

**A SECTOR SKILLS AGREEMENT  
FOR THE LIFELONG LEARNING SECTOR IN ENGLAND  
STAGE 5 – THE COLLABORATIVE ACTION PLAN**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*The collaborative action plan, which will meet the priority skills needs of the sector workforce, both now and in the future*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



“OUR VISION IS THAT THE UK LIFELONG LEARNING WORKFORCE SHOULD BE THE BEST IN THE WORLD. THAT VISION DEPENDS ON ENSURING THAT EMPLOYERS IN THE LIFELONG LEARNING SECTOR CAN RECRUIT, RETAIN AND DEVELOP HIGHLY SKILLED AND EFFECTIVE STAFF.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'D. Hunter', followed by a long horizontal stroke.

**David Hunter**, Chief Executive Officer,  
Lifelong Learning UK

## LIFELONG LEARNING EMPLOYERS IN ENGLAND

This is the Sector Skills Agreement for England for all those employers who provide lifelong learning. A Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) is essentially an agreement between employers in this sector, which includes education and training providers, and those organisations – partners and stakeholders – that plan, fund or support education and training. The aim of this agreement is to reach consensus on how lifelong learning sector employers will work together with key partners and stakeholders and with each other in the lifelong learning sector, to secure the necessary supply of training for their workforce in the future.

This is important because the United Kingdom is facing serious skills challenges. In England, if we are to remain competitive over the coming decades, then we must raise the skill levels of our entire workforce. This applies to all sectors of the economy, but particularly to the lifelong learning sector, whose employees educate, teach, train and develop the rest of the national workforce.

The lifelong learning sector includes five broad ‘constituencies’ of employers:

- community learning and development (CLD), including youth work providers
- further education colleges and providers (FE)
- higher education institutions (HE)
- libraries, archives and information services (LAIS)
- work based learning providers (WBL)

Our research shows that in all four countries of the United Kingdom, the lifelong learning sector has critical gaps in its skills base that must be addressed. This Sector Skills Agreement is a major step towards outlining how these gaps within England can be addressed in the longer term. Similar agreements have been developed for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This agreement has been developed through a formal five-stage process:

1. the skills needs assessment
2. a review of current training provision
3. analysis of the gaps in current workforce development activity, and priorities to be addressed
4. engaging employers to invest in their skills development
5. identification and agreement as to how lifelong learning employers and partners will work together to secure the necessary supply of training and skills development.

This document is the output of the fifth phase of the process and as such:

- describes the characteristics of the **workforce** in England, and the **policy drivers** that shape the development of skills provision
- establishes the **key skills issues** in the sector
- describes the agreements reached to date on the **solutions** areas and specific **actions** needed to resolve them.

It is not the end of, but rather a significant point on, a journey which will continue over the coming months, and in some cases years, as these specific actions are developed and agreements reached with employers, partners and stakeholders in the lifelong learning sector and with other industrial and occupational sectors.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## FUTURE WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS AND POLICY DRIVERS IN ENGLAND

The lifelong learning sector in England brings together all provision that delivers or supports learning and knowledge management for both young people over 14 and adults. The lifelong learning sector has been only relatively recently recognised and aligned with achieving national policy outcomes. A seminal policy driver the *Skills Strategy* (DfES, 2005) was published in the year Lifelong Learning UK was launched as a Sector Skills Council. Additionally, some constituent parts of the sector have been more recently aligned together in response to the FE White Paper (2006) and through Learning and Skills Council (LSC) policy. These drivers have brought work based learning and large parts of the community learning and development constituencies together with colleges and this new grouping is now known as the 'FE sector'.

Government policy in a range of areas plays a considerable role in influencing the future development of learning, training and personal development and the way this impacts on the demand for skills within the lifelong learning workforce. In the last two years there have been a number of new reports and policies that will impact heavily across the sector, including the *Skills Strategies* (DfES, 2005), *Foster Review* (DfES, 2005), the 14–19 Education and Skills White Paper (2005), followed by the FE White Paper (DfES, 2006) and the two Leitch reviews (HMT 2005, 2006). The future of the youth work sector will be influenced by significant policy drivers as outlined in *Youth Matters* (DfES, 2006) and *Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities* (DCSF, 2007). Libraries, Archives and Information services are affected greatly by the exponential increase in the use of ICT as well as policy drivers from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, for example *Supporting Excellence* (DCMS, 2007) and *Creative Britain* (DCMS, 2008). These developments are changing the way education, skills and knowledge are acquired, how they are resourced and how they are perceived. As a predominantly publicly resourced sector, the way in which the lifelong learning sector responds to and develops in order to address the demands placed upon it, is also largely governed by wider policy development.

Strengthening economic prosperity, productivity and social justice are key themes within government policy across England, to which the development of skills within the population as a whole is expected to contribute. The Government in England is looking to achieve all the proposed ambitions of Lord Leitch (HMT, 2006) in order to raise skills levels across England. This builds on the ongoing reforms and reviews of all parts of the sector which aim to make the system more 'demand-led'.

Specifically, provision at all levels must be responsive to the needs of learners, employers and communities. Public Service Agreements (PSAs) have been established in England, which set out clear targets for improving the educational attainment of young people and improving adult skills levels. In essence, these targets could be considered as the delivery targets for the sector, which in turn influence the demands placed on the lifelong learning sector and its workforce.

## KEY SKILLS ISSUES ACROSS THE LIFELONG LEARNING SECTOR

Using evidence from Stages 1 and 2, initial 'gap analysis papers' were developed for England for each constituent part of the lifelong learning sector. As this work developed and further consultation was carried out with employers and stakeholders, it became evident that a series of themes relating to skills issues are common across the lifelong learning sector not only in England but in the UK. These skills issues were mapped under the following overarching themes.

### Skills related to learning delivery including pedagogy and information learning technology (ILT)

These are some of the most important skills needs across all constituencies of the lifelong learning sector. However, the specific skill set related to learning delivery is different in each constituency – ranging from, for example, developing and using a range of teaching and learning techniques in further education to the increased demand for ILT within higher education and responding to the complex IT and information needs of users in libraries archives and information services.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management skills issues were identified across the lifelong learning sector in England and reinforced through Stage 3 consultation work in all constituencies. Specific skills needs include financial management, succession/strategic planning, bid writing/fund raising, leadership and coaching/mentoring skills.

### Learner engagement and customer (client) care

Various social inclusion and wider participation agendas have fuelled the demand for skills relating to learner engagement and customer (client) care, to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse learner/customer group that includes younger learners aged 14-19, adults and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. New methods of teaching and learning including e-learning, are making additional demands on support staff resulting in a need for more trainers, instructors and learning facilitators to work directly with learners on a daily basis. Changes to the role of technical staff, for example, mean that they now interface directly with the learner as well as supporting aspects of teaching and research programmes such as project and assignment work.

### Multi-agency/partnership working

In general, partnership working skills have been identified as a requirement across the five constituencies. Employers and stakeholders report a need for increased multi-agency working to deliver services to individual learners and/or

clients. Staff need skills in working collectively to achieve multi-agency, individual agency and service delivery targets. New skills and specialisms are emerging with consequent implications for staff development.

### Employer engagement

Effective employer engagement and partnership working is a pressing issue particularly for the FE, WBL and HE workforce. The Leitch Reports (HMT 2005, 2006) emphasised the importance of employer engagement in moving towards a skills system that is demand-led and underlined the need to improve links between employers and lifelong learning providers. Responding to employer demand has been identified in WBL as part of the demand for leadership and management skills.

### Recruitment and retention

Skills shortages and recruitment and retention difficulties were highlighted in all parts of the lifelong learning sector and reinforced through the Stage 3 and 4 consultation work.

### ICT – the e-capable workforce

Skills related to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are a requirement for many parts of the lifelong learning sector, particularly within the libraries archives and information services constituency. Technological change has brought with it higher expectations on the part of many users of information services. They anticipate that the latest and most complex technology will be available and be used to deliver services. For libraries, both public and academic, the demands placed upon staff by an increasingly ICT literate user are increasing exponentially in terms of both information handling and retrieval, and in improving the skills of the 'Google generation'.

Within CLD, both generic and specialist ICT skills have been cited as skills needs. Employers in the family learning sector identified a need for e-skills awareness to enhance the reputation of family learning and to enable innovative ways of delivering training and learning opportunities.

These issues are explored further in Chapter 4 of the main report which looks at the wider implications of the skills issues across the lifelong learning sector.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PROPOSED COLLABORATIVE SOLUTION AREAS AND ACTIONS

LLUK used the skills themes as outlined in the previous section to develop proposed collaborative solutions and actions for the Sector Skills Agreement. All of the proposed solutions are based upon partnership working with employers, partners and stakeholders and emphasise the existing good practice upon which further action can and should be built.

### The 10 solution areas are:

1. Explore the options for ‘professionalising’ all parts of the lifelong learning workforce.

Building on the experience in the FE sector of introducing new professional qualifications for teachers, tutors and trainers, LLUK intends to explore with the lifelong learning sector the whole area of professionalisation for each of the five constituencies – and across constituencies. This would be in order to identify what actions need to take place to move towards this goal. This is as much about identifying and encouraging professional behaviours as identifying professional roles. Benefits to the sector would include improved individual progression opportunities which would support the recruitment and retention of staff.

2. Develop an integrated continuing professional development (CPD) framework and model for the lifelong learning sector where appropriate.

LLUK identifies an aspiration that the lifelong learning workforce in all four nations and across all constituencies has access to an integrated CPD framework.

Although good practice exists in relation to CPD in parts of the sector, employers have identified a need for a more consistent approach to the application of CPD across the sector. There is currently no clear definition of what CPD means across the constituent parts of the lifelong learning sector and neither has any work been done to comprehensively map what is already available.

3. Develop a ‘skills for learning professionals’ qualifications framework.

During SSA consultations it became clear that there were a variety of skills needs that were common right across the lifelong learning sector. These skills needs were in the areas of employer engagement, information

learning technology, learner support/customer care and multi-agency/partnership working. This solution proposes that LLUK develops, with partners, a new ‘skills for learning professionals’ framework, which would provide staff in the sector with these transferable skills.

This framework could act as an introduction to working in the lifelong learning sector and support those working within the sector to update their core skills. In addition, the framework could sit within the Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS) or possibly become part of the CPD framework as outlined in solution 2. Ultimately this work should help to implement National Occupational Standards (NOS) across the sector and facilitate organisations to use standards more effectively.

4. Develop collaborative working across the lifelong learning sector, to recognise and disseminate good practice.

There is a great deal of good practice evident across the lifelong learning sector in many areas of workforce development. However there is a need to develop better partnerships across constituencies and even nations, to disseminate this good practice as widely as possible and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

5. Support lifelong learning employers in the move towards demand-led learning and training opportunities.

A culture change is taking place in the planning and delivery of education and training. In England, much of this is being driven by the Leitch Review of Skills, with a move away from the more traditional plan-led provision towards demand-led provision – the demand coming from other sectors, via SSAs from the other 24 SSCs and directly from learners and employers. This change can already be observed in the wider FE sector in the Train to Gain programme through which the Learning and Skills Council are directing much of their funding for adult skills.

This culture change will have a huge impact on the staff in the lifelong learning sector, from how learning is delivered to how courses are developed and financed. There is a need for a support programme to assist lifelong learning employers to make the transition to a demand-led system and ensure that no lifelong learning provider is ‘left behind’. Staff across lifelong learning sector organisations need skills to enable their organisation to be responsive to both other employer and individual learner needs.

6. Develop sector-wide career pathways.

There are currently no clear progression routes or career pathways that map across the whole lifelong learning sector in any of the four nations of the UK. This area of activity is based on the creation of a framework outlining career pathways in the lifelong learning sector.

7. Develop a knowledge bank for Information Advice and Guidance professionals and others, to support new entrants and existing staff in the lifelong learning sector.

It is critical that LLUK works with the sector and partners to develop a 'knowledge bank' for both IAG professionals within the sector (to support existing employees within lifelong learning) and IAG professionals outside the sector (to attract new entrants into the sector). Such a knowledge bank would provide information on all the careers available in the sector and the attendant qualification requirements and access/progression routes.

8. Recruitment programmes to address specific shortages in the lifelong learning sector.

Targeted recruitment programmes are needed to encourage people to either move within the lifelong learning sector or consider the sector as a career choice. Working in the lifelong learning sector is a career of 'ultimate choice' for most people – but is not always a career of first choice because of the need for staff to have experience in industry or business before passing those skills on to others.

9. Develop a UK-wide Leadership and Management strategy.

There is a plethora of provision in leadership and management that includes areas of good practice. The central issue is that there is no overall cohesive approach to leadership and management training and take-up across the lifelong learning sector. As with the other three home countries, there are numerous initiatives and organisations relevant to leadership and management in the lifelong learning sector in England. LLUK wishes to work with partners to ensure the availability of a framework of appropriate leadership and management training programmes.

Additionally, LLUK is engaged in the development of leadership and management standards through the Management and Leadership Champions scheme in the Skills for Business network.

10. Develop the business case and resources to support the use of technology in the sector, particularly relating to ILT – the e-capable workforce.

Leaders across the sector need to understand the benefits that technology can bring, and to put in place effective strategies for investment and deployment.

The workforce, through initial training and CPD, needs to develop the skills to use technology effectively, for delivering and supporting learning more flexibly. The role of the teacher is likely to change. Emphasis will shift from traditional whole class delivery to greater focus on demonstration, facilitation and mentoring along with associated content development and resource strategies. Practitioners will also need to address the challenges of delivering learning online for students studying at a distance.

Activity under this solution falls into two broad areas:

- an e-enabled workforce – ensuring that the workforce is able to use technology in business development and quality assurance and in the day-to-day running of operations
- the e-capable workforce – providing the workforce with the tools and skills to deliver learning using the enhancement of technology to meet the needs of a diverse learner, client and customer group.

Stage 5 of the Lifelong Learning UK Sector Skills Agreement focused on developing an action plan with employers and stakeholders, who have agreed to take action to confirm their role in the process. The sign-up process has varied in each nation.

The purpose of this final stage in the SSA process has been to achieve a formal commitment to the potential solutions and provisional action plans, which were set out at stage 3. A range of partners have signed up to carry out actions, costed where appropriate, which will address skills issues in the sector. These actions will complement agreements signed with employers and other workforce strategies and plans developed with employers during the development of the SSA. However, LLUK is committed to further consultation with a wider range of partners. Therefore dialogue will continue to take the process forward through discussions at national level and within the nine English regions.

The final Stage 5 report for England can be found at the address overleaf.

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