differentiate between training issues and skills utilisation problems. The fact that skills utilisation is also a channel through which increased performance and return on investment in training can be realised is a potential hook. During the planning of training, it can be useful to develop an understanding of the issues that will assist or hinder the application of skills in the workplace. The research also found that skills utilisation is more achievable when training is 'joined up' with other aspects of the business, including operational and people management and that training can act as a catalyst for releasing existing skills into the workplace. This work was also referenced extensively and informed the Gap analysis referred to in Section 4.1 above.

As the brokerage service progressed, a range of planning and development activities were supported by SLIM including: planning sessions; the development of a broker website and a skills audit of brokers; and an induction session for Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Project intermediaries.

At the time of writing, a Review of the Integration of Brokerage Services is underway and is due to report. This will inform future regional discussions about brokerage integration across the range of partners in the region.

The refocusing of Training to Gain, as the result of the publication, *A Plan for Growth*, towards larger and medium-sized employers is also being informed by a piece of work identifying key employers and understanding their needs. This will report in March 2008.

4.3 Leadership and Management

Leadership and Management is a key strategic priority for the South West RSP and, given the primacy afforded Leadership and Management as a driver of improved productivity and the utilisation of skills, an appreciation of the quality and scale of provision within the region is key.

With the RSP Leadership and Management strategy still in the early stages of development, there was a need to understand the range and breadth of activities currently underway in the region. To this end, the RSP commissioned a preliminary scoping study outlining Leadership and Management training and development.

This research, along with other recent regional Leadership and Management activities has contributed to the work of the RSP's Leadership and Management Task and Finish group, and is forming the basis for the establishment of a cohesive Leadership and Management strategy for the South West.

4.4 Skills for Life

Close liaison with the South West Skills for Life Unit has meant that there is a strong collaboration on the region's research agenda.

Two projects were conducted under this theme. We know that many workers, particularly those in low skilled, low paid employment have problems with literacy, numeracy, and in the case of many migrant workers, language. The challenge in terms of raising the level of skills for life within the region is increasing employers' understanding of the issues and encouraging them to invest in developing these skills within the workforce.

By mapping demand and supply for Skills for Life, we will have a clearer view of the impact of available training within workplace settings for literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Employers will benefit by improved access to a better skilled workforce through training available and good practice emerging under Skills for Life, and providers will be able to match delivery with a better picture of the scale of need – patchy across some sectors and widespread in others, but in which rapid change throughout is anticipated.

The *Workplace Perspectives on Skills for Life* aimed to improve our understanding of how well employers understood the issues, their attitudes to it and the solutions that they had sought to deal with it. The presence of an increasing number of migrant workers also saw a large focus on ESOL provision. The research found a wide spectrum of views, closely related to the size of firm. It also found that many employers were ignorant of the issues. At the same time employers wishing to support training found difficulties in accessing appropriate solutions, yet at the same time were developing a range of innovative responses.

Embedding skills for life into the delivery of vocational training and staff development is of course one solution, but to what extent is this taking place and how well equipped are providers to do this. However, the research found that specific awareness and uptake of Embedded Skills for Life practice in its diverse forms seems only to be current amongst Skills for Life tutors and tutor trainers. A distinct cultural divide exists between private training providers and others concerned with employer engagement and workplace delivery, and college-based Skills for Life practitioners who were considered 'specialist sub-contractors'.

For those working more directly with employers, encouraging them to take up vocational training of any description was more of a priority than embedding or discretely delivering Skills for Life. This attitude appeared to predate more recent experiences with Train to Gain although the latter has acted to reinforce it to an extent. Also, feedback from providers suggests that there is a dynamic tension between embedded vs discrete (standalone) delivery of Skills for Life. The tension works in two different directions, as funding is perceived to follow discrete delivery and hence not support embedded approaches.

4.5 Enterprise Skills

The Regional Economic Strategy recognises the need to build a culture of innovation and enterprise within the South West. It states that the region needs to concentrate on added value through ideas, knowledge and technology.

Research was commissioned looking at Enterprise Education. Following a departmental review meeting with the RSP board, the issue of enterprise education in the region's schools was raised and concerns expressed that more could be known and done in this arena.

Since the work started reviewing Enterprise Education in Schools, Enterprise Skills has become a priority for the SWRSP.

The research undertaken was directly aimed at gaining a better understanding of Enterprise Education and surrounding issues, which would enable a regional enterprise learning initiative to be piloted, led by the RDA.

4.6 Migrant Workers

The Research Programme has supported two significant projects on migrant working which have helped to raise awareness of the impact and issues concerning migrant workers. Both projects have shed light on the scale and nature of migrant working as well as the issues they face and the impact on employers and the local communities. The research shows very clearly that migrant workers have made a significant economic contribution to the region, solving employers' recruitment and skills shortages. Evidence on intention to stay is contradictory with local studies of migrant workers indicating that migrant workers are intending to stay for longer than indicated by official statistics.

The research has also shed valuable light on the state of local intelligence and activities, trade unions, voluntary and community organisations and local authorities.

Of significance is the enormous increase in demand for ESOL provision in the region and the extent to which this is meeting needs.

4.7 Employability

Whilst not a priority of the RSP, the theme of employability emerged strongly as a common interest of partners and support was forthcoming from agencies such as the LSC and Connexions for research projects in these areas.

Raising the participation of young people in education and training is a central aim of government. However, a relatively small but significant number of young people who enter employment between the ages of 16-18 do so without the benefit of training. This represents not only a wasted opportunity, but also links to potential problems for the future.

The Learning Theme on *Young People in Employment without Training* considered the issues and barriers faced by young people, by employers and by those working to support young people in making more effective choices. The Learning Theme found that those wishing to take the work-based route face a complex maze of different provision and qualifications, variable quality advice, and stigma attached to the vocational route. Employers too were confused and ill-informed about the support that was available to them in providing work-based training.

The Learning Theme prompted a more detailed, longitudinal piece of work, supported by the Connexions services in the region. The proportion of young people in jobs without training (JWT) is higher in the South West than across England as a whole. The Chief Executive of Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Connexions service (where it has been higher still) took this as a concern to the LSC and RDA in 2005. The SW RSP set up a Steering Group, and obtained funding from ESF, LSC and Connexions to set up the research project. Young people in JWT is an under-researched area and by aiming to learn more about the characteristics, enthusiasms and interests of the young people themselves, the aim was to add significantly to existing knowledge and inform both policy-makers, as well as front-line Connexions staff. Additionally, by involving Connexions PAs (Personal Advisors) in the research process, it has contributed to research capacity-building in the sector. It is anticipated that the work will lead to greater understanding on the part of agencies in the region of how to work with these young people.

One of the critical issues for employers is recruiting people with adequate employability skills. The work on Generic Employability Skills, undertaken by the Centre for Developing and Evaluating

Lifelong Learning, University of Nottingham, set out to identify the range of skills and attributes that could be considered to constitute 'generic employability'. It also set out the range of approaches identified, formal qualifications, and illustrated their effectiveness in different settings through the use of case studies. A regional conference was held, presentations were given to regional bodies and at a Neil Stewart Associates conference nationally, and also developed as a web-based tool. Interest has been expressed by overseas parties. 200 full reports and 300 Guides have been distributed.

4.8 Other

Since the demise of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), SLIM, through the Research Programme, provided support for the region's Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN) with specific support for two annual research conferences. The conferences provided an opportunity for further dissemination of the Research Forum's work within the region to a key audience, teachers, tutors and researchers, thereby enabling the research findings to reach practitioners.

Wider regional audiences were also important. In collaboration with the ESRC, SLIM organised a conference on the impact of globalisation on regional development. The conference, based in the region, drew a national audience to see and hear presentations from key presentations from academia, government and policy bodies. It was able to showcase the work of the region in this important field.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The SWRSP Research Programme has supported a considerable amount of regional research and development activity. This has been achieved primarily by a partnership approach to the identifying of regional research needs, commissioning and funding. This has enabled the RSP and its partners to develop a solid evidence base to support policy-making decisions and inform practice.

The programme has supported over 40 successful projects which have ranged from reviewing and tracking the skills economy of the South West to focusing on more specific skills issues where a need has been identified by partners.

Projects have engaged policy makers and practitioners to develop and share knowledge. Dissemination activities have ensured that the outcomes of the research have reached a wide audience within the region and beyond. For many of the projects, there has been a clear route for findings and recommendations to be fed into the decision making process.

The effectiveness of the Research Programme can be attributed to the following:

- Funding – the SWRSP Research and Knowledge Fund, Train to Gain Capacity Building Funding and SLIM support has enabled monies to be utilised to enhance regional research activities to aid future planning.
- Joint working – working with partners has ensured that knowledge was shared and disseminated effectively, and that resources were used effectively.
- Cross-agency representation – partners from different agencies have ensured a diversity of input and research focus. It has also aided the gathering and exchanging of evidence as well as providing a wider dissemination base.
- Defined projects – projects have been commissioned due to a specific need being identified. Crucial to achieving desired outputs have been well specified project plans designed to achieve the end result.
- Project Management – project specifications have been closely project managed throughout and steering groups and the Research Forum have helped keep projects on track and provided effective monitoring of activities.

The main achievement of Research Programme is the contribution to the awareness of the region's skills issues, and ultimately this has concluded in assisting the RSP in developing its priorities for 2007 – 2010.

Despite that fact the Research Programme and Research Forum have come to an end, research will continue to be an important feature of the RSP. The following structures are currently being explored to replace the Forum and to ensure that the region's research capacity is maintained:

- **Creation of a SW RSP Performance Monitoring Group**

This will meet quarterly to agree the reporting format and data requirements of the performance monitoring framework. Its remit will include identifying specific research projects required to support this work, and analysis of the results. Meetings would take place in April and October to align with the planning cycles of partners and the RSP. Membership of the group will be the research/data managers of the core strategic or funding partners in the region. This will report directly to the SWRSP Board and Alliance.

- **Virtual research network**

This will continue to allow research managers of the key partners and wider partnership to share ideas and research plans. SLIM will continue to send monthly reports on ongoing research projects.

- **Annual SW Skills Research Conference**

An annual meeting will bring together the virtual network to disseminate research work, share research plans and debate research questions. This will be organised by SLIM at an agreed time each year. Invitations could be extended to academics in the region with a skills, employment and enterprise interest.

- **Thematic research panels**

Thematic research panels will be drawn together to debate latest developments in the agreed fields of enquiry, linked to the RSP Research Priorities. These will be linked to the Strategic or Task and Finish Groups of the RSP.

- **Research project reports**

Research funders will continue to receive regular monthly reports of the SLIM research activities and these will be made available more widely to the research network.

- **Research project Steering groups**

As currently, membership will be invited from partners and other experts to form Steering Groups for agreed research projects. This will ensure accountability to commissioning bodies, funders and partners.

- **Sector Operations Group**

The Sector Operations Group is an established group of the RSP and brings together SSDA, SSCs and partners. Requests for specific sector analysis will be routed through this group. SLIM will continue to service the above, although the Sector Operations Group is the responsibility of the RSP.

On behalf of the Research Forum, SLIM would like to thank all those organisations and individuals who supported the Research Programme and commend this report as a record of its achievements.

ANNEX A

In this section, the individual research and development projects are presented in a common format to provide more details about the actual work carried out and the results of that work. The projects have been arranged under their themes, as detailed in sections 3.1 and 4:

- Joint Planning
- Brokerage
- Skills for Life
- Leadership & Management
- Migrant Workers
- Enterprise Skills
- Employability
- Other

A1 Joint Planning

1.1 Sector Balance Sheet Phase 1

Carried out by: Step Ahead

Date Commissioned: April 2005

Date Completed: December 2005

Partnership: The RSP, LSC, SSDA and a range of SSCs and RDA were also on the steering group.

Abstract: The [Sector Balance Sheet](#) is a key regional resource of labour market data at an industry level. It pulls together information that can be provided by key robust data sources such as the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI). The data is presented in a series of spreadsheets at a regional level for SIC, SSC and SWRDA priority sector industry breakdowns.

Keywords: labour market information, labour market data, sector intelligence, sector data.

Rationale: SLIM contracted with consultants, on behalf of the SWRSP Research Forum, to provide a baseline assessment for each SSC, RES and LSC priority sector regarding SW skills and workforce development. This information is needed in the absence of a full set of operational Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs) and a lack of coherence in the data presentation in those which do exist.

Methodology: The methodology was developed by Step Ahead following consideration by SLIM of a national methodology developed by SSDA and developments taking place in two regions (SE and Y and H). The Balance sheet draws together ABI, APS, NESS, LFS and ILR data (courtesy of the LSC). The data is presented in a series of spreadsheets for each major SIC industry breakdown (agriculture, forestry and mining through to health and care and other services), SSC and SWRDA priority sector, covering at a regional level variable sections such as economy, employment, demographics, business and enterprise, skills supply, current and future demand for skills. The data can also be downloaded by each variable section for all SIC, SSC and SWRDA priority sectors.

SLIM has since consulted with Experian who undertake the national sector matrix for SSDA with a view to providing regional breakdowns of the information. It is not yet known whether this will be done.

Key Findings: This is a tool which draws together sectoral data against regional priorities. The information is used by a range of partners to determine sectoral impact of policy. It was used heavily in the development of the RSP Gap Analysis and by the LSC in its regional strategic analysis.

Distribution: The Balance Sheet is now updated on a six-monthly basis and is available on the SLIM website, where spreadsheets can be downloaded. Presentations were made to a range of partners and formal groupings to alert people to the availability of the balance sheet. Information from the balance sheet appears and is credited in a range of regional publications.

Impact: It is understood that the Balance sheet is well used by Sectors, LSC and SSCs. It is also been used extensively by SLIM and underpins a good deal of the sectoral analysis that is required for regional analysis.

Research process feedback: The development of the matrix was an iterative process and the Chair of the SWRSP took on a role on the steering group. This was helpful as decisions about weighting of factors is a policy decision on which he was empowered to advise. As the balance sheet was made available, the steering group and users identified further possible indicators and methods of cross tabulating them. This formed the basis of the stage 2 project.

1.2 Labour Market Dynamism

Carried out by: University of Bristol

Date Commissioned: August 2005 **Date Completed:** September 2006

Steering Group: Project was originated and steered by the Healthy Labour Market Review Group (HLMRG), a sub-group of the Research Forum. It was chaired by Gareth James, then of the LSC.

Report Title: Dynamic Performance of the South West Labour Market

Abstract: This Report uses a dynamic approach to address two issues:

- To provide an interpretation of the snap-shot data on unemployment and vacancies, and to compare the SW labour market with appropriate comparator regions of the UK.
- To provide an analysis of the efficiency with which the SW labour market reallocates workers.

Keywords: Unemployment, Vacancies, Jobs turnover, Labour Market

Rationale: In the Healthy Labour Market Review, difficulties became apparent with the interpretation of data on levels of unfilled vacancies and unemployment. A Healthy Labour Market was viewed as one which effectively matches available people with available jobs. If a region has large numbers of vacancies, this could be seen as a 'good' thing: a sign of a dynamic economy that was replacing old jobs with new ones and keeping pace with global and technology trends. However, if jobs were left unfilled for any significant period of time, this would clearly be a drag on business performance and productivity. Thus the report sought to examine the rate or speed at which the SW labour market, compared to other regions, effectively allocates unemployed people to job vacancies.

Methodology: The report was a desk-based data study of LFS, unemployment and vacancy data, involving:

- Decomposing the unemployment and vacancy stocks into the component inflows and outflows.
- Examining the hiring of workers from unemployment and comparing the capacity of the SW labour market to generate these outflows, accounting for the tightness of the labour market. This approach estimates the structural efficiency of the labour market.
- Examining the rate at which workers move between jobs. Controlling for industry and skill level, we compared the South West labour market with other regions.

Key Findings: The SW labour market has a high unemployment outflow rate, and an unemployment inflow rate somewhat lower than the average. Both of these contribute to the SW's low unemployment rate, particularly the former. This pattern is generally repeated across women and men, across different age groups, and across most occupations. Recent data on inflows of new vacancies suggest that the SW has a high rate of vacancy formation compared to other regions.

These results could be due to a tight labour market or an efficient labour market. The results suggest that the SW sits slightly above the average of UK regions in terms of labour market efficiency, though is not statistically distinguishable from a number of other regions. Looking at how quickly workers move from one job to another, the SW scores highly, having a high rate of reallocation and ranks third after London and the SE.

Distribution: Presentations to SW HLMRG and Research Forum. Electronic distribution via SLIMlines and SLIM website.

Impact: The report supported existing impressions of the SW Labour Market and 'common sense' assumptions that existing low levels of unemployment and reasonably high vacancy levels were positive aspects of our labour market performance. Knowledge that the high levels of vacancies are due to high levels of vacancy formation, rather than large numbers of unfilled vacancies was also encouraging, although based on information from NESS the Healthy Labour Market Review Group had rather assumed this to be the case. The report therefore triangulated and supported existing assumptions rather than leading to radical new directions which would have resulted in changed behaviours and new impacts. Thus the report was primarily useful in supporting existing understandings and giving confidence to SWRSP partners re the validity of their existing analysis and direction.

Research process feedback: The research process proposed by Bristol was effective, although the findings were somewhat qualified by difficulties with data availability. This was due to a change in the way in which data was collated halfway through the time-series. This did not become apparent until some way through the project and rendered the findings somewhat tentative.

1.3 Regional Implementation of National Sector Skills Agreements – Learning Theme

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: September 2005

Date Completed: December 2005

Report Title: Regional Implementation of National Sector Skills Agreements

Abstract: SSAs were announced in the Government White Paper, *21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential White Paper*². They outline long-term plans to address skills needs in different sectors. At the heart of SSAs is employer/provider collaboration.

SSAs represent an important opportunity to understand employer needs better, and to refocus training provision accordingly. This is the report of the SLIM Learning Theme on the Regional Implementation of National Sector Skills Agreements, which looks at the issues faced by the region in understanding and delivering on the emerging range of agreements.

Keywords: Sector skills agreements.

Rationale: The Learning Theme sought to address the following issues:

- How well do the SSAs reflect employer need at regional and local level and what are the key messages to the SSCs yet to produce their SSAs?
- How can local training supply respond to the demands of employers and what do colleges and training providers need from SSAs to translate them into action on the ground?
- At the strategic level, how do we make sense of the range of SSA priorities and match them to the priorities of existing regional and local agencies?

Methodology: The Learning Theme drew on a literature review, (including a review of the first tranche SSAs) which looked at current developments in policy and practice. Telephone interviews took place with a range of key regional stakeholders and the Learning Theme also benefited from a lively online discussion enriched by the expertise of numerous practitioners in the South West.

The Learning Theme culminated in a workshop at Dillington House, Somerset, with seventy participants in attendance representing Sector Skills Councils; colleges and private training providers; Learning and Skills Councils; careers services; higher education; national, regional and local government; the voluntary and community sector; and regional and local initiatives.

² Skills Strategy White Paper - *21st Century Skills - Realising Our Potential*, DfES, 9 July 2003.

The results of this activity were drawn into the report.

Key Findings: The funding system was seen as a major issue in terms of the ability of the training providers to deliver the type of provision that they need. Much work is needed to ensure that unitised learning becomes the way forward.

The major question for stakeholders was how to make sense of the range of SSCs and their priorities, and how these map onto the priorities of the various agencies in the region, the RDA, the LSCs and Jobcentre Plus in particular. The regional perspective allowed for the development of closer partnerships between agencies and SSCs. However, it becomes a challenge when the sector is not necessarily a priority for the region, or does not have effective regional representation.

Recommendations included some practical process issues to enable partners to be informed of the SSA and manage a process to ensure that action is taken forward.

Distribution: The report was widely circulated to those involved in the Learning Theme. The executive summary was distributed to the SLIM distribution list and was available on the SLIM website.

Impact: The evaluation of the Learning Theme demonstrated that the process had helped raise awareness amongst partners of the role of SSAs. Since the Learning Theme, the recommendations presented in the report have been considered by the SSA working group, organised for the Skills for Business Network in the region, and the Sector Inter-Agency Group, a working group of the SWRSP. This is now being taken forward by the Sector Operations Group (SOG) of the Skills for Business Network.

The SSDA nationally also took an interest in the model and SLIM was approached by a range of SSCs nationally, interested in the analysis and recommendations.

1.4 South West NESS 2005 Report

Carried out by: BMG Research

Date Commissioned: March 2006 **Date Completed:** November 2006

Steering Group: Pete Gisborne, LSC, and Laura Smith, SLIM

Report Title: The National Employer Skills Survey 2005 for the South West of England.

Abstract: The NESS05 provides detailed information on levels of skills deficiencies, skills imbalances and recruitment difficulties within the economy. Where skills gaps and recruitment problems occur they can have a substantial impact on organisations' performance. The NESS also measures employers' training activities providing information on the employer response to skills and recruitment difficulties they have identified within their organisation. This report on the survey results in the South West Region highlights the findings with particular reference to regional priorities and priority sectors.

Keywords: Employer skills survey, skills gaps, skills shortages, South West skills needs.

Rationale: This project to analyse and report on the data from the 2005 NESS was commissioned by the RSP formerly and the West of England LSC on behalf of the region.

The NESS is the largest employer survey conducted in England. The South West equated to 7,200 employers.

The NESS05 is part of a longer series of surveys starting with *Skill Needs in Britain* (1990–1998) and followed by the *Employers Skill Surveys* (1999, 2001 and 2002). This series of surveys provides good time series data on employers' recruitment problems, and on skills deficiencies and workforce development activities. As such, the SWRSP, the LLSCs and other regional partners wished to draw on the results from the analysis of the NESS05 with the aim of further developing their understanding of skills needs, gaps and recruitment difficulties in the region and how these can be met whilst meeting targets and strategic priorities.

Methodology: The research was undertaken by desk analysis. The reporting of the NESS05 analysis took into account the four main LSC priorities³ and the four main RSP priorities (see Section 3.1) for action, discussing the implications of the NESS05 analyses for the delivery of these priorities. The SWRSP and LSC priorities were as follows:

- Youth participation (including Apprenticeships);
- Adult level 2 and level 2 at age 19;
- Management and Leadership;
- Adult *Skills for Life* achievement;
- Business brokerage;
- Issues for joint planning in the region.

The report also looked at:

- Demand for level 3;
- School level skills needs;
- Graduate level skills needs;
- Skills gaps and shortages;
- Employer engagement in training and development;
- Training towards recognised qualifications.

To aid the skills planning process, in terms of skills needs, the focus in terms of skills demand and supply was on certificated skills. The following data cuts were included:

³ These relate to the four key targets to increase numbers of 16-18 year olds participating in LSC-funded learning, 19 year olds achieving Level 2 qualifications for the first time, adults achieving Level 2 for the first time, and adults achieving approved Skills for Life qualifications at entry level 3 or above.

Geography – Although the focus was regional, variables were commented on at LLSC level where the analysis showed something of statistical significance. A factsheet summary of each of the LLSC areas of the region was provided.

Sector – The analysis reflected the SSC sectoral breakdown, however, where the analysis showed something of statistical significance, analysis was presented for the LSC priority sectors (*construction, health & social care, retail, engineering sectors and the public sector*⁴) and RDA priority sectors (*advanced engineering, biotechnology, creative industries, enviro-technologies, food and drink, information communication technology, marine and tourism*).

Size of business – The data was cut by size of business using the standard size bands as follows: 0 – 4, 5 – 49, 50 – 199, and 200+.

To achieve some of the analyses in terms of RDA and LLSC priorities for action, other key themes and the specified data cuts were necessary to add in additional information from other sources such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the industrial and occupational forecasts from IER/Cambridge Econometrics⁵. The work also included some trend analysis from the findings of the 2003 NESS.

Key Findings: Certainly the survey has some positive messages. Recruitment difficulty and skills gaps in existing workforces showed sharp downturns from the previous two years, suggesting a better balance between demand and supply than had been the case. The number of skill shortage vacancies was low in relation to the number of jobs.

Distribution: The regional and local reports were widely distributed to stakeholders and partners. Reports were distributed widely within the LSC, regionally and locally. Reports were also made available to Train to Gain skills brokers and Higher Level Skills Intermediaries. The reports are available for download on the SLIM website and form part of the Sector Balance Sheet.

Impact: The study has been used extensively by partners in the region as the key source of information on skills gaps and shortages. The study was used extensively in the South West LSC Strategic Analysis (LSC) and the South West Regional Enterprise, Skills and Employment Analysis 2007 (SLIM). The data forms an important part of the Sector Balance Sheet.

1.5 Objective Three ESF Impact Analysis

Carried out by: EKOS Consulting

Date Commissioned: March 2006

Date Completed: August 2006

Steering Group: Objective 3 Regional Committee sub-group, comprising GOSW, LSC, JC+, Local Authority and Voluntary Sector Representatives

Report Title: ESF Objective 3 Impact Analysis

⁴ The *Public Sector* is a national LSC priority and should be included along side the LLSC priority sectors.

⁵ IER, *Projections of Employment/Cambridge Econometrics*, 2004

Abstract: This report examines where the 2000-2006 European programme has added the most value in relation to South West employment and skills issues in order to identify where flexibility is needed for the 2007-2013 programme.

EKOS Consulting was commissioned by SLIM, (with funding provided by ESF (GOSW) and SWRDA), to review the impact of ESF within the South West region over six year period from 2000-2006. The review covered both Objective 2 and 3 with the aim of identifying lessons from them that will enable effective implementation of Objective 3 in the next programming period.

The report has been structured around the three themes of Worklessness, Skills and Enterprise. The report provides a commentary on the relevant issues with supporting evidence provided in appendices.

Keywords: ESF Impact Analysis Objective 2 Objective 3 Regional Skills Partnership Structural Funds.

Rationale: The key objectives of the study were to:

- Reflect on the impact that ESF has had on improving Skills and Employment in the region.
- Make recommendations to inform the new programme on how ESF can be used to implement the priorities of the Regional Skills Partnership.

Methodology: Project followed an 8 stage methodology:

- Stage 1: Inception and work plan;
- Stage 2: Desk based review work, covering:
 - National, interim and process evaluations of UK and regional ESF programmes;
 - Beneficiary and financial data; and
 - Policy analysis
- Stage 3: Stakeholder interviews;
- Stage 4: Workshops;
- Stage 5: Thematic analysis of findings and incorporation of:
 - Relevant economic analyses; and
 - Other studies on adequacy of regional provision
- Stage 6: Drafting of recommendations/proposals;
- Stage 7: RSP Workshop to test the draft proposals;
- Stage 8: Final report/advocacy document.

Key Findings: The project identified a range of key success factors for the implementation of competitiveness funding in the 2007 – 2013 period and produced recommendations for the region to feed into national discussions on priorities for inclusion in the National Strategic Reference Framework Document, which will set the framework for SW programmes in future.

Key findings fell under the following sections:

Flexibility – The new programme needs to have sufficient flexibility to be able to respond to changing economic circumstances and innovation in the future.

Balance – The research has highlighted a number of conflicts in the field of skills development. Do we want soft/hard skills? Skills or qualifications? Low or high level skills?

Co-ordination – Regeneration is an ever developing field with regional, sub-regional, district and in some cases neighbourhood plans. There is a need for greater co-ordination between agencies in planning ESF activities. The joint plan between the LSCs and Jobcentre Plus has been a step in the right direction, but this can be furthered with the involvement of the SWRDA to represent enterprise. Locally, Local Area Agreements may provide a vehicle to co-ordinate ESF activity.

Delivery – The evaluation has highlighted a number of delivery issues that the new programme should address:

- Improving recording mechanisms to capture soft outcomes
- The involvement of the voluntary and community sector;
- Improved employer engagement;
- Improved mechanisms to maximise mainstreaming and learning.

New Issues – New issues such as ‘under-employment’ need to be addressed by the new programmes.

The project also identified a range of funding priorities that the region wished to see taken forwards under the new programmes. Whilst recognising that it is necessary for the programmes to remain broad and flexible, the report recommended that the following gaps in mainstream provision are prioritised:

- Within the workless population, those who require more support before they are ready to access mainstream provision such as New Deal;
- Skills for people irrespective of age;
- NVQ Level 3, irrespective of age, where there are skills shortages e.g. construction;
- Leadership and Management skills;
- Workforce development in areas not covered by ‘Train to Gain’ i.e. not first Level 2 qualification; and
- In depth support for people wishing to start their own business, especially where this addresses social priorities such as worklessness.

Distribution: Given the strategic nature of the report, the results were primarily disseminated via a) presentation to the Objective 3 Regional Committee and b) a regional workshop bringing together the RSP and the Regional Committee, attended by 40 individuals.

100 copies of the report were also printed and distributed. Electronic copies of the report and executive summary were distributed via the SLIMlines E-newsletter and SLIM Website.

Impact: The process for developing the South West ESF Competitiveness programme is complex and drawn out, with many influences acting upon the many stages of its development. These stages include development of the NSRF which links ESF to national policy direction, agreement of the SW Regional Plan by the RSP, development of co-financing plans by LSC and JC+. Thus ESF Partners perspectives on regional priorities for 2007-2013 are inevitably filtered through a number of phases.

The size and importance of ESF also means that it is subject to a range of powerful interests, including national government's desire to use it to support centrally determined policy agendas. Nonetheless GOSW found the report useful in making the regional case for flexibility and a range of regional recommendations made in the report can be seen reflected in the SW Regional Plan (Co-financing plans are still under development), such as a focus on:

- Those who require additional support before they can access mainstream provision;
- Increasing the targets for delivery of older workers and delivering skills for people irrespective of age;
- Significant emphasis on Level 3, although national policy towards recognising the importance of L3 also has a bearing on this.

Research process feedback: This research process worked well due to:

- The project being initiated by the SW Objective 3 Regional Committee, as powerful group with strong ownership over the process and results;
- A highly effective and knowledgeable Steering Group being formed;
- ESF being familiar territory to a number of highly competent external contractors, one of whom was appointed;
- Ownership of the results by the Regional Committee and GOSW and a clear route for pushing the findings forwards, ie via GOSW to DWP;
- The project being well linked to a national process, which it was designed to influence.

1.6 Sector Balance Sheet 2

Carried out by: Step Ahead

Date Commissioned: April 2006

Date Completed: July 2006

Partnership: South West RSP. LSC, SSDA and a range of SSCs and RDA were also on the steering group.

Report Title: Sector Balance Sheet

Abstract: The [Sector Balance Sheet](#) is a key regional resource of labour market data at an industry level. It pulls together information that can be provided by key robust data sources such as the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI). The data is presented in a series of spreadsheets at a regional level for SIC, SSC and SWRDA priority sector industry breakdowns

Keywords: labour market information, labour market data, sector intelligence, sector data.

Rationale: In 2005, SLIM contracted with consultants, on behalf of the SWRSP Research Forum, to provide a baseline assessment for each SSC, RES and LSC priority sector regarding SW skills and workforce development. This initial piece of research was completed in December 2005, and there was a subsequent period of consultation, particularly around the use of the Balance Sheet in informing future developments and action planning around Sector Skills Agreements. This consultation highlighted the need to develop the Balance Sheet further in collaboration with a range of partners to ensure that the most current and appropriate sources of data were being incorporated and that all

parties concerned were fully consulted. It was also recognised that further work with the Business & Economy Module (BEM) of the regional Observatory would add considerable value to the tool and allow for further refinements and applications to be developed.

Methodology: The project was commissioned in order to provide further refinements to the original tool following consultation with a range of key partners in the region, including SSCs, SSDA, LSC, RDA etc.

This included the provision of further sub-regional and sub-sectoral reports where possible and to allow for closer alignment with the regional priorities of each of the partner agencies – currently a sticking point in the joint-planning process. Further work was required to reach an agreed mechanism for the prioritisation of sectors falling outside the Regional Economic Strategy, and also to assist in recording the contribution of different sectors to the economic progress in the region. The resource requested allowed the data represented in the Balance Sheet to be most current, so that the uses made thereof were both realistic and practical. It also allowed for dialogue with the pilot SSAs to agree a suitable data format for inclusion of SSA data in the Balance Sheet.

Key Findings: This is a tool which draws together sectoral data against regional priorities. The information is used by a range of partners to determine sectoral impact of policy. It was used heavily in the development of the RSP Gap Analysis and by the LSC in its regional strategic analysis.

Distribution: The Balance Sheet is now updated on a six monthly basis and is available on the SLIM website, where spreadsheets can be downloaded. Presentations were made to a range of partners and formal groupings to alert people to the availability of the balance sheet. Information from the balance sheet appears and is credited in a range of regional publications.

Impact: It is understood that the Balance sheet is well used by Sectors, LSC and SSCs. It is also been used extensively by SLIM and underpins a good deal of the sectoral analysis that is required for regional analysis.

Research process feedback: The balance sheet is now updated by SLIM and we monitor other regional developments through our membership of the RSP's national Performance group. This brings together other regional observatories to consider data pooling and the development of new indicators etc. Through membership of the RSP's SOG, we are able to respond to requests for additional data.

1.7 Healthy Labour Market Review 2005 and 2006

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: April 2006

Date Completed: December 2006

Steering Group: Research Forum and the HLMRG

Report Titles: South West Healthy Labour Market Review 2005

South West Healthy Labour Market Review – What's Changed Report 2006?

Abstract: The report presents the findings of the 2005 review of a range of labour market indicators:

- **Broad outcome indicators** – output and productivity; economic activity; population and migration
- **Closer to policy indicators** – Businesses Generation, Enterprise & Innovation, Vacancies Labour Turnover, Redundancies;
- **Learning and Training indicators** – Participation; Qualifications; and, Skills for Life.

This South West Healthy Labour Market Review 2005 is part of the evidence base for the work of the Regional Skills Partnership and its partners.

The 2006 *What's Changed Report?* sets out the key changes to the HLMR indicators for 2006.

Keywords: South West Labour Market, labour market indicators.

Rationale: The report was commissioned by the South West Regional Skills Partnership.

Developing a robust evidence base for the policies and actions of the RSP is of critical importance. It ensures that the skills and enterprise agenda for the region is grounded in an understanding of the operation of the labour market, through a detailed analysis of key labour market indicators. The analysis presented in the report is largely statistical, and based on robust national data sources. The Report is a contribution to an annual review process that engages academic experts, policy makers and SWRSP partners in assessing the health of the labour market and the impact of policy activities.

Methodology: The indicators were agreed as part of the HLMR process undertaken in 2004. This included an initial report and debate involving four well respected labour market economists. The indicators were further developed by SLIM for the 2005 report.

This report uses national data sources that enable the key labour market indicators to be updated and reviewed annually. The majority of data used within this report are sourced from national data monitoring bodies such as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the NOMIS data service and are referenced accordingly.

As the nature of the data changes little over the period of a year, the 2006 change report highlights some of the key changes from the 2005 report.

Key Findings: The analysis of the health of the South West Labour Market across this range of labour market themes paints a picture of a region which continues to enjoy a high degree of labour demand, a well qualified workforce, and efficient and equitable functioning between the demand and supply sides of the market. On these indicators, this region appears to be more 'healthy' than any other region with the exception of the South East.

Yet despite this relatively rosy picture, a number of indicators point to the fact that the region is operating in a low-skills equilibrium. Productivity is low, and lower than one would expect given the region's highly qualified workforce. Employers report few skills gaps within their workforces, and little difficulty recruiting the skills they need from the external workforce.

A significant problem is presented by the markedly differing fortunes of the region. Low output per head, low earning levels and relatively high unemployment dominate the picture for the west of the region, while the reverse is the case for the north and the east of the region.

Distribution: The report was widely distributed to stakeholders and partners in the South West. The report was also made available on the SLIM website for download as a report and the data is available in sections on the labour market section of the SLIM website. The report was presented to the RSP Board for discussion.

Impact: The report formed part of the RSP's balanced scorecard report so was part of the ongoing discussions within the region on regional economic and skills issues. It has also been included in the regional Gap Analysis. Plans are afoot to draw this into the new Performance Monitoring Framework being developed for the RSP.

Research process feedback: The 2004 process was very interesting and successful and should at some point be repeated.

1.8 Business Link Data Review

Carried out by: Innovacion Research

Date Commissioned: March 2006 **Date Completed:** June 2006

Steering Group: Project was originated by the SW Research Forum. A steering group chaired by Brian Archer, Chief Executive of Somerset Business Link, led the project. Membership of the steering group comprised: Brian Archer (Business Link), Ben Neild (SLIM), Marina Auburn (LSC), Kay Cheeseman (LSC), Mark West (BL), Paul Crawford (BL), Hester Shier (RDA).

Report Title: Business Link Data Review

Abstract: This Report maps data collated by the South West Business Links and considers how it could be developed, in the context of the new Train to Gain programme and Business Links' re-organisation, in order to provide intelligence on employers skills needs for the wider SWRSP partnership.

Keywords: Business Link, Brokerage, Train to Gain, Workforce development, labour market intelligence.

Rationale: SWRSP partners identified that the development of the Employer Training Pilots / Train to Gain service provided an opportunity to gather labour market intelligence. The region could benefit

from capturing the content of brokers' discussions with employers re their skills needs and how these could be met. As a first step it was agreed that there would be value in a project that:

- Reviewed the data currently collated by the South West Business Links;
- Identified steps that could be taken to generate intelligence from this data at regional and sub-regional level;
- Developed proposals on how this intelligence could be collated and shared with a broader range of agencies across the region to support more focused delivery of skills provision.

Methodology: The methodology for the project consisted of:

- A Review of Business Link Customer Relationship Management systems and good practice, geared to understanding current practice, differences in practice, what was being gathered that could be of value to partners and how this could be better co-ordinated;
- Workshop with regional partners to examine the range of practice, the value of data currently or that could potentially be captured and its value in generating additional skills intelligence;
- Developing a report and recommendations for the Steering group, advising on the way forward.

Key Findings: The research uncovered a number of considerable differences in approach and challenges in bringing these together:

- Current systems for capturing the outcomes of Training Needs Analysis (TNA)/ diagnostic processes were too varied in design and extent of application for these to have much value. Considerable additional attention, especially from the LSC and Business Link, needed to be put into the in the design, use and analysis of new TNAs / diagnostics for Train to Gain if the aim of having TNAs that collect the right information consistently in a way that could be analysed at a later date was to be realised;
- Considerable tacit knowledge was being developed by Skills Brokers and there could be value in a quarterly survey of Skills Managers and Skills Brokers as part of a wider knowledge-sharing approach;
- Regional partners should identify and empower a Research Champion who could play a key role in aligning the Train to Gain MI approach, reporting requirements, online analysis and evaluation strategies. The individual would need real power, for example, to be a sign-off member of Project Management Board to ensure the appropriate development of software met research needs.

Distribution: Presentation to the SWRSP Research Forum. Electronic Distribution via SLIMlines and SLIM website.

Impact: The recommendations within the report were largely practical. Following the final presentation at the SWRSP Research Forum, it was agreed that Mark West (Business Link) and Marina Auburn (LSC) would work together to take these forward in a way that met the intelligence needs of the partners. A number of recommendations were implemented at an early stage, e.g. around consistency of data collection, fields and definitions within LSC and BL CRM / MIS systems. After some delay, while Train to Gain staff focused on getting accredited, the LSC is starting to bring groups of brokers together to gather intelligence on common skills gaps and concerns, as recommended by the report. This has on occasion been done with a sector focus and has generated useful intelligence. LSC

feedback indicates that this networking / intelligence gathering, although more informal than originally anticipated, generates valuable intelligence that is used for internal improvements to service.

Research process feedback: Given that there was a very limited budget, the research options were limited. The Steering Group viewed the adopted process - meetings with all BLs' MI Managers, a workshop, report and dissemination presentation - to be the correct one for this task.

1.9 Level 3 Review

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: August 2006 **Date Completed:** April 2007

Steering Group: See Gap Analysis Steering Group below

Report Title: Level 3 Skills: Challenge for the South West - Learning Theme Report

Abstract: The Level 3 Review was undertaken by SLIM on behalf of the RSP to enable them to meet the commitment placed on RSPs to assess the nature and scale of Level 3 priorities in the region. The report is presented in three parts. Part 1 looks at how Level 3 skills are defined, examines the key issues and the policy response. Part 2 looks at the demand and supply of Level 3 skills in the region and at future trends. It also includes a priority sector model developed by SLIM and more qualitative sector information. Part 3 puts forward a range of recommendations for action, including those aimed at government.

Keywords: Level 3 skills, intermediate level skills, craft and trade skills

Rationale: The Skills White Paper, *Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work 2005*, asked RSPs to:

... assess how best to use existing public funding to meet Level 3 priorities in colleges and training providers and in the workplace. These will take account of both regional and sectoral needs.

This report was prepared by SLIM on behalf of the South West RSP to enable them to meet this commitment and assess the nature and scale of Level 3 priorities in the region.

Methodology: The methodology for this review included:

- Desk-based research that looked at the wider economic drivers behind the demand for skills and the implications of this for future trends;
- A SLIM Learning Theme process. SLIM engaged in dialogue with a range of academic experts and with partners in the region to seek views on the nature and scale of the issue;

- A review of the relevant data on current and future demand for skills and the supply of those skills in the region, including an in-depth analysis of SSC information;
- A review of relevant analysis from the interim Leitch Report, *Skills in the UK: The long term challenge*, 2005, (Leitch Interim Report) and the final Leitch report, *Prosperity for all in a global economy – world class skills: Final Report 2006*, (Leitch Report);
- A review of evaluation evidence on the impact of current initiatives aimed at supporting Level 3 skills;
- Interviews with a range of colleges;
- A review of approaches adopted by other English regions.

Key Findings: Current issues in relation to skill shortages and gaps at Level 3 are heavily focused in a number of sectors, as identified by the review, and are closely linked to problems in skilled trades. If future demand for Level 3 skills is to be met, it would require a significant shift in policy towards support for Level 3 skills and this has since been confirmed by the Leitch Report and the Government's response to it.

Recommendations included:

- The identification of priority sectors for Level 3.
- The need for a Level 3 target.
- The need to improve Level 3 attainment beyond 19 is critical but also important to raise the stock of Level 3 skills which may best be achieved by improving achievement by age 19, through both the vocational and academic routes. More needs to be done to improve the image of vocational qualifications and the understanding of young people and their parents about the options.
- The need to ascertain support for the introduction of a Licence to Operate and on this basis, raise the issue with government.
- The need to map Level 3 provision taking place and the extent to which business and individual funding is making a substantial contribution.
- Share best practice in the funding and delivery of Level 3 provision.
- The need for LSC to map the extent to which Train to Gain is resulting in additional demand for Level 3 provision.
- Ensure that Level 3 skills in skills shortage areas are supported through ESF.
- Redress the gender imbalance, particularly in relation to trade apprenticeships.
- Investigate the feasibility of an all-age IAG service in the region; including better online careers information based on the labour market information and progression pathways.
- Improve knowledge of vocational Level 3 qualifications and ensuring that there are effective progression routes into the HEIs in the
- Establish a Regional Apprenticeship Task group to oversee an integrated approach to delivery of new apprenticeship numbers, targeted at priority sectors, and to look at measures to improve take up and completion.

Distribution: The Review was part of a Learning Theme so included a regional workshop which attracted 80 participants. Copies of interim findings were distributed to the workshop attendees and a wider range of stakeholders involved in the Learning Theme. The Report was widely distributed within the region and is available, together with the summary report, from the SLIM website.

Impact: The recommendations of the Learning Theme formed part of the wider Regional Enterprise, Skills and Employment Analysis 2007. Its recommendations were endorsed by the RSP Board and formed part of the new priorities of the RSP for 2007-2010.

1.10 South West Gap Analysis

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: September 2006

Date Completed: April 2007

Partnership: South West Regional Skills Partnership was the lead partner. The Steering Group also included, LSC, RDA, HEFCE, SSDA, Jobcentre Plus, HERDA SW, GOSW.

Report Title: South West Regional Skills, Enterprise and Employment Analysis 2007/8

Abstract: This report sets out the main findings and broad policy implications of the analysis of skills, enterprise and employment issues in the South West. This analysis draws together the most current and pertinent research and analysis of skills, enterprise and employment, both nationally and within the region. It is a critical tool in developing a shared understanding of these issues, both now and into the medium-term future. It also seeks to inform future regional priorities.

The report is the result of a partnership approach between the key government agencies in the region involved in the skills, enterprise and employment agenda and it also draws on expert views. The findings of the analysis will be critical in steering the RSP to develop a clear strategic vision, achieve our objectives and redefine our priorities.

Keywords: Skills, enterprise, employment, regional analysis, productivity, sector analysis.

Rationale: The Gap analysis was requested by the SWRSP as part of its review of current priorities. The Gap Analysis aimed to provide information for the Board to support the development of a revised Regional Skills Strategy and to support the development of joint planning in the region. This was assigned a high priority by the SWRSP, who received and approved the findings of the Gap Analysis when it met in January 2007.

This work was linked closely to the work of the LSC as it produced its regional strategic analysis and regional plan. In addition SLIM was responsible for conducting a review of the plan, priorities and targets of the key agencies in the region. This aimed to improve understanding of the extent to which agencies are responding to current employers needs and the extent to which they are planning for future employment demand.

Methodology: The project proposal and the outline specification was presented to the RSP Board and its meeting on September and approval received for the overall approach.

The methodology consisted largely of desk based research, some primary research and data analysis. Data analysis included a detailed review of the NESS 2005 Survey, the results of which were

published by SLIM in the report, *The National Employer Skills Survey 2005: For the South West of England (NESS 2005)*. Further information on key economic indicators was reviewed by SLIM and also published in *The South West Healthy Labour Market Review 2006*. The *SLIM Sector Balance Sheet* was updated for use in the analysis. This includes ABI, NESS and LFS data. More detailed analysis of HEFCE and HESA data was undertaken and produced in a Working Paper on HE (see below).

For the desk research, SLIM drew heavily on recently published key reference documents including:

- The South West LSC Regional Strategic Analysis 2007(*LSC Analysis*);
- South West LSC Regional Skills Action Plan (*LSC Action Plan*);
- SSAs and SSC's Skills Assessments (*Sector Analysis*);
- The Leitch Review Interim Report (*Leitch Interim Report*);
- The Leitch Final Report – Prosperity for all in a global economy: World class skills (*Leitch Report*);
- Skills in England 2005 (*Skills in England*);
- *Working Futures, National Report 2004-2014*, Skills for Business Network, 2006 (*Working Futures*);
- *State of the South West 2007*, SWO.

The primary research consisted of a review of SSAs and Sector Needs Statements, accompanied by interviews with representatives of SSCs in the region. The priorities of the SSCs were mapped against national and regional priorities to produce a detailed matrix of common themes and individual sector narrative reports.

Additional primary research was undertaken with key partners including a review of plans and priorities against a planning matrix and interviews on perceptions of gaps etc.

In addition to the report, SLIM produced a range of SLIM Working Papers⁶ which set out in more detail research into aspects of the Regional Analysis:

- Working Paper on Higher Education;
- Working Paper on High Performance Sectors;
- Working Paper Leadership and Management in the South West;
- Working Paper on Skills Utilisation;
- Review of Skills, Enterprise and Employment in the South West 2007: Sector Analysis;
- GCSE Attainment in the South West 2006.

Key Findings: Three key themes emerge from the analysis of the needs of the region, all of which are closely linked to the region's competitiveness. They are:

- Productivity – to ensure that SW businesses have access to the right skills and business practices to improve their productivity;
- Progression – to ensure the availability of effective routes for progression to enable people to maximise their potential within the workforce, addressing issues of equality and diversity;

⁶ These Working Papers are available for download on the SLIM website www.swslim.org.uk/labourmarket/RSP

- Sustainability – to ensure that the development of the region is sustainable, maximizing the impact of the public resources that are deployed, encouraging investment by individuals and businesses, and planning for the future.

The report concluded that the main priorities for the RSP for 2007-2010 are:

- Improving leadership and management skills;
- Developing the enterprise skills of all ages within the South West;
- Developing the skills to increase innovation and creativity within the South West economy;
- Ensuring that the skills needs of the regional economy, and in key sectors in particular, are addressed at Level 3 and above (including higher education).

There are other areas which, whilst not being priorities per se (referred to in the Statement as sub-priorities), are nevertheless areas which the Partnership needs to monitor closely and may need to influence. These are:

- Supporting effective strategies for the integration of migrant workers;
- Supporting the development of an integrated all age Information, Advice and Guidance service;
- Supporting strategies for the reduction of NEETS.

This activity will also be underpinned by more effective joint planning and promotion as well as a strong intelligence base and performance and impact monitoring.

Distribution: One thousand copies of the report and the summary report were published and distributed widely to partners, initially via the RSP Annual conference and then to the wider SLIM circulation list. Copies were made available to the Train to Gain Skills brokers and the new HE intermediaries.

The reports and working papers are also available for download from the website, including a web enabled version which provides direct access to key reference materials.

Presentations were made to the RSP Board and Alliance as well as the RSP Annual conference where the report was formally launched. Presentations have been made to sector groups and to some LSPs on request.

Impact: The report was presented to and endorsed by the RSP Board. Its recommendations were accepted as the basis for the development of a Statement of Strategic Priorities. The recommendations of the report have now become the priorities of the RSP and its partners. The Sector Analysis which formed a critical part of the analysis has also been debated separately by the Sector Operations Group, leading to agreed thematic work the part of the sectors.

The work also underpinned the development of the two ESF Frameworks, Competitiveness and Convergence.

Research process feedback: The approach adopted by the researchers reflected the short timescale provided for the work. With more time and resource more data analysis and primary research with sectors could have been undertaken. There was also considerable debate about what constituted a “Gap” and the data and analysis required. This debate should have been conducted prior to the project being commissioned. In the event the researchers had to manage this debate within the confines of the project implementation.

In the event there was good partner participation in the project and little or no dispute over the analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

1.11 Workplace Employment Relations Survey

Carried out by: Crews Associates

Date Commissioned: January 2007 **Date Completed:** May 2007

Steering Group: Only internal consisting of Acas (the client), Ben Neild and Laura Smith of SLIM, and Adam Crews who undertook the work.

Report Title: Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) 2004 – an analysis for the South West

Abstract: This report examines issues around employment relations in the South West region. Alongside reporting on wider issues around employment relations, the report establishes the region’s position against a number of indicators in the Acas Model of measures that create more effective workplaces.

Keywords: Employment Relations, employment practice, Industrial Relations, unions, Management.

Rationale: WERS was a collaborative study, jointly sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Policy Studies Institute (PSI). WERS 2004 was the fifth survey in a series.

Within the South West, there were 175 interviews with managers and 1,969 employee questionnaires, creating a sample that could be benchmarked, albeit roughly, against national figures. The Policy Studies Institute produced regional data tables. The rationale for this project was to provide an analysis of the data, reporting this to the SW Regional Workplace Employment Relations Panel, highlighting any significant regional trends in employment relations and practice.

Methodology: Analysis of and reporting on the contents of a series of pre-created data tables, under the following headings:

- Workplace and workforce profile;
- The management of employees;
- Training;
- Employee involvement;

- Determination of pay and other terms and conditions;
- Conflict and dissonance;
- Equality, diversity and work-life balance;
- Employee views and experience of working life.

Key Findings: The South West generally closely mirrors the national situation, and performs better than average on some indicators and less well on others. In particular, the available data suggests that the South West is performing below average in the following areas:

- The proportion of employees who receive regular appraisals that cover training needs;
- Provision of training to employees;
- Provision of leadership and management training to non-managerial occupations;
- The adoption of best practice in dealing with employee grievances and discipline;
- The adoption of formal written equal opportunities policies.

Distribution: Presentation to SW Employment Relations Group.

100 copies of the report were printed, 20 given to members of the group, 60 distributed via Acas, 20 distributed via SLIM. Available from SLIM website and publicised via SLIMlines.

Impact: The impact of the report is difficult to ascertain at this stage. It formed the 'meat' of discussion / focus at the first meeting of the SW Employment Relations Forum and is likely to have had value in cementing an initial understanding and focus for this group.

It has been acknowledged that the report supports the SW RSP focus on improving leadership and management practice in the South West and may help to focus work to follow under this priority.

1.12 Objective One ESF Impact Analysis

Carried out by: Jo Pye/Caroline Hattam, Marchmont SLIM, Cornwall

Date Commissioned: 1 January 2007

Date Completed: due 31 March 2008

Steering Group: Marchmont/SLIM (lead), RSP, Cornwall Learning Partnership, GOSW, JobCentre Plus, LSC, Cornwall County Council, Objective One Programme Office, TUC, Federation of Small Businesses.

Report Title: Interim and final reports

Abstract: The aim of the ESF strand of the Objective One Programme is to build sustainable capacity for Cornwall, enabling Cornish individuals and organisations to implement continuing measures to drive and support their own future economic development. In order to take full account of the impact of ESF funding under Objective One on activities and the local economy over the Programme period, the overarching review will comprise a retrospective and longitudinal impact analysis which:

- Highlights improvements to the Cornish economy that can be linked to ESF expenditure to date;

- Demonstrates how ESF has had a positive impact on the aspirations and attainments of individuals and businesses;
- Identifies and draws together lessons from initiatives demonstrating good and interesting practice;
- Signposts how outcomes from ESF funding can inform future priorities and developments for the Convergence Programme.

Keywords: Impact analysis, sub-regional economy, productivity, Cornwall, Objective One, European Social Fund

Rationale: The Objective One Programme in Cornwall was originally established to overcome the long term, debilitating effects of a low wage, low value-added economy. The decline over many decades of traditional industries such as mining, farming and fishing has eroded overall productivity, with potential growth sectors as yet too seasonal or underdeveloped to add sustained value to the local economy. Individual and business contributions to GDP (usually expressed in terms of GVA, or gross value added per head) in Cornwall have remained substantially lower than most of the rest of the United Kingdom and much of the European Union for an extended period, measuring at less than 75% of indexed value compared to the rest of the European Union.

Existing resources and industrial activity levels in Cornwall have been recognised as insufficient to make viable improvements through locally generated initiatives alone.

The allocation of ESF monies under Objective One was designed to raise the value and productivity of the Cornish economy, increase the aspirations of businesses and individuals, and thereby set in motion a 'virtuous circle' whose initial benefits would last far beyond the Programme period.

Methodology: Literature review, secondary data analysis, semi-structured interviews, workshops / focus groups, surveys, case studies.

Key Findings: These are emerging at present from reviews of evaluation studies, stakeholder feedback, focus groups and project data and are currently being analysed; interim findings will be disseminated at a September consultation event.

Distribution: see above for early dissemination plans; there will be a final conference to publicise widely conclusions and recommendations in early 2008.

Impact: Enables additional linkages to be made with complementary Agency activities in Cornwall.

Research process feedback: We have encountered very good collaboration and support by the many individuals and organisations already contacted in the early stages of the study.

1.13 RSP Balanced Scorecard

Carried out by:

Date Commissioned: Dec 2004

Date Completed: Dec 2006

Report Title: RSP Balanced Scorecard

Abstract: The RSP performance measurement system is based on a Balanced Scorecard approach. It has been designed to both monitor strategic impact and evaluate a set of factors that, when linked with decision and action cycles, will drive future performance.

The quarterly reports were accompanied by a commentary, with interpretations and the implications for RSP management decisions. Analysis was based on trends between quarters but there was also potential for benchmarking against one or more other regions, if they were to adopt some of the same metrics.

Keywords: RSP Performance, balanced scorecard, performance indicators.

Rationale: With the establishment of the RSP it was important to design a system for monitoring its effectiveness. The then RSP determined that this would take the form of a Balanced Scorecard approach. The framework was designed by Gareth James of Otter KLI and implemented by SLIM.

Methodology: The framework consisted of three elements:

1. External engagement: this measured progress against two indicators:
 - Engagement through business brokerage;
 - Engagement through number of individuals engaged on leadership and management programmes.
2. Internal processes: this measured progress against two indicators:
 - Partner assessment of the effectiveness of partnership;
 - The value of training budgets aligned with the RSP.
3. Internal capability focus: this measured progress against two indicators:
 - Partner rating of RSP capability;
 - Internal engagement.

Distribution: The RSP Balanced Scorecard reports were published on the SLIM website and distributed in report form to the RSP Board and Alliance members.

Impact: The results of the monitoring were reported to each Board meeting and formed a standard part of the agenda. The information allowed the RSP and partners to review their performance and make changes to joint plans where required. This has now been replaced by a Performance Monitoring Framework (see below).

1.14 RSP Performance Monitoring Framework

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: April 2007

Date Completed: Ongoing

Report Title: RSP Performance Monitoring Framework

Abstract: The Performance Monitoring Framework is a set of indicators, accompanied by narrative analysis, which allows the RSP to track trends in the region's skills performance. The Framework is based on a set of robust and agreed indicators, grouped into four elements.

- RSP Priority indicators;
- Partner indicators;
- ESF indicators;
- Strategic indicators.

Keywords: RSP Performance, Regional Skills Indicators, Performance Indicators.

Rationale: Following the Regional Enterprise, Skills and Employment Analysis and the development of the new RSP priorities, SLIM was invited to develop a Framework to monitor the effectiveness of the RSP and its partners in meeting the needs of the region.

Methodology: *RSP indicators* - indicators that specifically measure the output and impact of the RSP Priorities and Sub-priorities as set out in the Statement of Priorities. Substantially these comprise quantitative indicators.

ESF indicators - indicators that allow the RSP to measure the outcomes and impact of the use of ESF Frameworks in the region. These are defined by GOSW.

Partner indicators - indicators that allow the RSP to assess performance and contribution of the key agencies in the region. This includes PSA targets and specific priorities set out in the regional action plans etc of the partners. Indicators and data are provided by partners.

Other Strategic Indicators - a range of other indicators not covered above but which are important in enabling the partnership to assess the overall performance of the labour market. Many of these indicators are included within the Healthy Labour Market Review.

Distribution: The RSP Framework is published on the SLIM website and distributed in report form to the RSP Board and Alliance members.

Impact: The results of the monitoring will be reported to each Board meeting and form a standard part of the agenda. The information allows the RSP and partners to review their performance and make changes to joint plans where required.

A.2 Skills Brokerage

2.1 Train to Gain Broker Regional Awareness Workshop Programme

Carried out by: SLIM, Learning South West, Gareth James, Otter KLI

Date Commissioned: April 2006

Date Completed: October 2006

Report Title: Train to Gain Skills Broker Regional Awareness Workshop Programme

Abstract: The workshops formed part of an induction and regional awareness programme for Train to Gain skills brokers in the South West. The programme consisted of three two-day workshops which included sessions on understanding the South West labour market, working with SSCs and other partners, equality and diversity, skills for life issues and skills utilisation. A range of training and background materials accompanied the workshops.

Keywords: Skills Broker, Train to Gain, CPD programme

Rationale: The purpose of the regional awareness workshops was to:

- Brief skills brokers on the key features of the South West skills market. This aimed to provide both an important context for the work of the brokers but also to provide them with the knowledge and skills to maintain this knowledge base;
- To support brokers in preparing for the Broker standards;
- To introduce brokers to key regional partners and gain an understanding of agreed ways of working and protocols;
- To raise awareness and understanding of Skills for Life and diversity issues in the region;
- To provide an up-to-date evidence base for the business case for skills/training.

Methodology:

A range of units were developed which included drawing on latest research, data and evaluation and case study material. A range of stakeholders and partners supported the events, providing background material and making presentations.

Distribution:

The workshops were attended by all skills brokers in the region (over 40) and materials were made available on the SLIM and broker websites.

Impact:

The workshops took place at a time when the new teams were still in development and the timing of the workshops meant that the opportunity could be taken for team building. The workshops aimed to support brokers in meeting the new SFEDDI standards. All brokers in the region have now met the standards by the target date.

2.2 Skills Utilisation

Carried out by: Gareth James Otter KLI

Date Commissioned: May 2006

Date Completed: May 2006

Report Titles: Skills Utilisation Broker Briefing

Skills Utilisation – Gap Analysis Working Paper.

Abstract: Just like any other resource, the possession of skills does not provide any benefits unless put to use. Experience, education and training can enable the acquisition of skills but utilisation is needed if any value is to be added. Hence skills utilisation is important to many different stakeholders. This discussion paper demonstrated a diverse range of perspectives and highlighted the complexity of the many issues that have an impact on skills utilisation.

Keywords: Case studies, Train to Gain, broker practice, employer experience.

Rationale: The aim of the work was to improve the knowledge and understanding of Train to Gain skills brokers on the subject of skills utilisation within the workforce and within individual workplaces. The project was commissioned in support of the broker workshop programme and included the production of a training programme, training materials and access to knowledge resources for skills brokers on this issue. The material aimed to capture latest thinking on:

- What are the factors that lead employers to invest in skills, with some specific reference to SMEs?
- What are the links between training, skills acquisition and productivity?
- What do we know about employer demand for skills?
- How to improve the transfer of skills within the workplace to support increased productivity?

Methodology: The methodology for the project was a literature review and analysis of key lessons. It sought to address the following questions:

- *What are the factors that lead employers to invest in skills, with some specific reference to SMEs?* A strategic look at the factors which impact on employers' use of skills, drawing on the work of organisations such as SKOPE⁷ and examining the links between skills utilisation, production methods and product specificity.
- *What are the links between training, skills acquisition and productivity?* To draw on the wide range of literature examining the contribution of skills to business performance and the extent to which training leads to an improvement in skills within the workforce.
- *What do we know about employer demand for skills?* A review of key qualitative findings of the 2005 NESS Survey and Skills Surveys examining demand for skills by employers.
- *How to improve the transfer of skills within the workplace to support increased productivity?* Drawing heavily on human resource development literature examining the factors that make for successful skills transfer during and following formal training. The aim would be to identify key lessons for creating a training and development support process that would ensure that the training had an impact on the employer's bottom line performance.

⁷ ESRC, Centre for Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance, Universities of Oxford and Warwick.

Key Findings:

- Leaders and managers, at all levels, have a major influence on skills utilisation.
- There is no single right way to approach skills utilisation.
- Simply raising awareness can be a very worthwhile step.
- It is useful to differentiate between training issues and skills utilisation problems.
- The fact that skills utilisation is a channel through which increased performance and return on investment in training can be realised is a potential hook.
- During the planning of training, it can be useful to develop an understanding of the issues that will assist or hinder the application of skills in the workplace.
- There are many 'learning transfer' issues that can be taken into account during the design and delivery of training and during concurrent and subsequent work.
- Skills utilisation is more achievable when training is 'joined up' with other aspects of the business, including operational and people management.
- Training can act as a catalyst for releasing existing skills into the workplace.
- Skills will only be used if there is adequate opportunity and this can be influenced by external factors, product/service specification and internal ways of working.
- Skills will only be used if there is adequate motivation and this is dependent on many factors including the working environment, management and rewards.

Distribution: The discussion paper and accompanying presentations were distributed to skills brokers as part of the workshop materials.

The discussion paper also formed a background working paper for the Regional Enterprise, Skills and Employment Analysis 2007 and was posted on the SLIM website.

Impact: The work would enable skills brokers to obtain an insight into the strategic issues impacting on skills utilisation within employers' organisations, as well as equipping them with some practical lessons to assist employers in improving the impact of training within the workplace.

The work was also utilised in the development of the South West Regional Enterprise, Skills and Employment Analysis and led strongly to the focus on leadership and management as a recommendation.

2.3 Train to Gain Regional Case Studies

Carried out by: Gareth James, Otter KLI

Date Commissioned: May 2006

Date Completed: June 2006

Report Title: Train to Gain Case Studies

Abstract: Train to Gain employer case studies illustrate the value to business of skills and workforce development and the valuable role played by skills brokers. The case studies describe the impact on the business from the employer perspective. The case studies also reflect upon the role of the brokers and the lessons learned for improving broker practice.

Keywords: Case studies, Train to Gain, broker practice, employer experience.

Rationale: SLIM was asked by the Regional LSC to develop a programme of regional awareness workshops, to support the development of Train to Gain Skills Brokers within the region.

The aim of the workshops was to raise awareness of the broader regional context within which brokers would be operating and, where possible, contribute to developing the knowledge required to meet the new national standards for skills brokers⁸.

Case studies formed part of the agenda for the workshop and were intended to provide a resource for brokers.

Methodology: Case studies were conducted with 10 employers about their experiences of working through brokers to support workforce development within their companies. Employers were contacted following recommendation of the skills brokers and interviews were conducted with employers in the presence of the broker in order to capture the dialogue.

The contractor was asked to develop material to support the delivery of the workshops, and participate in the general development of the workshop programme. The majority of case studies were drawn from the Devon and Cornwall and Swindon and Wiltshire ETP pilots.

Case studies sought to draw out issues about how skills have been utilised in the workforce and the benefits to productivity of skills. The case studies were presented at the workshops and were made available as a web-based resource.

Key Findings: A range of findings emerged from the case studies:

- Training can 'enliven' the workforce, where the work is repetitive and progression opportunities very limited.
- The knowledge and confidence gained from training can empower staff to make changes to working practices.
- A key role for the broker is to make sense of a confusing training system in the employer's particular context.
- A sustained broker-client relationship can enable a gradual skills development process that encompasses leadership and management.
- liP can provide a route to engagement and underpin the training process.
- It can be difficult for employers to visualise the full benefits of training before it has taken place.
- Incompatibility between training provider and client can be a major barrier to progress, unless swiftly resolved.
- Training can have a discernable influence on the bottom line.

Distribution: The case studies were distributed to skills brokers as part of the workshop materials. Case study material was also integrated into presentations on broker practice. Case studies were made available on the SLIM and broker website and were used by the LSC marketing team.

⁸ Skills Brokerage Standard for Train to Gain Skills Brokers, March 2006

Impact: The case studies enabled brokers to reflect on practice, an important aspect. The case studies were also used in marketing and promoting the service more widely.

Research process feedback: The process of including the brokers in the process proved fruitful as it provided an element of self reflection, allowing the nature of the broker involvement in the process to be well understood.

2.4 Labour Market Knowledge

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: May 2006

Date Completed: May 2006

Report Title: Labour Market Handbook and Training

Abstract: The handbook and accompanying training provide a basic guide to understanding the labour market. It covers the main labour market terminologies and concepts, geographical boundaries, availability and limitations of labour market data and a summary of useful resources.

Keywords: labour market information, guide

Rationale: The work of skills brokers sits within the context of the overall labour market and the demand for skills. Understanding the labour market is therefore essential and form part of the skills broker standards. This resource was aimed at providing brokers with a better understanding of the labour market and access to resources in order to update and maintain their knowledge.

Methodology: Interviews took place with participants to agree issues. An agenda was developed with skills managers.

Key Findings: The event allowed brokers to be develop an understanding of labour market information and to access resources designed to keep this knowledge up to date.

Distribution: The training was conducted during the Skills Broker Regional Awareness events and made available to all skills brokers in the region. The Labour Market handbook was distributed to all brokers and was made available more widely through the SLIM website.

Impact: The evaluation of the event showed that brokers found the event very helpful.

2.5 Train to Gain Skills Broker Team Leader Business Planning event

Carried out by: SLIM and Howard Jones

Date Commissioned: May 2006

Date Completed: May 2006

Report Title: Train to Gain Skills Broker Team Leader Business Planning event

Abstract: The event brought together skills broker team managers to develop the business plan for the coming year and review skills brokerage performance.

Keywords: Skills brokers, brokerage business plan.

Rationale: The opportunity to review the first year of operation and plan for the future.

Methodology: The event was planned following extensive consultation with team leaders and managers across the region and the agenda focused on areas where further development and service improvements could take place.

Key Findings: The event allowed for the effective sharing of practice across the region and developed an action plan for future development.

Distribution: The report was distributed to team leaders, skills managers, other members of the skills brokerage team and a small number of LSC staff.

Impact: The evaluation of the event showed that manager found the event very helpful in developing the business plan.

2.6 Train to Gain Broker Website

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: June 2006

Date Completed: October 2006

Steering Group: Rhona Hope, Paul Gaunt, Ingrid Purse, Dave Eagles, Jane Gallagher, Phil Newton.

Report Title: Train to Gain Broker website

Abstract: The Train to Gain South West Broker Website was a temporary development to develop the content and structure of a website for skills brokers in the region. The project was a step in preparation for the move to use of the national broker website.

Keywords: Website, skills broker.

Rationale: The website was an important knowledge management tool for skills brokers. The national website had not finalised its development and problems existed with access. It was agreed that SLIM should develop a shadow website and start to populate this with content.

Methodology: Chaired by the LSC, SLIM established a steering group comprising skills broker managers, skills brokers, LSC staff, and CFE representatives. The outline structure has been determined by national requirements. Brokers then agreed the nature of the content. An initial survey was undertaken with all brokers to identify needs and sources of content that might be shared with others.

SLIM developed the website (hosted by SLIM) and content, together with links and resources to support ongoing maintenance and update of the content. The website was trialled by steering group members and access passwords were provided to all brokers and their use was monitored in the first six weeks. After two months the website was formally handed over to the LSC for maintenance and further development.

Distribution: The website was available to skills brokers and a small number of LSC staff.

Impact: The website was initially used by brokers. Feedback nationally (where the website is now being redeveloped) is that the South West Model has been useful in informing the development of the revised national website.

2.7 Train to Gain Skills Audit Phases 1 and 2

Carried out by: SLIM and Marylin Hartwell

Date Commissioned: October 2006

Date Completed: November 2006

Phase 2 completed November 2007

Steering Group: Paul Gaunt, Ingrid Purse, Rhona Hope

Report Title: Train to Gain Skills Audit

Skills Audit, Train to Gain Skills Brokers in the South West:

Implications for continuing professional development

Abstract: Against the background of new SFEDDI standards for skills brokers, SLIM conducted a skills audit of brokers in the South West Region. The main aim of this skills audit was to assist the professional development of brokers by allowing them to self-assess against the standards, in advance of the formal assessment process.

Keywords: skills broker skills audit

Rationale: New standards had been developed for Train to Gain Skills Brokers. In advance of the assessment process, LSC and BL were keen to develop an understanding of the present skills and knowledge of the brokers and to develop appropriate action plans in advance of the formal assessment process. The audit was an opportunity to allow brokers individually and in teams to undertake self-assessment and from that to plan any development needs.

Methodology: The skills audit questionnaire was developed by consultant, Marilyn Hartwell, following consultation with skills brokers, managers and team leaders. The questionnaire allowed for brokers to assess their current skills and knowledge and the extent to which these were a requirement of their jobs. Brokers were asked to assess their knowledge and competence on a scale of 1-4.

The purpose of the audit was developmental, and the assessment criteria anchored in nationally recognised standards. The skills auditing process was kept as straightforward as possible. The audits were confidential and brokers posted or e-mailed their responses. A 95% response rate was achieved and the results analysed by SLIM. The final report was produced by SLIM and Marilyn Harwell and contained recommendations about further development requirements.

Key Findings: The audit identified a large range of responses. It also showed that the brokers were largely operating at Level 3. In order to plug existing gaps in knowledge and skills, the report suggested the need to:

- Provide CPD in those areas where brokers need to develop their skills and knowledge to perform their **current** job.
- Provide opportunities for brokers in narrow jobs to gain at least some experience of a more extended job role. This could be achieved through development activities such as job shadowing, perhaps with a broker in another region, or through special 'projects' that encourage brokers to do at least one piece of work that challenges and extends their skills. This could, for instance, involve working face-to-face and more in-depth with one client, then reflecting on the process through professional discussion with a more experienced colleague.

Distribution: The report was distributed to LSC staff, BL managers and brokers.

Impact: The audit led to the development of a range of workshops and other initiatives to support brokers in achieving the standards. All brokers have now successfully completed the standards in the South West. The Audit will be repeated as part of the annual review of performance and as part of the general review of the Broker CPD Plan.

2.8 Train to Gain LSC/BL Joint Away Day

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: February 2007

Date Completed: February 2007

Report Title: Train to Gain LSC/BL Joint Away Day

Abstract: The aim of the day was to:

- Reflect on progress to date and the lessons learned.
- Gain a better understanding of LSC and BL priorities, and how these underpin the relationship between the agencies.
- Start the process of forward planning, identify areas for improvement and capture outcomes.

Keywords: Train to Gain planning

Rationale: The event was to bring together senior management staff from the LSC team and the BL teams delivering Train to Gain skills brokerage. The aim was to take stock and look ahead towards forward planning.

Methodology: Interviews took place with all attendees to identify key issues. The agenda was agreed with the Head of Train to Gain and facilitated by the Director of SLIM, Chris Evans. The day consisted of presentations and working groups and was followed with an action report.

Distribution: The report was distributed to attendees.

Impact: The event was a critical part of the partnership development between LSC and BL and formed the basis for future planning and service improvement discussions.

2.9 Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Project Intermediaries Induction

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: June 2007

Date Completed: June 2007

Report Title: Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Intermediaries Induction Event

Abstract: Higher Level Skills Intermediaries play a key role in stimulating the supply of work-based higher level learning provision to meet identified demand. Based in HEIs across the South West, they manage client relationships, identify skills gaps and interpret the needs of business and translate this demand into appropriate provision.

The induction event and resulting report aimed at establishing working practices for intermediaries, including working links with Train to Gain skills brokers.

Keywords: higher level skills, employer engagement, demand-led HE

Rationale: This was the first full event attended by all intermediaries and was an opportunity to bring together staff from across the region to share experience, design working practices and processes. The objectives of the event were:

- To examine the role of Intermediaries as knowledge brokers, and to think about how the knowledge management system to support Intermediaries should work;
- To improve knowledge and understanding of the regional economic context facing employers, their need for skills and key trends, including an understanding the role of Sector Skills Councils and ways of working;
- To examine how this knowledge can support employer engagement;
- To improve knowledge of Train to Gain;

- To draw on existing Train to Gain broker experiences and highlight good practice in employer engagement, with a view to developing an HLSPP 'customer journey';
- To examine the process of cross referrals and working with partners;
- To understand further training needs.

Methodology: The programme was supported by the LSC and was intended to help define effective joint working with the Train to Gain skills broker service. The programme was designed with the Higher Level Skills project manager and also in conjunction with the skills brokers, who attended the afternoon session of the event.

A skills audit (against the SFEDDI standards) was conducted in advance of the event and feedback presented at the event. A report was produced outlining the agreed actions from the event.

Key Findings: The event identified a range of case studies and effective practice which would form the basis of the development of team working practices in relation to knowledge management, marketing, the brokerage practice and liaison with Train to Gain.

Distribution: The report of the event was distributed to intermediaries and the project managers together with selected staff at the LSC.

Impact: A range of new practices and processes were agreed as the basis of ongoing development within the team.

2.10 Train to Gain Broker Conference

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: June 2007

Date Completed: June 2007

Event Title: 2007 South West Skills Broker Conference

Abstract: This first annual conference provided an opportunity for skills brokers to:

- Celebrate the success of the service over the last year;
- Exchange practice;
- Debate policy and operational issues with a view to service improvement;
- Engage in opportunities for CPD.

The programme was designed by a group of broker managers/team leaders, with support from the LSC and SLIM. The conference was organised and facilitated by SLIM with funding from the LSC.

Keywords: skills broker, broker conference

Rationale: BL and LSC wished to have an opportunity to bring together all the skills brokers in the region to set the direction for the coming year.

Methodology: The event was planned following extensive consultation with broker team leaders and via those, brokers themselves. BL team leaders and LSC designed the agenda for the event. The conference included presentations, information sessions, CPD Sessions and discussion and debate sessions. A report of the conference was produced outlining the presentations and capturing the questions and discussions.

Key Findings: The event allowed brokers to be updated on LSC policy and direction and to improve skills through CPD Sessions.

Distribution: The report was distributed to all skills brokers, other BL staff and a selection of LSC staff.

Impact: The evaluation of the event showed that brokers found the event very helpful.

2.11 LSC Partnership Managers and Provider Events

Facilitated by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: September 2007

Date Completed: September 2007

Event Title: LSC Partnership Managers and Provider Events

Abstract: SLIM facilitated three events run across the region which drew together LSC partnership managers, LSC regional staff and representatives of providers of Train to Gain in the region. The aims of the day were to:

- Reflect on progress to date and the lessons learned;
- Gain a better understanding of Train to Gain priorities and to discuss these with LSC staff;
- Share these issues with providers with a view to improving future performance.

Keywords: Train to Gain planning, providers.

Rationale: The event was to bring together those involved in the planning and delivery of Train to Gain to reflect on performance to date, gain an understanding of issues and develop proposals for improved future performance.

Methodology: The morning sessions focused on internal LSC discussions. The afternoon brought in providers for presentations and round table discussions. The issues and recommendations were produced in a report distributed to attendees.

Distribution: The report was distributed to attendees.

Impact: The event was a critical part of the partnership development between LSC and providers and formed the basis for future planning and service improvement discussions.

2.12 Integration of Brokerage Services

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: September 2007

Date Completed: January 2008

Report Title: A Review of the Integration of Brokerage Services in the South West

Abstract: The reports identifies, within the context of a limited mapping exercise, the nature, scale and range of brokerage services available to business within the region. It also builds up a picture of synergy, overlap and divergence amongst existing brokerage services. The Report identifies where links need to be made as well as barriers to greater integration, including referral and signposting processes, joint marketing and quality assurance standards.

Keywords: Brokerage, integration.

Rationale: The research aims to inform future planning of brokerage services in the region and to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the available resources. The research was commissioned with the RSP Brokerage Task Group.

Methodology: The review has looked at brokerage in a number of ways:

- Core targets and employer focus i.e. who are they each trying to engage?
- Employer engagement – how does each service go about it? How are the services marketed?
- Employer satisfaction – how is it measured?
- Brokerage standards – how is brokerage defined and how is it quality assured?
- Nature of engagement – short – long term/ gaps discipline/subject?
- What works well and doesn't?

The initial phase research focused on mapping the existence of brokerage services delivered through the following organisations/funding regimes:

- Sector Skills Councils;
- Trade associations and employer federations;
- European Funded services.

A telephone survey of identified brokerage services was then conducted in order to gather basic information.

Phase 2 comprised a range of face-to-face/phone interviews with a selection of the major brokerage organisations within the region, including Train to Gain skills brokerage, Business Link IDB service, Jobcentre Plus, and the Higher Level Skills Pathfinder project. As well as observations on how the services currently relate, the research sought to draw out potential for service improvements and

barriers to implementation. The research also sought to identify what works well in terms of engagement and collaborative working.

Distribution: The report is not yet finalised.

Impact: Not yet known.

2.13 Train to Gain LSC/BL Joint Away Day

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: December 2007

Date Completed: December 2007

Report Title: Train to Gain LSC/BL Joint Away Day

Abstract: The aim of the day was to:

- Reflect on progress to date;
- Consider the Train to Gain Plan for Growth document and its implementation;
- To consider the need for a transition plan for moving the skills brokerage service from LSC to the RDA.

Keywords: Train to Gain planning

Rationale: The event was to bring together senior management staff from the LSC team and the BL teams delivering Train to Gain skills brokerage. The aim was to take stock and look ahead towards forward planning.

Methodology: The agenda was agreed with the Head of Train to Gain and facilitated by the Director of SLIM, Chris Evans. The day consisted of discussions and developing recommendations for future action.

Distribution: The report was an internal LSC/BL report.

Impact: The event was a critical part of the partnership development between LSC and BL and formed the basis for future planning and service improvement discussions.

2.14 Employer Engagement in the South West

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: December 2007

Date Completed: March 2008

Report Title: Employer Engagement in the South West: Identification of the top 100 companies

Abstract: The LSC in the South West region has an employer engagement strategy which encourages senior Directors in the LSC Areas to engage with the largest employers to use their understanding of their skills needs to inform the planning process and performance of the LSC. The engagement may result in a number of outcomes including: increased business with the employer; skills pledge commitment; invitation to become college governors; support to reach peer groups with the skills message etc.

To support this work the LSC is producing a list of the 100 largest private employers in the region (defined by the size of the workforce operating in the region).

Keywords: Train to Gain planning, large and medium size employers, Train to Gain.

Rationale: The Train to Gain Plan for Growth will see the inclusion of medium and larger employers. The LSC and Business Link need to know about this potential market. This work will identify key employers and their labour market position.

Methodology: The work includes a number of components:

- Identification of the 100 largest private employers as defined by the size of the workforce in the region, and sub divisions of the list by LSC Area – Glos/Wilts, West of England, Bournemouth, Dorset Poole and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall so that each Area has at least 10 large employers;
- Identification by size, location of workforce and nature of business;
- Identification by employer of current skills activity to include LSC funded activity by the region (e.g. apprenticeships, Train to Gain, Skills Pledge), LSC funded activity from the National Employer Service, RDA funded activity, involvement with SSC. This list is not exhaustive and there may be other components to add;
- Contacts within the region;
- Profile of the workforce by skills level if known.

Distribution: Work is underway.

Impact: The work is underway.

A3 Leadership and Management

3.1 Leadership & Management

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: March 2006 **Date Completed:** July 2007

Steering Group: Liz Georgeson (Lead), RDA, Jackie Bagnall, Leadership South West, Jim Hanbury, Leadership South West.

Report Title: Mapping Leadership & Management Provision in the South West

Abstract: The project aimed to provide an overview of the range of major L&M programmes and provision underway in the South West.

Keywords: South West, leadership and management, provision

Rationale: Management & Leadership is a priority for the SWRSP and in order to promote current developments ongoing in the region better, there is a need to conduct a preliminary scoping study to assess present activities in the region.

Methodology:

The methodology for the study was a largely desk-based review of information on provision, together with telephone interviews of providers. The research took place over a two-month period in Spring 2007 and around 300 organisations were contacted.

Providers were asked to:

- Describe the nature of the provision
- Give an indication of number of individuals/ organisations involved

The research included a consideration of regional initiatives, education and business (public and private) activities.

Key Findings: The main findings are summarised below:

- There is a significant range of L&M provision within the South West, delivered by a large number of providers. This includes national and regional initiatives, offerings from public institutions, private bodies, trade associations and consultants;
- L&M programmes have been designed by providers to take into account: size of business; type of learning intervention; and time and budget available;

- Whilst there is a wide choice of L&M provision on offer in the region, it is this very choice that potentially creates a confusing picture for the customer. Accessibility and appropriateness of provision was not always clear;
- Adding to the confusion is the lack of a consistent definition of L&M across the region. Indeed, it was not uncommon for those providers responding to the study to experience difficulty in defining their provision;
- Two main markets appear to be emerging in the provision of L&M training and development. On the one hand is the standard, more formal qualifications route, i.e. FE and HE offerings as well as Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and Institute of Leadership and Management (LMI). On the other hand are the more bespoke offerings tailored to sector, organisation or individual needs;
- The study identified a clear trend towards bespoke programmes, specifically those related directly to sectors;
- Some evidence is emerging that organisations that have traditionally operated representative and/or brokerage roles are moving towards becoming providers;
- Although this study was only able to touch upon provision delivered via consultants, a clear impression formed that consultants are coming to dominate the market. Consultants are used extensively to deliver FE or HE provision;
- The scale and scope of the study meant that researchers were left with the impression that they had only really 'scratched the surface'. A full review of L&M provision in the region would require a significant resource, not currently available.

Distribution: Presently, findings are to be circulated internally to inform the RSP regional Leadership and Management strategy making process.

Impact: Findings will contribute to a regional Leadership and Management strategy.

Research process feedback: The project took a while to get started, and then awaited the employment of the new R&D manager at SLIM. The project then took a little time to take shape as no one took ownership and steered it for some time. As soon as Liz Georgeson started to steer the research, it was able to be completed in line with the RSP's needs.

A4 Skills for Life

4.1 Employers Perspectives on Skills for Life/ESOL

Carried out by: The EPS Team (Pablo Foster, Val Saunders, Gwen Blake, Craig Dimmock).

Date Commissioned: April 2006

Date Completed: November 2007

Steering Group: SW Skills for Life Unit, LSC, TUC, JobCentre Plus, SWRDA

Report Title: Employer Perspectives on Skills for Life and ESOL

Abstract: The project examines employer awareness of literacy, numeracy and language needs within the South West workforce, with a particular emphasis on ESOL workers. The research has been conceived as a means of:

- Providing further strategic information at regional level on the supply and demand of Skills for Life provision within the workplace, by and for the stakeholders concerned;
- Acting as an awareness-raising mechanism for employers with staff training needs in language, literacy and numeracy; helping them recognise, articulate and source appropriate provision.

Keywords: South West employers workplace literacy numeracy English language training

Rationale: By mapping demand and supply for Skills for Life, we will have a clearer view of the impact of available training within workplace settings for literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Employers will benefit by improved access to a better skilled workforce through training available and good practice emerging under Skills for Life, and providers will be able to match delivery with a better picture of the scale of need – patchy across some sectors and widespread in others, but in which rapid change throughout is anticipated.

Methodology: Desk/online literature review – using regional/national stakeholder data and reports.

- Developing, testing, refining and implementing questionnaire surveys with target groups.
- Identifying and interviewing employers in target industry sectors; running focus groups with low skilled workers.
- Analysing and assembling findings, producing conclusions and recommendations.

Key Findings: Employers' perspectives on Skills for Life depend largely on size of business and industry sector:

- Skills for Life /ESOL target achievements in the South West do not reflect the full extent of low level literacy, numeracy and language skills in the workplace;
- A shared understanding of terminology, purpose and outcomes of Skills for Life training amongst diverse stakeholders and employers would be helpful;
- Informal coping strategies have been adopted by employers like on-the-job coaching, peer mentoring, appointing team leaders and supervisors who can interpret;

- Skills for Life targets camouflage a wide a range of abilities and needs across workplaces and skills areas;
- Skills for Life participation levels in the region largely reflect supply, not demand;
- In sectors where Trades Unions have been involved in supporting the delivery of learning, including Skills for Life and ESOL, outcomes and good practice have resulted;
- Opportunities have been missed to train assessors, ULRs, training managers and other supervisory staff in supporting the delivery of Skills for Life/ESOL;
- SSC have a major contribution to make but are yet in the early stages of engaging with the Skills for Life agenda, and find existing red tape and qualifications/funding requirements unhelpful;
- Employers perceive a significant lack of cohesion between the main regional stakeholders in Skills for Life/ESOL, resulting in confusion of approaches and unmet expectations;
- Employers' views are mixed on their preparedness to pay for Skills for Life qualifications, and they often prefer to recruit labour with the appropriate level of English skills.

Distribution: The report was made available on the SLIM website.

Impact: As yet unknown.

4.2 Embedded Skills for Life in South West Workplaces

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: March 2007

Date Completed: August 2007

Steering Group: Lead body: SW Skills for Life Unit who commissioned the research

Report Title: Embedded Skills for Life in South West Workplaces

Abstract: This research study has been commissioned by the South West Skills for Life Unit as a means of investigating the nature and extent of Embedded Skills for Life provision and practice in workplaces around the region. The research was based principally on field research with providers of literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) in the South West, tutor trainers for tutors delivering Skills for Life, and others working closely with employers or learners with Skills for Life needs.

Keywords: Embedded / Contextualised / Discrete / Standalone Skills for Life, Adult literacy and numeracy, Workplace LLN, Tutor trainers, Sector Skills Councils, Trades unions

Rationale: The South West Skills for Life Unit recognises the value of embedded approaches to Skills for Life delivery within vocational training and staff development in businesses throughout the region. However, it anticipates much variation in delivery models, and understands that integrated workplace contexts may operate beyond mainstream, discrete Skills for Life qualifications and hence be difficult to quantify. More needs to be clarified about provision for the lower skilled (at entry level), existing and potential linkages with education and training providers, as well as the role of advice bodies such as learndirect.

With the advent of Train to Gain and the target-led funding attached to more visible discrete (standalone) Skills for Life provision, it is more difficult to gauge the impact of Embedded delivery of Skills for Life in South West workplaces. The project was designed to determine whether Embedding is making a significant contribution to Skills for Life delivery and to validate anecdotal evidence that it is the method 'of choice' for workplace providers of Skills for Life.

Methodology: Desk research/literature review, telephone and face-to-face interviews (based on data from selected providers supplied by South West Skills for Life Unit), focus group.

Key Findings: Specific awareness and uptake of Embedded Skills for Life practice in its diverse forms seems only to be current amongst Skills for Life tutors and tutor trainers. There was a distinct cultural divide between private training providers and others concerned with employer engagement and workplace delivery, and college-based Skills for Life practitioners who were considered 'specialist sub-contractors'. By contrast, Contextualisation was thought to be less of a specialist area and was uniformly welcomed as a useful vehicle for delivering Skills for Life.

For those working more directly with employers, encouraging them to take up vocational training of any description was more of a priority than embedding or discretely delivering Skills for Life. This attitude appeared to predate more recent experiences with Train to Gain although the latter has acted to reinforce it to an extent. Also, feedback from providers suggests that there is a dynamic tension between embedded vs discrete (standalone) delivery of Skills for Life. The tension works in two different directions, as funding is perceived to follow discrete delivery and hence not support embedded approaches.

Another general theme was the prevalence of Embedded Skills for Life within Apprenticeship programmes and its place as part of Key Skills provision. In a number of cases respondents were much more familiar with the use of Contextualised Skills for Life with younger learners rather than with adults. This practice itself gave rise to good examples of individual contextualisation by private sector providers as distinct from more mainstream college-based provision.

Distribution: Available from the SLIM website

Impact: Commissioned by the Skills for Life Unit to support policy development in this field.

A5 Enterprise Education

5.1 Mapping and review of enterprise skills provision for young people in the South West

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: October 2006

Date Completed: not yet completed

Steering Group: David Williams (lead), RDA, Sue Anderson, LSC, Jim Neilson, RSP, Peter Cloke, GOSW.

Tender comments: The original project specification went through many changes under the direction of the RDA.

Abstract: This project aims to review the provision of Enterprise Education (14-19 age group) in the South West to gain a clearer understanding of activities within the region.

Keywords: Enterprise education, South West

Rationale: The Regional Economic Strategy recognises the need to build a culture of innovation and enterprise within the South West. The region needs to concentrate on added value through ideas, knowledge and technology. At the recent cross departmental review meeting with the RSP Board, the issue of enterprise education in the region's schools was raised and concerns expressed that more could be known and done in this arena.

Methodology: Primary Qualitative research - interviews have taken place with key stakeholders within the South West and also with providers of enterprise education and schools within Somerset.

A further report was commissioned, mostly gathering of quantitative information, forming a rationale for an enterprise learning initiative to take place in five areas within the South West.

Distribution: Presently reports and research findings are being circulated internally (RSP Board).

Impact: It is hoped that the research will contribute to the rationale for an enterprise learning initiative to be launched in the South West, led by the RDA.

A6 Migrant Workers

6.1 Learning theme: Migrant Workers – the Challenge for the South West

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: Oct 05

Date Completed: Apr 06

Report Title: Migrant Workers – the Challenge for the South West

Abstract: Migration to the UK has recently increased and migrant workers are making an increasing contribution to regional labour markets. The challenge for employers and agencies in the region is to make the most of the skills migrant workers offer, whilst at the same time preventing exploitation. In the absence of robust figures and intelligence provided by central government, the report assesses the regional picture based on evidence from those working with migrants and makes recommendations to inform future regional policy on migrants' employment.

Keywords: Migrant workers, South West workplaces, Employers, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Rationale: From the UK's perspective, a growing economy and record levels of employment have led to a tightening of the jobs market, with the potential for labour shortages and wage demands to build up. Migrant workers are helping to relieve these pressures by taking up unfilled vacancies in the UK regions. This rise appears to be largely driven by economic forces, and is occurring across all categories of migrants, from people entering with work permits to asylum seekers. It reflects a number of factors: the current strength of the UK labour market; economic globalisation; increasing economic integration and labour mobility within the EU; and increased political instability around the world.

Methodology: Literature review, data analysis and mapping, online discussion, interviews/field research, case studies of good practice, workshop.

Key Findings:

For employers: better access to information, advice and support; improved awareness and delivery of ESOL;

For agencies and service providers: a better coordinated multi-agency approach, improved information about scale/nature of migrant working, better ESOL and IAG provision, community safety information;

For training providers: more flexible access to ESOL provision and tutor training for ESOL, use of ESF funding to meet demand, better progression for ESOL learners;

For policy-makers: improved intelligence and rights awareness, reduced bureaucracy, harmonisation of legislation (and communication with countries of origin), recognition of qualifications.

Distribution: SLIM Website, including library of related resources (access logs indicate report is second most popular download on Website); presentations around the region; media contacts and press reports.

Impact: Continuing interest and follow up of findings from the Learning Theme have been unprecedented, as evidenced by continuing invitations for presentations around the region long after report publication. SLIM is a member of Local Government Association Multi-Agency Group on Migrant Workers. SWRDA Corporate Research Group has recently approved further 'snapshot' follow-up research to the end of 2007. A University of Exeter studentship has been funded by SWRDA.

Research process feedback: Support for Theme and SLIM's research has been enthusiastically expressed by wide range of practitioners at every level across the region.

6.2 Migrant Workers in the South West

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: Sept 07

Date Completed: Nov 07

Report Title: Migrant Workers in the South West

Abstract: The economic impact of migrant workers is an issue which has invited much controversy. The contribution that migrants make to the UK economy has been one of the most contested areas within research, policy-making and in the media. This study therefore attempts to plug the gap in knowledge about the nature, scale and economic impact of migrant working in the South West.

The absence of robust information on the economic characteristics and contribution of migrant workers means that policy-makers do not have the evidence base they need on which to base good policies. This study not only analyses the official statistics in detail, but also contributes significant new primary research from local authorities, local strategic partnerships and community and voluntary organisations in the South West. This has enabled the development of a more detailed picture at local and sub regional levels within the region.

Keywords: Migrant workers, South West workplaces, Employers, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Rationale: This research has focused on the characteristics and impact of the new, predominantly A8, economic migrant population in the South West. The research methodology comprised primary and secondary research, including a detailed literature review and desk research, regional data analysis, and a survey and interviews with local authorities, local strategic partnerships and voluntary organisations in the region.

Methodology: The methodology included, a literature review updating the findings of the earlier SLIM Learning Theme (see above), with a particular focus on: trends in migration nationally; the

economic impact of migrant workers; good practice in supporting migrant workers; and developments in other English regions, including a review of other regional research.

The project also reviewed available data sources to assess the scale and nature of migrant working in the region. The analysis of the data covered: numbers of migrant workers; inflows of migrant workers; country of origin of migrant workers; intended length of stay in the UK; age and gender; concentrations within the South West; skills of migrant workers; migrant workers and their families; employment by sector; levels of unemployment; English language issues.

Data included latest data on NiNo registrations, new local authority level Workers Registration Survey (WRS) data, including a commentary upon their adequacy and appropriateness.

A survey and interviews with local authorities, local strategic partnerships and voluntary and community organisations sought to source local research and intelligence together with any specific policy initiatives, good practice, and service delivery that has been initiated as a result of the presence of migrant workers. Organisations were also asked to identify their intelligence needs and support needs.

Key Findings: This research project has drawn together a large body of evidence from national, regional, sub-regional and local levels. Whilst the primary focus has been the economic impact and intelligence, the research has identified a wide range of factors that come into play when considering the issue of migrant workers.

In terms of economic impact, the evidence emerging is one of an overall positive impact on the regional and local economies, with little evidence of a negative impact on the resident workforce, in terms of displacement or the depression of wage rates.

Local evidence of economic impact is confined to those areas where employer surveys have been commissioned. Studies in Cornwall and Gloucestershire in particular confirm that employers are recruiting migrant workers because of their inability to recruit locally or because of skills shortages.

The impact of not doing so, employers report, would be: downgrading service delivery; loss of production and potential business closure. Whilst links with employers is becoming a feature of the search for understanding of migrant workers and their economic impact, only one in three of the respondents to the survey had made such links. If our knowledge and understanding of the impact of migrant working is to be fully understood at local level, then employer surveys and networks will be needed to plug this gap.

Whilst there is evidence of substantial activity and understanding at local level, the majority of local authorities within the region appear not to have conducted local surveys/research, as proposed by the Audit Commission Report, *Crossing Borders*. The inadequacy of national statistics makes this imperative if the scale and nature of migrant workers is to be understood.

The survey of statutory and voluntary organisations has therefore been timely. At local government level, many District and Unitary authorities have begun to turn their attention to how effectively they are meeting the needs of migrant workers and have become acutely aware that they have no data to show where migrant workers are; who they are; where they work and what support services they need. Others, mainly at County level, but including a number of Districts, have taken a lead and have identified a number of areas for action, but again, the need for data and intelligence and funding increases the complexity of this work. This research has not necessarily taken place where national data tells us that migrant worker numbers are greatest.

The survey found little evidence of significant impact on local services, although some localised issues have been pinpointed and the need for additional resources to cover translation services and English language support in schools.

Distribution: An executive summary will be distributed widely and the report available for download from the SLIM website. The report findings will be further disseminated through presentations, media and press reports.

Impact: The report will inform RDA activities in relation to migrant working as well as the work of the RSP. The work has also fed into the South West Observatory discussions and the region's multi-agency task group.

A7 Employability

7.1 Learning Theme: Young People in Jobs Without Training

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: April 2005 **Date Completed:** October 2005

Steering Group: Connexions x 2, LSC, University of Exeter

Report Title: Young People: Employment Without Training

Abstract: Raising the participation of young people in education and training is a central aim of government. However, a relatively small but significant number of young people who enter employment between the ages of 16-18 do so without the benefit of training. This represents not only a wasted opportunity, but also links to potential problems for the future.

The Learning Theme considered the issues and barriers faced by young people, by employers and by those working to support young people in making more effective choices.

Keywords: NEETs, Young People, Employment, Workplace training, Apprenticeships

Rationale: Research shows that the attainment of vocational qualifications at all levels can improve the employment chances of unqualified school leavers. Yet, although there is some take up of NVQ Level 2 qualifications by school leavers, and of apprenticeships and low level City and Guilds qualifications, very few individuals who obtained no school level qualifications manage to reach Level 3 through the vocational route, and only around a quarter of this group manage even to reach Level 2. Research also underlines the importance of a stronger vocational offer post-16 and preparation for this route and its opportunities pre-16.

However, those wishing to take the work-based route face a complex maze of different provision and qualifications, variable quality advice, and stigma attached to the vocational route. Employers, too, are confused and ill-informed about the support that is available to them in providing work-based training.

Methodology: Literature review, data analysis, online discussion, workshop.

Key Findings: Recommendations for the region:

1. Actively promote the work-based learning route to young people;
2. Introduce work experience in schools for young people and track development of employability skills;
3. Track and assess the skills of young people in employment;
4. Develop a major promotional campaign targeting employers;

5. Recognise the role of Connexions services in brokering employment and training for young people within the emerging skills brokerage model;
6. Take action to improve knowledge and understanding of the cohort in the region;
7. Develop measures to identify earlier those young people at risk of disengagement and develop measures which provide additional support;
8. Develop capacity within the infrastructure to equip those advising young people better;
9. Develop a regional mentoring initiative aimed at supporting young people in their transitions to learning and work.

Distribution: SLIM Website, including library of related resources; presentations around region.

Impact: SLIM now manages a follow-on research project into Young People with Jobs Without Training which builds on the Learning Theme with interviews, case studies and desk and field research, currently due to finish end 2007.

Research process feedback: The issue remains of national interest and has featured in policy recommendations for implementation.

7.2 Flexible Training Solutions

Carried out by: Host Policy Consultancy and Anne- Marie Warrender

Date Commissioned: April 2005

Date Completed: February 2006

Partnership: The lead partner was the SWRSP. The Steering Group comprised representation from the LSC (Devon and Cornwall), AOC, ALI, FSB, NIACE (Chair) and SWRDA.

Report Title: Flexible Training Solutions Self-Assessment Toolkit

Abstract: The Toolkit draws on the knowledge and experience of ten local training providers who have all contributed generously to a research project that sought to:

- Identify good practice within the training provider community in order to establish a baseline for the engagement of employers;
- Develop tools to aid training providers in replicating effective practice;
- Develop recommendations for training providers, employers and strategic agencies.

Each training provider needs to customise its provision to meet the particular needs of its employer clients, but will do this in a way that is unique to its own circumstances. The criteria, checklists and examples provide a good starting point, but need to be adapted to organisational needs.

Keywords: Flexible, training, self assessment, employer engagement, demand-led provision.

Rationale: The Government's Skills Strategy emphasises the need for a more demand-led approach: "placing employers' needs for skills centre stage and managing the supply of training, skills and qualifications so that it responds directly to those needs". Many of its recommendations relate to the need to improve the flexibility of training provision for employers.

This issue was identified as a priority by the South West FRESA, and the subsequent SWRSP established a working group to take forward this work on behalf of the Alliance. The work was commissioned following a Learning Theme⁹ which concluded that many barriers stand in the way of meeting employers' needs; some are structural and systemic and can only be addressed at national policy level. However, other barriers concern the adoption of appropriate cultures and behaviours by training providers. The capacity for change and knowledge about best practice is therefore critical and the learning theme noted the existence of much excellent practice within the region which can be built upon and further replicated.

The aim of the study was to develop a better understanding of the key components of effective practice in the delivery of flexible training solutions to employers and the conditions and behaviours within providers that enable effective practice to be developed. It also aimed to develop a tools for its replication across training providers in the South West.

Methodology:

Stage 1: Identification and theme analysis of effective practice

Central to this study was an examination of the critical success factors that enable effective practice to be developed. The consultants undertook interviews with the steering group as well as representatives from other organisations including ALI, the LSDA, employer representative bodies, all Business Links in the South West, RDA, Group Training Associations, CoVEs, the ETP taking place in Wiltshire and Swindon (Free2Learn) and the seven local LSCs. Interviews were conducted either individually by phone or through focus group interviews as part of already timetabled meetings.

This was supported by a literature review and a review of practice highlighted on the SLIM website, innovation and good practice across the country highlighted by the National LSC, LSDA and other bodies such as DfES, and recent relevant research as well as international experience.

Case studies were identified at this stage.

Stage 2: Validation of good practice through case studies

Following agreement by the steering group on the short list for case study training providers and the methodological approach, providers were interviewed using a topic guide devised by HOST and approved in advance by the Steering Group. The overarching criteria for this topic guide incorporated the key components for effective practice as identified by the Learning Theme and Stage 1 above. Case studies were attributed to specific organisations, and, as part of HOST's quality control processes, a validation and clearance process was established. This involved sending the draft case studies to the interviewees for a 'factual accuracy' clearance prior to submission to the Steering Group or wider publication.

Stage 3: Develop tools for replication of effective practice

⁹ The Learning Theme process includes a literature review, e mail discussion, case studies and interviews and a discussion workshop with practitioners and policy makers. Report can be found on http://www.swslim.org.uk/research/slim_reports.asp.

The decision to develop a self-assessment toolkit was taken by the Steering Group and on the advice of the AOC representation. It drew on the practice themes interlaced with examples of practice.

Key Findings: Six overarching themes were identified as areas where training providers needed to develop practical policies:

- Employer engagement/training provider responsiveness;
- Marketing and communication;
- Staffing and other resources;
- Financial management;
- Training provision;
- Working with and through intermediaries.

A range of recommendations and practice were highlighted within the report and toolkit.

Distribution: The Toolkit is available on the SLIM website. At the time that the Toolkit was finalised it was announced by government that they intended to develop a capacity building programme for providers in advance of Train to Gain roll out. SLIM worked with the LSC to consider how the toolkit would form part of that package. The toolkit was made available to Ashridge, the consultants used in the region to provide workshops and bespoke consultancy on employer engagement.

A background report on which the toolkit is based is also available but was not distributed.

Impact: In the event the full impact of the Toolkit has been limited by the announcement by government that it intended to develop a national employer engagement standard for training providers and colleges. It was not clear what this would include and some providers were reluctant to use a system that might differ from the standard. SLIM did make the toolkit available to the organisation developing the standard and we were informed that they found the approach useful. It has not been possible to identify the extent to which it has been used as the standard is yet to be published.

7.3 Young People in Jobs without Training in the South West.

Carried out by: Dr Kim Diment, researcher, Dr Rob Lawy and Professor Jocey Quinn, Project Directors, all University of Exeter SLIM or SELL (Also Connexions – see below)

Date Commissioned: June 2006 **Date Completed:** December 2007

Steering Group: members representing LSC (part funding), Connexions (involved directly in the research process), SLIM/Marchmont and SELL.

Abstract: Young people in Jobs Without Training (JWT) (ie without nationally-recognised accreditation) have been identified by policy-makers as an area of priority concern. This longitudinal research project aims to enhance practitioner, academic and policy-makers' understanding of the characteristics and aspirations of young people in JWT in the South West.

Keywords: jobs without training (JWT), NEET, young people.

Rationale: The proportion of young people in JWT is higher in the South West than across England as a whole. The Chief Executive of Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Connexions service (where it has been higher still) took this as a concern to the LSC and RDA in 2005. The SW RSP set up a Steering Group, and obtained funding from ESF, LSC and Connexions to set up the research project. Young people in JWT is an under-researched area and by aiming to learn more about the characteristics, enthusiasms and interests of the young people themselves, the aim is to add significantly to existing knowledge and inform both policy-makers as well as front-line Connexions staff. Additionally, by involving Connexions PAs (Personal Advisors) in the research process, it will also contribute to research capacity-building in the sector.

Methodology: A longitudinal study of young people in JWT from across six Connexions partnerships. Face-to-face interviews conducted by the university researcher, and telephone interviews by the Connexions PAs; an analysis of statistical databases relating to local and national employment/educational patterns amongst young people.

Key Findings: Final report is due December 2007. The second stage fieldwork for the project is still underway.

Distribution: To date: National and international conferences; Participative research seminar with regional stakeholders.

Impact: The research has not yet been completed.

Research process feedback: The issue remains of national interest and has featured in policy recommendations for implementation.

7.4 Generic Employability Skills II

Carried out by: The Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning, University of Nottingham

Date Commissioned: July 2006

Date Completed: January 2007

Steering Group: LSDA/QIA, LSC, RSP, FSB, LSN, AoCSW

Report Title: Generic Employability Skills II, and The Teaching, Learning and Assessment of Generic Employability Skills

Abstract: The report sets out to identify the range of skills and attributes that could be considered to constitute 'generic employability', the range of approaches identified, formal qualifications, and illustrates their effectiveness in different settings through the use of case studies.

Keywords: Generic Employability Skills, transferable skills, E2E, apprenticeship

Rationale: It was decided by the Steering Group that issues raised during the first phase of the research were worthy of further investigation – particularly a ‘good practice’ approach to existing initiatives in place to develop this area of skill.

Methodology: Consultation with Steering Group, desk research including literature review, case study interviews, development of a good practice framework, reporting.

Key Findings: There is a multiplicity of approaches at the margins of society, but surprisingly little provision within mainstream education and training.

Distribution: Regional conference held, presentations to regional bodies and at a Neil Stewart Associates Conference nationally, also developed as a web-based tool. Interest has been expressed by overseas parties. 200 full reports and 300 Guides have been distributed.

Impact: unclear as yet, although the recommendation that Education Business Partnerships be more fully supported in the region has been taken on board.

Research process feedback: There was a gap between the originally intended output and certain key audiences. This led to a revision of the original proposal and the preparation of a ‘guide’ to accompany the full report.

A8 Other

8.1 Learning & Skills Research Network (LSRN) conference

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: July 2006

Date Completed: 12 July 2007

Steering Group: Jo Pye, Katie Kelsey, Irene Derczynska, Hilary Todd, SLIM, Philip Barker and Janet Brewer, City of Bristol College and Michael Tedder, University of Exeter School of Education and Lifelong Learning, LSRN Network convenors; Paula Jones, Learning South West.

Keywords: Regional, Research dissemination, Practitioner conference

Rationale: The LSRN and its conference programme was established by the LSDA in the UK regions to provide opportunities for research practitioners to network and disseminate findings. Following the demise of the LSDA in April 2006, SLIM volunteered to continue the LSRN conference programme as 'caretakers' until such time as the LSRN regrouped nationally (expected by end 2007).

Methodology: Conference organisation for networking / research dissemination by multiple agencies (public and private providers, stakeholders, project personnel); Website provision.

Key Findings: Opportunities to showcase and exchange research findings were well received by practitioner communities (as recorded by conference feedback forms) for professional development.

Distribution: Conference programme and papers presented available via SLIM Website for regional and national audiences.

Impact: SLIM's contribution to continue interim LSRN initiatives much appreciated by regional research practitioners. Future conference organisation to be led by Learning South West as part of its enhanced Practitioner Training remit.

Research process feedback: Ongoing interest and participation by practitioners in regional research networking and dissemination.

8.2 Joint ARO/ESRC Conference: Globalisation and the regions

Carried out by: SLIM

Date Commissioned: July 2005

Date Completed: July 2005

Steering Group: Association of Regional Observatories, ESRC, SKOPE, SLIM.

Keywords: Regional development, globalisation.

Rationale: The conference sought to combine the resources of the ESRC and regional observatories to disseminate latest research and thinking on the impact of globalisation on regional economies.

Methodology: Conference organisation for networking / research dissemination by multiple agencies (public and private providers, stakeholders, project personnel); Web site provision. Regional / national event attended over two days by 150 key policy makers and experts.

Key Findings: Opportunities to showcase and exchange research findings well received by the policy and research community.

Distribution: Conference programme and papers presented available via SLIM Website for regional and national audiences.

Impact: SLIM's contribution fostered a closer relationship between the regional observatories and the ESRC research. It raised the profile of the South West RSP amongst its peers.

ANNEX B

The total available for commissioning of research activities was £451,188. The cost of management, dissemination and administration by SLIM over the three years was £135,729. The timescale for the fund was 1 December 2004 to 30 November 2007.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
SLIM Staff Costs	2,017	24,279	25,094	23,709	75,099
Other Costs (e.g. publication costs and marketing)	1,290	15,480	15,480	14,190	46,440
Contract Research		150,396	150,396	150,396	451,188
Total	3,307	190,155	190,970	188,295	572,727