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The Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007-2012

Revised version: 2009-2010

Contents

01. Preface	1
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02. Introduction	3
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03. The future of the further education sector workforce	4
A clear direction: strategic context	4
Responding to change	5
A vision for the further education workforce	5

04. A strategy for success	6
Strategic priorities	6
The journey from vision to implementation	9
Strategic themes	10

05. What next?	14
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This document has been produced by Lifelong Learning UK in consultation with, and on behalf of, partners and providers within the further education system.

Lifelong Learning UK would like to thank all the partners and providers who have contributed to this document.

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Preface



I am delighted to introduce the revised version of the first *Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007-2012*, and I would like to

thank the many people who have contributed to this document.

The first strategy, designed to help shape the future further education workforce, was published in 2007. This revised version, refreshed with the help of individual providers, their national representatives and national partners, summarises the original workforce strategy priorities and themes and explains why, following consultation, two new themes have been added.

The development of the first strategy was an ambitious aim for all of us working in the sector. Identifying the four priorities for workforce development was a first step towards helping focus work at national level and supporting providers across the further education sector to implement the strategy.

We need a workforce who can embrace change and respond positively to the opportunities and challenges it brings. The world we are operating in has changed dramatically over the last six months and, more than ever, providers need to understand the changing needs of learners and their employers.

It is vital for us all in England to ensure that the entire further education workforce is appropriately trained, has the flexibility to respond to these changing needs and is recruiting the best people from a wide talent

pool. The two new strategic themes around leadership and management; and a flexible, fair and supportive working environment will help to further shape and enhance our work towards achieving the aims of the strategy.

In 2008, we produced a companion implementation plan to the workforce strategy. This year, we have worked with providers and national partners to create a guide for providers to implement the workforce strategy (*Implementing the Workforce Strategy: A Guide for Learning Providers*) and a national partner discussion document (*Implementing the Workforce Strategy: An Overview of National Partner Contributions*). We are also working with national partners to develop further accessible resources to use for their own workforce planning and development and to help make links with the national improvement agenda for the sector.

I would like to congratulate you for all your work in the last year and hope that you will continue to work with us to achieve our vision for the further education workforce.

David Hunter
Chief Executive, Lifelong Learning UK

'National Partners' describes those organisations within the sector that are working with Lifelong Learning UK at a national level to support the implementation of this strategy. They include: government departments; sector organisations such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Institute for Learning, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service and the Learning and Skills Council; and unions, professional bodies and provider representative bodies.

Introduction

The *Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England* was designed to help shape the future workforce in the sector. Its purpose is to support all employers in the sector in implementing their own workforce plans to ensure the delivery of excellent learning provision.

This strategy has been designed not only to equip staff to meet today's demands on the further education sector, but also to look ahead and anticipate what employers, communities and learners will want from the sector over the next five years. The further education sector needs to be able to respond to the many economic and social challenges that this country faces. The strategy needs to build on the existing strengths of the workforce, and to enhance the development of a highly professional and expert workforce for the future. This requires highly skilled staff that are ready to seize opportunities for ongoing personal and career development, and are able to adapt to new and challenging roles that will develop as the range and nature of provision changes.

The strategy covers the whole workforce of the sector. As such it is applicable to all employees in:

- further education colleges
- sixth form colleges
- specialist colleges
- publicly funded work based learning providers
- local authority or voluntary and community sector learning providers (also known as adult and community learning providers)
- offender learning providers.

'Employers' describes learning providers in the sector who employ the workforce encompassed by the strategy and implementation guide.

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This will include some third sector provision in receipt of public funding.

Everyone in these organisations, together with Lifelong Learning UK and other national organisations in the sector, has a role in fulfilling the vision for the workforce in the sector. Everyone affects, and is affected by, the strategy.

Pursuing Excellence, the National Improvement Strategy for the sector developed by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, sets out in Aim 3 that: "The further education system continuously improves so that colleges and providers aspire to and achieve excellence, and no provision is unsatisfactory". The *Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector* contributes to this aim.

The future of the further education sector workforce

A clear direction: strategic context

The Government has established a clear direction for the future of the education and skills sector. By 2020 the sector needs to provide 14 to 19 learners with a greater choice of high standard academic and vocational programmes. The sector needs to provide adult learners with access to excellent provision for basic skills, training for work and learning for personal development, including locally delivered accessible higher education through further education colleges. Businesses need to have a direct and productive relationship with a transformed and responsive network of providers committed to meeting regional and sub-regional skills needs.

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Responding to change

As a response to changes in the machinery of government, government policy directives, learner demands, technological change and increasing global competition, the further education sector has identified five changes that are required in developing the sector for the future:

- 1 Increase the quality of provision.
- 2 Establish flexibility in the design and delivery of learning and skills programmes – including exploiting existing and emerging technologies – for the workplace and the community.
- 3 Promote the benefits of learning and skills development, and of qualification achievement.
- 4 Develop a range of partnerships to stimulate and respond to demands for learning.
- 5 Increase participation from learners of all ages and backgrounds.

A vision for the further education workforce

To support these far-reaching changes, the further education sector has developed a shared vision for the workforce and a strategy to achieve it. The vision and strategy have been developed through consultation within the sector, facilitated by Lifelong Learning UK.

The vision is:

To have a workforce that is highly skilled, qualified and committed to continuing professional development

To have a workforce of professionals who drive forward their own levels of expertise

To have a workforce that is flexible enough to meet the changing needs of learners and their employers

To have a workforce that is excellent at designing, delivering and supporting learning including making effective use of the potential of technology to deliver improved outcomes for learners

To have a workforce that can provide learning effectively in a variety of physical and technological settings including both educational and workplace environments

To have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the sector's customer base.

A strategy for success

Underpinning the following priorities are ten categories, or *themes*, of workplace development activities to be carried out by the stakeholders. The priorities and themes contained in the strategy support the achievement of the vision.

'Stakeholders'

includes national partners and learning providers in the sector.

Priority 1

Understanding the nature of the workforce

The sector vision for the future includes a step change in the professionalism and quality of the sector's workforce. This can only be achieved by having a thorough understanding of the current and future workforce, gathered in a systematic way at regular intervals throughout the implementation of the strategy.

Why is this a priority?

- Reliable information on the workforce and its diversity supports forecasting, policy development and decision making at national and local level.
- Reliable assessment of workforce skills enables employers to predict the specific needs of their workforce as the environment changes.
- High-quality information about the sector workforce and context enables the strategy itself to be developed as circumstances change.

Priority 2

Attracting and recruiting the best people

In order to provide a first-rate experience for all learners, it is essential that the sector identifies, attracts and recruits outstanding individuals from a diverse talent pool. The sector needs to attract new entrants and those recruited from within and outside the sector need to be adaptable and committed to developing their careers and skills.

Why is this a priority?

- Providers need to meet the changing needs of the 14 to 19 curricula and the learning requirements of the increasing numbers of 16 to 19 year olds staying on in education.
- As the environment becomes increasingly demand-led, it is vital that providers can respond with flexibility to the changing requirements of learners and their employers.
- The workforce needs to reflect and understand the diversity of its learner base and the local communities it serves so that it provides an inclusive and responsive approach to meet needs more effectively.

Priority 3

Retaining and developing the modern, professionalised workforce

As the sector faces a changing environment, it is vital that the skills and knowledge of the workforce remain comprehensive, relevant and current and that staff are confident in the use of digital technology. This requires an effective professional development system for all levels of the workforce. The sector also needs to retain experienced staff who can provide this professionalism.

Why is this a priority?

- To support staff in a changing and challenging environment, sector employers need to be committed to the personal and professional development of their workforce.
- The sector requires a workforce that can adapt to the changing needs of the business environment and society. This ability to adapt can be achieved through professional development and building on experience.
- Professionals need to continually reflect on and develop their skills and expertise towards excellence.

Priority 4

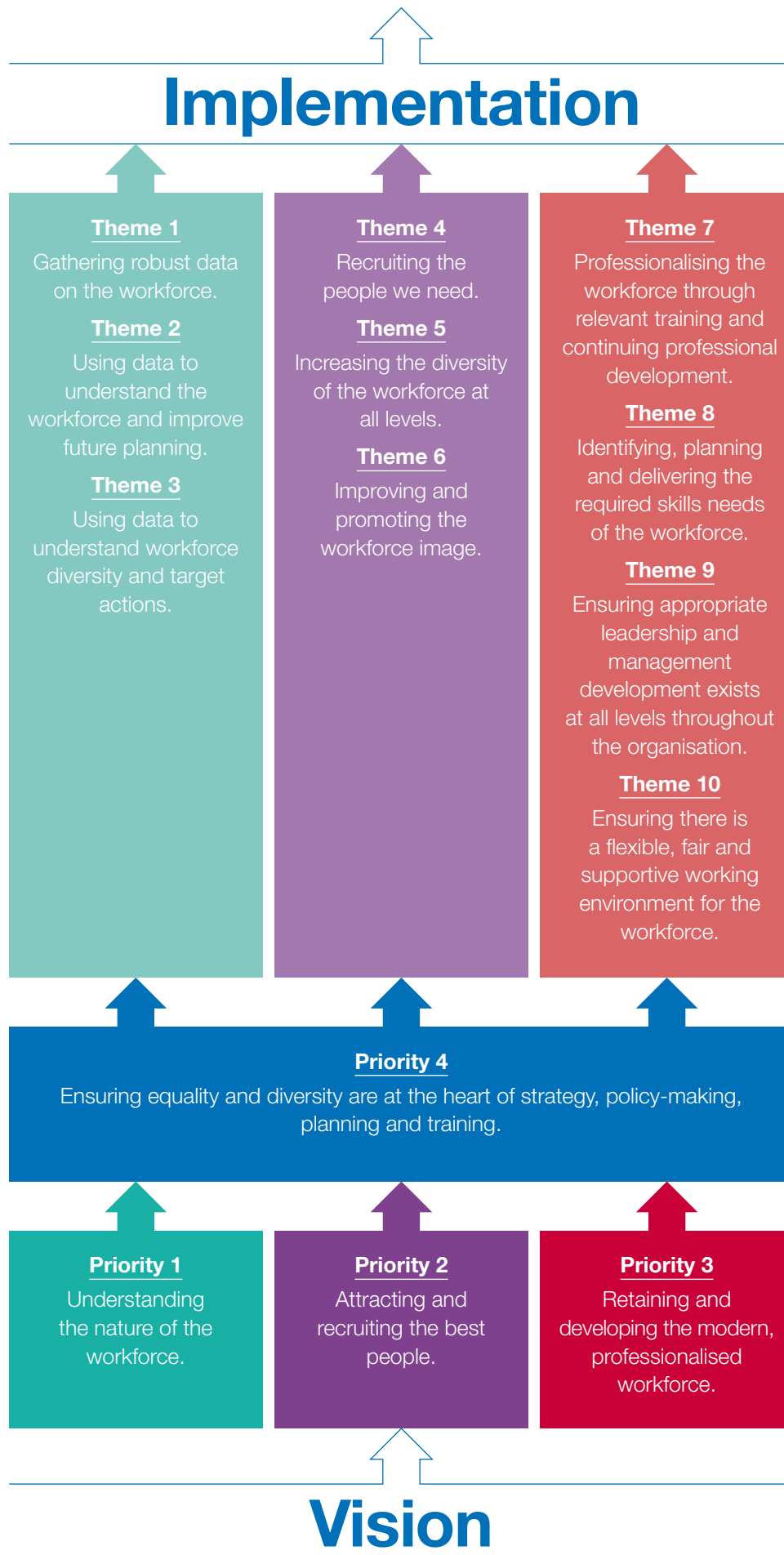
Ensuring equality and diversity are at the heart of strategy, policy-making, planning and training

One advantage of the British workforce is its diverse nature but it is only an advantage if individuals can participate on an equal basis. The influence of the sector on individual learners, their employers and their communities can be profound. It is important therefore that the sector presents a workforce that reflects and understands the diverse communities of which it is a part.

Why is this a priority?

- Ensuring equality of opportunity and outcome within the sector enables employers to draw on the widest talent pool possible.
- The promotion of equality and diversity results in social and economic benefits and is a legal requirement.
- Active promotion demonstrates fairness within the further education sector workforce and sets a model for others.

The journey from vision to implementation



04: A strategy for success

Strategic themes

The strategic priorities will be achieved by a series of workplace activities grouped into ten categories or strategic themes.

When achieved, these will ensure that the sector has realised its vision for the future. Everyone involved in the achievement of these themes needs to understand the aims of each and their own role in implementation.

Last year's strategy was based around eight themes. In the consultations with the sector to review the workforce strategy this year, it was felt by employers and national partners that the addition of two further themes would enhance the achievement of priority 3. These are included as themes 9 and 10.

Priority 1 themes

Understanding the nature of the workforce

1 Gathering robust data on the workforce

Data required for producing current, reliable and robust intelligence on the whole workforce, and on sector workforce needs, is being defined and collected by Lifelong Learning UK in consultation with, and supported by, the Information Authority, employers and other stakeholders in the sector. Making links with data available from other sources regarding parts of the workforce, such as those registered with the Institute for Learning, will help strengthen the overall understanding of the sector workforce. This provides the means to: identify and manage gaps in training, skills and resources; expose under-representation within the workforce; help the sector to

be more accountable to government, community and learners; and allow a reliable assessment to be made of how successful the sector is in achieving the vision.

2 Using data to understand the workforce and improve future planning

Lifelong Learning UK is analysing and interpreting data, policy and market information to produce and disseminate intelligence that can be used for planning at local and national levels. At the same time, this allows the provision of information to inform national policy-making and provide information on workforce effectiveness.

3 Using data to understand workforce diversity and target actions

In gathering and analysing workforce intelligence, particular attention needs to be paid to improving capacity to identify and manage under-representation within organisations. Such intelligence enables the identification of necessary actions and provides evidence to justify targeted interventions to promote diversity within the workforce.

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04: A strategy for success

Priority 2 themes

Attracting and recruiting the best people

④ Recruiting the people we need

A key part of the vision is to build a fully professionalised workforce and ensure that professional behaviours are evident across the workforce. Stakeholders are working to improve the supply of suitable candidates by providing flexible opportunities for entry by 'non-traditional' candidates such as those from industry, and by improved career progression across post-14 learning providers. The individuals who are recruited need to be professionally qualified, and registered with an appropriate professional body.

⑤ Increasing the diversity of the workforce at all levels

The diversity profile of the workforce needs to be representative of the learners and communities it serves. National partners are committed to supporting ways of increasing the numbers of staff from groups that are currently under-represented, particularly within senior management and leadership roles. Employers have the primary role in recruiting staff. In addition, employers contribute to workforce diversity by engaging in national pilots or direct action.

Priority 3 themes

Retaining and developing the modern, professionalised workforce

⑥ Improving and promoting the workforce image

The sector fulfils a vital role in educating young people and providing skills development for young people and adults. In this regard, employers and other stakeholders in the sector need to work to promote a positive professional image and a greater appreciation of the high levels of skills and knowledge of the workforce amongst the public and industry. The profile of a career in the further education sector in England needs to be raised.

⑦ Professionalising the workforce through relevant training and continuing professional development

Staff need to be supported through initial training and qualifications, induction and professional formation to achieve professional status. The whole workforce should be encouraged to undertake continuing professional development to ensure skills stay current and relevant. Skills needs in relation to new technology and wider employability skills such as communication, team working and problem solving need to be met. Employers and individuals need to have a continuing professional development strategy.

⑧ Identifying, planning and delivering the required skills needs of the workforce

Sector employers need to anticipate and meet the workforce requirements to satisfy changing learner needs and social,

economic and technological changes at both national and local level. They need to work closely with industry and learners to plan and deliver courses that meet the identified skills needs. They need to develop the capacity of the workforce to deliver the new 14 to 19 curricula to increasing numbers of learners. A more flexible workforce is needed to accommodate these changes.

Themes 9 and 10 are the new themes that have been introduced following consultation with employers in the sector. It was felt that these new themes would emphasise some important elements of the strategy that were previously inferred within other themes.

9 Ensuring appropriate leadership and management development exists at all levels throughout the organisation

This is a new strategic theme this year, recognising that the achievement of the strategy is highly dependent on management and leadership skills and expertise, particularly in times of change. Employers and other stakeholders in the sector must continue to make commitments to invest in training and development in order to raise the management skills and ability of staff throughout organisations and the sector. At national level, partners need to identify opportunities to maximise support including leadership of professional development for all staff.

10 Ensuring there is a flexible, fair and supportive working environment for the workforce

This is another new strategic theme. By supporting staff and offering flexible and fair working, employers help to ensure continued commitment and good retention of staff, and may facilitate greater diversity within the workforce. Employers establishing

a supportive environment with a strong focus on development opportunities for their workforce may also benefit by attracting people who might not have previously considered a career in the sector. Again, national partners need to identify ways of supporting this theme.

Priority 4

Ensuring equality and diversity are at the heart of strategy, policy-making, planning and training

Promotion of equality and diversity is an important part of workforce planning. Sector employers need to ensure that the diversity of their workforce reflects local and national demographic profiles, as well as learner backgrounds. Priority 4 is an integral tenet of the strategy and its impact can be seen within the other priorities and themes described above. As such, it has no specific themes. Its relationship to the other priorities and themes is illustrated graphically in the diagram on page 9.

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What next?

In the last year, stakeholders have overwhelmingly shown their support for the strategy through developing and implementing plans and undertaking projects that move towards the vision of excellence in the workforce. Together, we have all begun to address the priorities highlighted by this strategy.

As a result of consultation with the sector, the transformation of workforce data collection is underway. The resulting data and its analysis will give all in the sector a more complete understanding of the workforce on which to build future planning.

Through a variety of projects and initiatives, Lifelong Learning UK and national partners are working to assist organisations to attract and develop new talent and to promote diversity in the workforce that reflects the communities in which they work.

The drive to improve the skills of, and to professionalise, the existing workforce has moved forward with a large number of

initiatives offering continuing professional development and specialist skills training. The success of the Institute for Learning, the professional body for teachers and trainers across the sector, shows a real enthusiasm for raising the professionalism and standing of the practitioner workforce.

A number of national partner organisations have addressed issues of equality and diversity with conferences, workshops and bulletins designed to support employers in this area. With the publication of the *Annual Workforce Diversity Profile 2008*, Lifelong Learning UK can now give access to better data than ever before regarding diversity in the workforce. This will help inform employer planning and target setting.

The workforce strategy is ambitious but employers and national partners alike have taken on board the challenges and have moved the strategy forward. Stakeholders continuing to work together in this way will bring the vision within reach.

National partners are both continuing existing work and planning new initiatives designed to promote and implement the strategy with employers in the sector. This strategy helps employers to formulate their own plans to achieve the priorities and themes and support their workforce through the changes that will make the vision attainable.

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In order to support employers and national partners, Lifelong Learning UK has produced the following suite of publications and tools available from www.lluk.org/feworkforcestrategy.htm

For Employers:

- The provider guide *Implementing the Workforce Strategy: A Guide for Learning Providers* gives employers an overview of the changing context within the sector and sets out the initiatives being undertaken by national partners to support the work of employers in the sector.
- The 'toolkit' being developed by Lifelong Learning UK in consultation with sector employers will provide more detailed support such as case studies, templates and frameworks. Visit the website for more information.

For National Partners:

- *Implementing the Workforce Strategy: An Overview of National Partner Contributions* will be a working document to support national partners in the co-ordination, management and design of projects and activities that support the achievement of the strategy and vision.

The strategy and guide for learning providers are refreshed each year and Lifelong Learning UK welcomes your comments on the usefulness of these tools and documents. Please contact us via the website to send us your comments.

An evaluation of the first year of *The Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector, 2007-2012* can be found at www.lluk.org/feworkforcestrategy.htm

Notes



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