



**CabinetOffice**  
Public Services Forum

# Quality Skills, Quality Services

Final Report of the Public Services Forum  
Learning and Skills Task Group

Making  
government  
work better

## Introduction

Learning raises aspirations and helps to create a society where no-one is left behind and where we make best use of everyone's talents. As we face the challenges of the global economic downturn, it is important that we do not make the mistakes of the past.

Equipping our workers with new skills and preparing them for better times is central to the Government's work this year.

Public services are the glue that holds our society together. In tough times it is our hard working public servants who provide real help for our people. Now, perhaps more than any other time, we need to redouble our efforts to construct a world class skills base. Our 5.7 million public service workers will play an important part in realising that ambition.

I want public service colleagues to lead by example by promoting important initiatives like the Skills Pledge and Apprenticeships. The recommendations for action set out in this report articulate next steps towards this goal, and I hope that colleagues work in partnership going forward to make this a reality.

I would like to thank all the participants in the Learning and Skills Task Group for their hard work, contribution and ongoing commitment to our work to support and develop the UK's learning and skills.

I look forward to seeing progress in the near future.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Watson." with a horizontal line underneath.

**Tom Watson MP**

*Cabinet Office Minister and Chair of the Public Services Forum*

# Foreword by the Co-Chairs

This Task Group has been a unique partnership. The genuine added value of bringing together representatives of employers, unions and skills agencies was evident from day one and this has endowed a real authority to the analysis and recommendations in this report on the way forward for public service skills. We wish to acknowledge the commitment and contributions of all Task Group members and others who supported the initiative.

From the outset there was a consensus that further improvements to public services increasingly depends on our ability to empower the workforce to take on new and challenging roles. Better services for users and a more fulfilling working life became the mantra of the Task Group and our recommendations are all set within this context.

Our original remit was to galvanise joint action by employers and unions on a number of skills priorities especially by building on existing collaborative work. The challenge ahead is to use this report to fire up a skills campaign across all parts of the sector – nothing less will do if we are to achieve our overall aim of building quality skills and quality public services.



## **Co-Chairs of the Learning and Skills Task Group:**

### **David Amos**

*Director of Workforce, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*

### **Frances O'Grady**

*Deputy General Secretary, TUC*

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# 1. Executive summary

## 1.1 Introduction

The Public Services Forum (PSF) Learning and Skills Task Group was launched in 2006 and brought together representatives of Government, employers, unions and partners with a clear remit<sup>1</sup> to develop a 'skills action plan' fit to meet the shared ambition of improving public services.

In the current economic climate, the work of the Task Group has taken on a new and urgent significance. The recommendations set out in this report reflect our view that public services have a critical role to play in upholding principles of fairness and public value in tough times, providing practical support for citizens and communities through the recession, and helping the country to prepare for recovery.

Task Group members share a firm belief that skills and service improvement go hand in hand. All parties stand to gain - skills are a key driver for improving both the quality of public services and the working lives of those who deliver them.

Throughout its work, the Task Group has embraced an approach of 'learning through doing'; Task Group members have led by example, developing new partnerships and practical initiatives, and sharing best practice in the process. The Task Group is living proof that a joint approach - Government, employers and unions working together - can add real value to the drive to expand workforce skills opportunities and so deliver better public services for all.

The Task Group was co-chaired by David Amos (Director of Workforce, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) and Frances O'Grady (TUC Deputy General Secretary) and members were largely drawn from employer and trade union representatives on the PSF.<sup>2</sup>

The remit given to the Task Group by the PSF was as follows:

- Scope out the major long-term skills priorities for public services in the context of workforce development and the overall aim of improving public services
- Address some key strategic public sector skills issues on a cross-sector basis.
- Develop an action plan for employers and trade unions to take forward that could influence the LSC's remit on skills.

## 1.2 Policy priorities

Following the first year of its work, the Task Group published an interim report<sup>3</sup> in 2007 which recommended that the following four priority areas should be incorporated into a joint action plan to be taken forward by employers, trade unions and Government:

1. Build a joint commitment on delivering the Skills Pledge across public services.
2. Develop new skills pathways for young people entering public services employment, especially by expanding Apprenticeships.
3. Establish a skills investment strategy and Train to Gain service for public services that will support the planning and delivery of skills priorities and enable employer investment and publicly funded provision to align more effectively.
4. Identify good practice in leadership and management facilitating access to skills in public services.

It was also agreed that a case study of a particular sub-sector should be commissioned in order to 'reality-test' the effectiveness of the above approach.

<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1 for the original PSF paper setting out the remit given to the Task Group.

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 2 for details of the Task Group membership.

<sup>3</sup> The interim report is available at: [www.tuc.org.uk/skills/tuc-13514-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/skills/tuc-13514-f0.cfm).

The Task Group reported back to the PSF with a number of provisional recommendations in June 2008. Following this a case study was commissioned in the adult social care sector to assess the appropriateness and practicability of the draft recommendations for improving workforce skills in a single sector.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of the case study research, the Task Group has now finalised its findings and recommendations with the aim of instigating Government, employers and trade unions to take forward a public services skills campaign.

### 1.3 Policy themes

The underpinning theme of the Task Group's discussions has been the need to ensure that an improvement in workforce skills has a tangible positive impact on both the quality and delivery of public services and the career prospects and personal development of individual employees.

Task Group members viewed this as a classic 'win-win situation' on the basis that significant advances in skills levels would produce a major pay-off both for users of public services and the workforce that delivers them. Further improvements in workforce development and skills are also crucial if the Government is to achieve its vision of world class public services, which is increasingly based on developing a new professionalism where managers and front-line staff have freedoms and flexibility to shape how services are delivered.<sup>5</sup>

However, the implications of the economic downturn has quite rightly dominated discussions recently, especially in relation to the crucial role that public services can play in supporting individual citizens, communities and the wider economy through the recessionary period and also to help maximise the benefits of the upturn when it inevitably arrives. The Pre-Budget Report 2008 reprioritised spending on public

services to support the economy through the downturn and it is welcome that this has been accompanied by related announcements on skills, such as 'making it a requirement that successful contractors have apprentices as an identified proportion of their workforce.'<sup>6</sup>

Rising unemployment and the risk of increased poverty will place a growing demand on public services over the coming period and workforce development strategies will be more important than ever in maximising the reach and impact of these services during a time when there will also be increasing pressure on the public purse. Public services have a key role to play in supporting the country through the recession, especially through delivering on values of fairness, equality and support for the most disadvantaged. For example, the Government needs to develop a strategic approach to opening up job opportunities in public services to private sector employees who lose their jobs in the recession.

Early analysis undertaken by the LSC for the Task Group highlighted that whilst overall public services did better than the private sector on training and workforce development strategies, there remain huge challenges. For example, around a fifth of employees in public services do not have a Level 2 qualification and, in line with trends across the wider economy, the distribution of work-based training is inequitable with staff in front-line service-user roles being much less likely to access training on a regular basis.

Encouraging young people to make a conscious decision to enter public services and to develop their job roles was another key theme addressed by the Task Group, in particular in respect of any longer-term improvement strategy. The LSC highlighted the challenges facing the sector on account of the age-profile of the existing workforce and other worrying age-related trends (e.g. less than 10% of all Apprenticeships are in the public sector).

<sup>4</sup> See Annex 3 for the Executive Summary of the Adult Social Care case study.

<sup>5</sup> Excellence & Fairness, Achieving World Class Public Services, Cabinet Office, June 2008

<sup>6</sup> Pre-Budget Report, Treasury, November 2008

The Task Group had extensive discussions about the strength of leadership and management skills, particularly at a supervisory level, and how weaknesses in these skills can act as a barrier to training by front-line staff in particular. Linked to this, Task Group members agreed that skills initiatives will only pay off over the longer term if managers have the proficiency to ensure that the utilisation of new skills ultimately delivers on improved service delivery and job satisfaction.

Understandably, the recommendations in the final report of the Leitch Review of Skills and the ongoing implementation of the Government's skills strategy have also had an important bearing on the Task Group's thinking, in particular the increasingly critical role that Train to Gain and Apprenticeships are playing in addressing the specific skill needs of public services. Over the past year the Government has introduced a number of flexibilities to these programmes so that they can better meet the needs of the business sector, especially in light of the rapidly changing economic environment. The Task Group has discussed the need for similar flexibilities to boost the skills and capacity of the public services workforce whilst maintaining the overall coherence of the Government's skills strategy.

At the same time it has been acknowledged by Task Group members that there is a need to clarify and build a consensus on how to combine the respective contributions of all parties including employers to meet skills priorities. This should ensure that existing training resources are protected and maximised in order to promote value for money in keeping with the overall objectives set out by the Task Group.

The Task Group has also considered how a number of ongoing policy developments could best be tailored to support the skills development of public services workers. Some of these include the role of procurement in influencing employer behaviour on skills, the use of Train to Gain to

better tailor government skills provision to the specific needs of sectors, new skills initiatives designed to counter the impact of the economic downturn in the private sector, and the proposed new right to request time to train.

The Task Group also considered the potential impact on workforce skills of developments such as contracted-out services, the commissioning process and the drive to deliver more personalised services. The findings from the adult social care case study proved to be highly informative in these areas as was the recent agreement brokered by the PSF with the aim of improving the quality of services delivered under central government contracts.

Throughout the Task Group's discussions, there was a positive recognition about the increasingly significant contribution of migrant and immigrant workers employed in public services and also the extent to which changing patterns of migration and new immigration policy could impact on recruitment in some parts of the sector.

The Task Group also specifically considered the role of unions in promoting skills development in the workplace and especially how they could further build the capacity of their union learning representatives to achieve a stronger and more strategic approach in all unionised workplaces across public services.

The crucial role of providers, including FE colleges and independent training providers, in supporting the 'skills offer' for the public services workforce was also acknowledged by the Task Group and the need to ensure that providers develop the capacity and skills to deliver on this agenda.

## 1.4 Main Recommendations

The Task Group has drawn up the following recommendations following the findings of the 'reality-testing' exercise facilitated by the case study undertaken in the adult social care sector in autumn 2008.

### Public services and the economic downturn

1. The Task Group calls on public services employers and trade unions to make a public statement on the need to maintain investment in skills during the economic downturn in the same way as private sector employers and the TUC have done so in the recent advertising campaign under the auspices of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. The Government must ensure that all public services employers are persuaded that this challenge applies as much to them as to their counterparts in the private sector. Maintaining skills investment will be essential in order to boost the capacity of public services to support individual citizens, communities and the wider economy through the recessionary period and also to help maximise the benefits of the upturn when it arrives.
2. It is inevitable that there will be tough choices ahead for employers and trade unions in public services as they juggle challenges on a number of fronts resulting from the consequences of the downturn, especially the impact of rising unemployment and disadvantage in many communities. The Government should send a clear message endorsing the crucial role of public services in supporting fairness and social justice during the tough economic times ahead and it should also consider a range of flexibilities to enable employers and trade unions to come to agreements that safeguard jobs whilst maintaining investment in skills in the sector.

### Procurement, contracted-out services, commissioning and personalised services

3. The Task Group welcomes the new Government statement on public procurement<sup>7</sup> and recent statements by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills setting out a much more proactive use of national procurement policies (and similar levers available to local authorities) to influence employer behaviour on skills investment, especially during the coming economic downturn.
  - However, it is evident that too many of the relevant agencies at national, regional, local and sectoral levels lack suitable information and guidance to enable them to implement this new proactive approach on procurement and skills. The Task Group therefore recommends that the Office for Government Commerce (OGC) in consultation with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Cabinet Office should urgently develop guidance on procurement and skills to drive forward this agenda as quickly as possible.
  - In addition, the Government's commitment to bring forward major infrastructure projects to counter the economic downturn needs to be mirrored with a commitment to use the procurement process so that businesses which win contracts deliver skills and training opportunities. This will help to revitalise local communities and deliver the sustainable skills required by workers and the economy over the longer-term. The Government should build on this approach in other sectors.
4. The Task Group also welcomes the new agreement<sup>8</sup> brokered by the PSF designed to improve the quality of services delivered under central government contracts, including raising the skills of service providers' employees.

<sup>7</sup> *Buy and Make a Difference: how to address social issues in public procurement*, Office of Government Commerce, 2008

<sup>8</sup> *Joint Statement on Access to Skills, Trade Unions and Advice in Government Contracting*, Cabinet Office, July 2008

The commitment to ensure access to Skills for Life training for all contracted-out employees and to encourage access to Level 2 qualifications via the Skills Pledge is a very positive step. The Task Group recommends that the PSF should consider extending this approach to contracted-out services in all other parts of public services as soon as is feasible.

5. The Government should undertake further research into the potential risks and opportunities for skills development arising out of the commissioning process and also the move towards greater personalisation of services, especially in the adult social care sector. The Task Group recognises that the plans to rapidly increase the number of personal assistants in the adult social care sector will do much to deliver services that are better suited to individual needs by promoting a sensitive, consistent, personalised approach to care-giving. However, the Task Group notes that, in direct contrast to other sections of the adult social care workforce, there are currently no plans to register or regulate the rapidly growing number of personal assistants directly employed by service users.

To ensure that personal assistants have the knowledge and skills to provide safe and high quality care throughout their careers, the Task Group recommends that the Government and General Social Care Council consider scope for increasing access to training for personal assistants. The Task Group calls on the Government to urgently assess how the current plans to expand personal assistants will impact on the quality of skills and service delivery in the sector, and how to guarantee the principle of parity with the rest of the workforce. In addition, the PSF should initiate a wider review of the implications for workforce development of the commissioning process and also the move towards greater personalisation of public services.

### **Skills Pledge and Train to Gain**

6. There is an urgent need to tackle the degree of variation in take-up of the Skills Pledge by public services employers, especially the relatively slow progress in some sub-sectors (e.g. adult social care). The Task Group recommends that specific plans are developed by sectors to address these variations, for example through Train to Gain Sector Compacts. However, such an approach would also have to tackle the irregular fit between parts of public services and the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) network. In addition, the Task Group has been particularly impressed by the Joint Investment Framework model developed for the NHS, which has greatly supported progress in take-up of the Skills Pledge in this sub-sector. Although it recognises that this model is not completely appropriate for all parts of public services, the Government should also look at extending this approach where possible.
7. The Task Group has been concerned that there still appears to be a degree of confusion about the eligibility criteria for Train to Gain provision for different parts of public services. The Task Group recommends that the Government should address the lack of clarity and issue a clear policy statement. This can then be followed up by a marketing and communications strategy by all partners to make sure this message reaches all employers and trade unions across public services.
8. The proposed right to request time to train, the Skills Pledge and developing best practice should be used as an opportunity to launch a new comprehensive culture of regular dialogue on learning and skills, thereby empowering all public services employees to access suitable training to develop their job role. The Task Group therefore recommends that the Government should lead by example by making a commitment

that all public services employees should have an annual review of their training and development needs with actions flowing from it, especially in those occupations where this is currently not the norm.<sup>9</sup> This commitment would strengthen and promote best practice in training and development across public services as well as providing a positive example for private sector employers.

### Apprenticeships

9. The Task Group recommends that the PSF should set aspirations for the number of Apprenticeships that each part of public services should be supporting over an appropriate timeframe in order that the sector delivers its fair contribution to doubling the total number of apprentices by 2020. This should be developed in consultation with Sector Skills Councils, employers and trade unions and these aspirations would be based on a realistic projection of the capacity of each sub-sector to support growth in the number of Apprenticeships.<sup>10</sup> The achievements of the constituent parts of public services in developing 'home-grown' Apprenticeships should be published regularly in order to recognise the contribution of those that deliver on this agenda whilst also highlighting those sub-sectors where there is particularly slow progress.
10. Government, employers, trade unions and partners should develop strategies in all parts of public services to ensure that new government guidance on procurement and skills (see recommendation 3) is used proactively to drive up the number of apprentices and to tackle equality and diversity issues, especially by improving access to high quality public services Apprenticeships for women and black and minority ethnic communities.
11. Best practice should be a key means of driving forward a new approach on Apprenticeships in public services and innovative approaches already in development in different sub-sectors should be more widely publicised with the aim of promoting similar approaches by employers and trade unions across all parts of public services. The Task Group has been made aware of a number of pioneering approaches in different parts of public services and some of these are highlighted in the main body of this report.
12. The expansion of adult Apprenticeships should be a major plank of the Government's strategy to rapidly increase the number of Apprenticeships in public services. This would demonstrate a strong commitment to progression for the current workforce. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that adult Apprenticeships are proving to be an effective means of supporting access to high-quality training for women employees, black and minority ethnic workers and disabled people, many of whom previously faced skills barriers in the workplace.
13. The Task Group has called on the Government to make a clear statement about the need for employers to maintain their investment in skills (see recommendation 1). However, there remain concerns that some apprentices in public services may be at risk of not completing their training due to financial pressures in the areas where they work. The Government must therefore make a clear commitment to work with employers, unions, training providers and apprentices to minimise the risk of non-completion and maximise the employment opportunities open to public sector apprentices. Such an initiative could draw on the 'Clearing House' model developed in the construction industry to tackle this challenge.

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<sup>9</sup> If possible, a question should be included in the National Employer Skills Survey asking whether employees are having annual reviews of their training and development needs.

<sup>10</sup> This should be based on a robust analysis of the profile of the workforce in each sub-sector and official projections of employment change over the coming years.

## Leadership and Management

14. The Government's vision for achieving world class public services is increasingly based on developing a new professionalism where managers and front-line staff have freedoms and flexibility to shape how services are delivered. Developing leadership and management skills is a crucial component of this approach and the Task Group has been struck by comments from employers and trades unions alike that public service managers and supervisors responsible for front-line staff can often lack the skills, confidence and organisational support to develop the staff for whom they are responsible. The Task Group considers it extremely important that the training and development needs of all new public sector managers or supervisors are reviewed on their promotion into a management role. Where necessary, actions should be put in place to enable new (and potential) managers to access appropriate training and development so they can develop staff reporting to them effectively. New and existing supervisors and managers should receive support with their responsibility to consider the training and development needs of the staff they manage. This could include extra development in managing a team's workload to allow time for training for team members. Employers and unionlearn should both play a role in supporting new supervisors and managers to develop their staff.

15. The Task Group also recommends that a number of other initiatives are developed to support such a strategy including:

- Asking the PSF Chair to write to the main, sector based, public service training and development organisations inviting them to promote the importance of developing staff and supporting frontline managers to promote

training in their courses, and to review their curriculum to ensure that managers and supervisors will be equipped with the skills to be able to detect learning needs in staff and take actions to address them.

- Recommending that senior managers lead and enable training provision throughout their organisations to empower frontline managers to promote training and development opportunities for their staff. Lessons should be learnt from existing good practice and carried across sectors, where possible. The work underway at Barking and Dagenham local authority (for example, their Done in One Academy) is a compelling example.
- Requesting that unionlearn develop a strategy to address Skills for Life challenges in managers which impede their role and on which they are too embarrassed to ask for help.

## The Trade Union Role

16. The Task Group recommends that unionlearn should work closely with all public services unions to assess how they could further build the capacity of union learning representatives to achieve a stronger and more strategic approach in all unionised workplaces alongside a greater focus on supporting the introduction and delivery of Apprenticeships and the Skills Pledge.

## 2. Background

This chapter outlines the context in which the Learning and Skills Task Group was formed and how work has progressed within this remit.

### 2.1 Remit of the Task Group

The Public Services Forum (PSF<sup>11</sup>) Learning and Skills Task Group was launched in 2006 and brought together representatives of Government, employers, unions and partners with a clear remit to develop a 'skills action plan' fit to meet the shared ambition of improving public services.<sup>12</sup>

The Task Group's remit has been to:

- Scope out the major long-term skills priorities for public services in the context of workforce development and the overall aim of improving public services;
- Address some key strategic public sector skills issues on a cross-sector basis;
- Develop an action plan for employers and trade unions to take forward and that would influence the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) remit on skills.<sup>13</sup>

The Task Group was also asked by the PSF to address a number of key themes within the above remit, including the following:

- **Career Pathways:** enabling more skilled public sector employees to acquire qualifications and develop skills that enhance employability and transferability;
- **Young people and skills:** how to build tomorrow's public sector workforce;
- Improving **customer service skills** in order to develop highly responsive public services;
- **Equality and diversity agenda:** opening up learning and development opportunities for all employees;

- **Value for money:** exploring opportunities for cross-public service collaboration with LSC and its stakeholders on common skills priorities in order to improve the use of resources.

In 2007, the Task Group issued an interim report<sup>14</sup> recommending four priority areas to be taken forward jointly by employers, trade unions and Government:

- Build a joint commitment on delivering the **Skills Pledge** across public services;
- Develop **new skills pathways for young people** entering public services employment, especially by expanding Apprenticeships;
- Establish a **skills investment strategy** and Train to Gain service for public services that will support the planning and delivery of skills priorities and enable employer investment and publicly funded provision to align more effectively;
- Identify good practice in **leadership and management** facilitating access to skills in public services.

### 2.2 Supporting activities

The Task Group is living proof that a joint approach - Government, employers and unions working together - can add real value to the drive to expand workforce skills opportunities and so deliver better public services for all.

Throughout its work, the Task Group has embraced an approach of 'learning through doing'.

<sup>11</sup> The Public Services Forum (PSF) was established in 2003 to improve dialogue between Government, trade unions and public service employers on public service workforce issues. The Learning and Skills Task Group reports to and is a sub-group of the main PSF.

<sup>12</sup> The Task Group is co-chaired by David Amos (Director of Workforce, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) and Frances O'Grady (TUC Deputy General Secretary). See Annex 2 for details of the Task Group membership.

<sup>13</sup> The original terms of reference for the Task Group are attached at Annex 1.

<sup>14</sup> The interim report was endorsed by the PSF in May 2007 and is available at: [www.tuc.org.uk/skills/tuc-13514-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/skills/tuc-13514-f0.cfm).

Task Group members have led by example, developing new partnerships and practical initiatives, and sharing best practice in the process, for example:

- The TUC and unionlearn held a seminar in spring 2008 aimed at developing the trade union role of working in partnership with employers in promoting and delivering the Skills Pledge across all parts of public services. This event included a number of best practice case studies highlighting positive examples of joint working at that time.
- The LSC commissioned specific research into employer barriers to engagement in Apprenticeships in different parts of public services to support the Task Group's work in this particular area.

In turn, the workforce is expected to rise to between 2.1 million and 2.5 million by 2025 – these colleagues will work across the public, private and voluntary sectors supporting people who use care services.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.3 Sector specific study

In order to inform and to test the effectiveness of the Task Group's approach and recommendations for action, the Task Group commissioned an in-depth study of learning and skills in a specific area of public services.

The resulting report on **Learning and Skills in Adult Social Care**<sup>15</sup> has also helped to highlight specific issues and opportunities that can be taken forward within this important sector in order to improve the quality of care for people who use services.

Adult social care was chosen as a study area because it is a growing sector that will have increasing importance in our communities as our society gets older. For example, within 25 years the number of people over 85 is predicted to double, the same is true for people suffering from dementia.

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<sup>15</sup> The executive summary from the adult social care report can be found at Annex 3. The full report can be accessed at: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/102175/ADULT\\_SOCIAL\\_CARE\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/102175/ADULT_SOCIAL_CARE_REPORT.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Source for statistics: Skills for Care

## 3. Public service skills – setting the scene

**This chapter explains the policy context for public service skills, including progress to date and articulating the links to other national policy agendas such as those on public service reform.**

Skills are a key driver for improving both the quality of public services and the working lives of those who deliver them. The need to ensure that an improvement in workforce skills has a positive impact on the quality and delivery of public services, and the career prospects and personal development of individual employees has remained the cornerstone of the Task Group's work.

### 3.1 World class skills

In December 2006, the Government published the Leitch Review of Skills, essentially a policy framework to achieve world class skills for the UK and the major policy backdrop to the Task Group's work.<sup>17</sup> Lord Leitch concluded that skills are the key driver of prosperity and fairness, "the UK has serious social disparities with high levels of child poverty, poor employment rates for the disadvantaged, regional disparities and relatively high income inequality. Improving our skills levels can address all of these problems."

Public service employment accounts for around 20% of the UK workforce nationally (with a total workforce of 5.7 million)<sup>18</sup> and often a much higher proportion than this in some communities.

Raising public sector skills will therefore make a major contribution to the targets set by Lord Leitch for upskilling the overall UK workforce in order to establish a world class skills base by 2020 and a fairer distribution of skills investment.

### 3.2 World class public services

The link between developing quality public services and enabling all employees to acquire quality skills has been an underpinning theme of the Task Group's discussions, and also features in the Government's strategy to achieve world class public services.

The 2008 Government publication Excellence and Fairness sets out an overall framework for enabling further improvement of public services and 'the Government's overall approach to public service reform over the coming years', which will include investment in workforce skills.<sup>19</sup>

There are three core elements to this reform strategy:

- Developing new approaches to **empowering citizens** who use public services;
- Fostering a **new professionalism** across the whole public workforce;
- Providing strong **strategic leadership** from central Government.

Improving workforce skills will support reform efforts across all of these strands, but it is under the strand of 'new professionalism' where the intention to invest in the skills of the public service workforce is set out.

The concept of a 'new professionalism' combines:

- Increased responsiveness to users;
- Consistent quality in day-to-day practices;
- Higher levels of autonomy from central Government wherever those at the front-line show the ambition and capacity to excel; and
- Greater investment in workforce skills.

<sup>17</sup> *Prosperity for all in the Global Economy – World Class Skills*, Leitch Review of Skills: HM Treasury, December 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Office of National Statistics: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=407>

<sup>19</sup> *Excellence & Fairness, Achieving World Class Public Services*, Cabinet Office, June 2008

*Excellence and Fairness* states that, “Across the entire public service workforce, the Government will renew its efforts to improve skills, provide clearer routes to progression and encourage the expansion of opportunities such as public sector apprenticeships. These measures will increase opportunities for progression... in order to develop a world class workforce. The Government will support this by ensuring that all who work in public services have good numeracy and literacy skills”.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.3 Public service skills – a snapshot

LSC analysis has found that public service employers as a whole are performing well and demonstrate comparative strength on skills investment and workforce development.

This is highlighted by the following figures drawn from the 2007 National Employers Skills Survey (NESS) – a large, authoritative survey of sectoral workplace skills trends based on responses from 75,000 employers across all regions in England:<sup>21</sup>

- 75% of public sector employees had received some training over the previous 12 months and this was 17% higher than the average for the private sector;
- 87% of public sector establishments reported that they formally assessed the skills gaps of their employees, whilst outside public services the equivalent percentages were 54% in the ‘for-profit’ sector and 78% in the ‘not-for-profit’ sector;
- Out of all public sector establishments, 84% had a business plan, 82% had a training plan and 82% had a training budget in place. 65% of public services

establishments had all three of these in place compared with only 22% of ‘for-profit’ employers and 45% of employers in the ‘not-for-profit’ sector outside public services.

Larger organisations in public services are likely to have a more developed training structure in place. But smaller organisations in public services also perform well. The LSC analysis found that 92% of public services organisations with fewer than 25 employees stated that they provided training to at least some of their workforce compared to 62% of private sector establishments of this size.

A survey<sup>22</sup> commissioned by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills has also highlighted that 71% of public sector establishments meet the criteria for using a High Performance Working Practices (HPWP) model compared with only 25% of private sector establishments.<sup>23</sup>

However, other evidence clearly demonstrates that significant skills challenges remain across public services:

- A relatively high proportion of the public services workforce do not have the skills or qualification level (i.e. a Level 2 standard academic or vocational qualification) that is increasingly seen as the minimum standard for the world of work; and
- Around a fifth of public servants do not have a Level 2 qualification and while this is better than the economy-wide average, it still represents a major skills deficit that needs to be urgently addressed.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Learning and Skills Council, May 2008.

<sup>22</sup> *Skills for the Workplace: employer perspectives*. UKCES, November 2008

<sup>23</sup> HPWP practices are defined in the survey as a set of ‘organisational practices employers adopt to help them absorb training and skills amongst their workforce’ (e.g. IIP accreditation, undertaking training needs assessment etc).

<sup>24</sup> Office of National Statistics, Labour Force Survey <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=207&Pos=1&ColRank=1&Rank=374>

### 3.4 Supporting those at the front-line

In line with trends across the wider economy, the distribution of work-based training in public services is inequitable, with staff in front-line service-user roles being much less likely to access training on a regular basis than those staff in higher level occupational groupings. Analysis of NESS 2005 undertaken by the LSC on behalf of the Task Group highlighted that whilst up to 54% of 'professional staff' had received training over the past year, the equivalent rates were much lower for other occupational groupings.

There is an urgent need to build the capacity of front-line public service staff to deliver quality services by enabling them to achieve a Level 2 skill level and also by giving them the opportunity to progress further up the skills ladder.

### 3.5 Supporting young people

Encouraging young people to make a conscious decision to enter public services and to develop their job roles was another key priority identified by the Task Group. The LSC highlighted two key challenges facing public services on this:

- The significantly low take-up of Apprenticeships in public services;
- The ageing profile of many parts of public services.

While the Task Group did look at the range of existing (and potential) skills pathways for young people, there was a clear consensus that the most effective strategy would be to give strong support to the Government's policy of expanding Apprenticeships across public services.

### 3.6 Supporting Government programmes

The Task Group decided that the key means of addressing the weaknesses in the extent of low skills among the existing workforce and the limited skills pathways for young people would be to look at improving take up of the main Government programmes in this area, and it identified two key priorities<sup>25</sup> in its interim report:

- To build a joint commitment on delivering the Skills Pledge across public services and to establish a skills investment strategy and Train to Gain service for public services that will support the planning and delivery of skills priorities and enable employer investment and publicly funded provision to align more effectively;
- To develop new skills pathways for young people entering public services employment, especially by expanding Apprenticeships.

### 3.7 Building leadership and management capacity

The Task Group also had extensive discussions about the strength of leadership and management skills, particularly at a supervisory level, and how weaknesses in these skills can act as a barrier to training for front-line staff in particular.

Skills initiatives will only pay off over the longer term if managers have the proficiency to ensure that the utilisation of new skills ultimately delivers on improved service delivery and job satisfaction. Section 7 of the report contains a more detailed analysis on this.

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<sup>25</sup> See sections 5 and 6 for more detail.

### 3.8 Colleges and training providers

Training providers, including FE colleges and independent training providers, have a crucial role to play in supporting an improved 'skills offer' for the public services workforce. Therefore, it is essential for the provider network to have the capacity to deliver, and for the supply side workforce to themselves receive the necessary training and development to enable them, in turn, to support the upskilling of others. In this sense, it is welcome that there is now a commitment for FE staff to have a prescribed period of continuing personal development each year.

It is also important to ensure that the supply side, both FE colleges and independent training providers, are attuned to the values and priorities of public services alongside an understanding of how they work. This will mean that they can provide an optimal service to public service clients.

In particular, Train to Gain brokers have a valuable role to play in supporting employers. Our research highlighted a concern that brokers did not currently have sufficient knowledge about the skills needs of certain public service clients (a finding backed up by the adult social care study). Whilst the Task Group has not issued any specific recommendations regarding the supply side, it is clear that these issues need to be addressed in the process of transferring the Train to Gain brokerage system to the Regional Development Agencies in April 2009.

### 3.9 Migrant and immigrant workers

Throughout the Task Group's discussions, there was a positive recognition about the contribution of migrant and immigrant workers employed in public services and also the extent to which changing patterns of migration and new immigration policy could impact on recruitment in some parts of the sector. This issue is especially important in parts of public services with significant numbers of migrant workers.<sup>26</sup>

For example, the TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment has highlighted that social care is one sector with a higher incidence of vulnerable employment and that this often involved migrant workers. ESRC research about social care estimates 'that foreign-born workers account for 20% of the social care labour force in many regions and over 70% in inner London'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Hard Work, Hidden Lives*, TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment, 2008

<sup>27</sup> Dr Isabel Shutes, quoted in: *Britain in 2009: the state of the nation*, ESRC, 2008, page 27. *The Role of Migrant Health and Social Care Workers in Ageing Societies: Planning for the Future*: [www.compas.ox.ac.uk/research/Health\\_and\\_Migration.shtml](http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/research/Health_and_Migration.shtml)

## 4. Facing the future - new challenges ahead

**This chapter highlights emerging issues that will impact on the public service skills agenda, and that require urgent attention and action in order to safeguard improvement in public service workforce skills. We also set out key recommendations about how to respond to these new and urgent challenges.**

### 4.1 Skills and the economic downturn

It is the Task Group's view that public services have a critical role to play in upholding principles of fairness and public value throughout the global economic downturn, providing practical support for citizens and communities, and in helping the country to prepare for recovery.

Rising unemployment and the risk of increased poverty will place a growing demand on public services over the coming period and workforce development strategies will be more important than ever in maximising the reach and impact of these services during this time. Public services have a key role to play in supporting the country through the economic downturn, especially by delivering on values of fairness, equality and support for the most disadvantaged. For example, by opening up public sector job opportunities to those who lose their jobs in other sectors.

The 2008 Pre-Budget Report<sup>28</sup> reprioritised public spending to support the economy through the economic downturn by bringing forward £3 billion of capital spending from 2010-11 into 2008-09 and 2009-10 as part of a wider fiscal stimulus package. This will be focused on housing, education, transport and other construction projects, and will support industries and jobs across the country. The Task Group welcomes that this announcement was accompanied

by a clear commitment by Government that this increased capital spending over the short-term should also lead to increased investment in workforce skills, especially through the role of procurement in driving up the number of Apprenticeships. The Task Group also welcomes the Government's signal they will look to extend a similar approach to other sectors exploiting further the power of Government procurement.

There will be tough choices ahead for employers and unions across all parts of public services during the downturn and there is a real danger that the threat of potential job cuts could lead to cuts in training expenditure before a considered view has been taken. The Task Group agreed that leading employers and trade unionists should issue a clear public message about the importance of maintaining investment in workforce skills to enable public services to fulfil its role of supporting the economy and wider society through the downturn.

**Recommendation 1:** The Task Group calls on public services employers and trade unions to make a public statement on the need to maintain investment in skills during the economic downturn in the same way as private sector employers and the TUC have done so in the recent advertising campaign under the auspices of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. The Government must ensure that all public services employers are persuaded that this challenge applies as much to them as to their counterparts in the private sector. Maintaining skills investment will be essential in order to boost the capacity of public services to support individual citizens, communities and the wider economy through the recessionary period and also to help maximise the benefits of the upturn when it inevitably arrives.

<sup>28</sup> Pre-Budget Report, Treasury, November 2008

**Recommendation 2:** It is inevitable that there will be tough choices ahead for employers and trade unions in public services as they juggle challenges on a number of fronts resulting from the consequences of the downturn, especially the impact of rising unemployment and disadvantage in many communities. The Government should send a clear message endorsing the crucial role of public services in supporting fairness and social justice during the tough economic times ahead and it should also consider a range of flexibilities to enable employers and trade unions to come to agreements that safeguard jobs whilst maintaining investment in skills in the sector.

## 4.2 Procurement and Skills

One of the most powerful ways through which to stimulate investment in skills is through public procurement, where the Government spends some £175bn a year on the goods and services needed to deliver public services.<sup>29</sup>

The Task Group welcomes the Government's guide on public procurement<sup>30</sup> and statements by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills setting out a more proactive use of national procurement policies to influence employer behaviour on skills investment, especially during the coming economic downturn:

*'Through policy, regulation and through procurement, we are able to shape and create markets, and the skills that will be needed to drive them... Through innovative procurement or other purchasing strategies, we can create the most with conditions for employers to invest [in skills]'.*<sup>31</sup>

There remains a degree of confusion about what scope there is within EU competition law to positively drive up skills standards through procurement. It is imperative that the Government tackles this by issuing guidance that will enable procurement and similar levers to be used to optimum effect while ensuring equal access for all businesses.

**Recommendation 3:** The Task Group welcomes the new Government statement on public procurement<sup>32</sup> and recent statements by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills setting out a much more proactive use of national procurement policies (and similar levers available to local authorities) to influence employer behaviour on skills investment, especially during the coming economic downturn.

However, it is evident that too many of the relevant agencies at national, regional, local and sectoral levels lack suitable information and guidance to enable them to implement this new proactive approach on procurement and skills. The Task Group therefore recommends that the Office for Government Commerce (OGC) in consultation with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Cabinet Office should urgently develop guidance on procurement and skills to drive forward this agenda as quickly as possible.

In addition, the Government's commitment to bring forward major infrastructure projects to counter the economic downturn needs to be mirrored with a commitment to use the procurement process so that businesses which win contracts deliver skills and training opportunities. This will help to revitalise local communities and deliver the sustainable skills required by workers and the economy over the longer-term.

<sup>29</sup> Source: DIUS.

<sup>30</sup> *Buy and Make a Difference: How to address social issues in public procurement*, Office of Government Commerce, 2008

<sup>31</sup> Secretary of State for Skills, CBI conference, 24 October 2007: [www.dius.gov.uk/speeches/denham\\_cbi\\_241008.html](http://www.dius.gov.uk/speeches/denham_cbi_241008.html) (full text of speech)

<sup>32</sup> *Buy and Make a Difference: how to address social issues in public procurement*, Office of Government Commerce, 2008

### 4.3 Contracted out services

The Joint Statement on Access to Skills, Trade Unions and Advice in Government Contracting was developed by the PSF and launched by the Cabinet Office in July 2008 in partnership with the CBI, Business Services Association (BSA), TUC, Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).<sup>33</sup>

The Joint Statement aims to improve the quality of services delivered under central Government contracts by raising the skills of service providers' employees and by helping to ensure fair treatment.

Commenting on the Agreement, the Secretary of State for Skills said "*This Joint Statement complements the Skills Pledge that all government departments have signed. It illustrates our commitment to lead the way on improving the skills in the public and private sector and to enable those who work for us, whether directly or indirectly, to progress in life and work.*"<sup>34</sup>

**Recommendation 4:** The Task Group also welcomes the new agreement brokered by the PSF designed to improve the quality of services delivered under central government contracts, including raising the skills of service providers' employees. The commitment to ensure access to Skills for Life training for all contracted-out employees and to encourage access to Level 2 qualifications via the Skills Pledge is a very positive step. The Task Group recommends that the PSF should consider extending this approach to contracted-out services in all other parts of public services as soon as is feasible.

### 4.4 Personalisation of public services

The personalisation of services is an important strand of the Government's approach to public service reform and should help to improve the services people receive so they are better suited to their individual needs.

The adult social care study has prompted the Task Group to make a specific recommendation on the need to address and support the long-term skills needs of the growing number of personal assistants in public services to ensure sustained benefits for people who use services and workers providing those services.

**Recommendation 5:** The Government should undertake further research into the potential risks and opportunities for skills development arising out of the commissioning process and also the move towards greater personalisation of services, especially in the adult social care sector.

The Task Group recognises that the plans to rapidly increase the number of personal assistants in the adult social care sector will do much to deliver services that are better suited to individual needs by promoting a sensitive, consistent, personalised approach to care-giving. However, the Task Group notes that, in direct contrast to other sections of the adult social care workforce, there are currently no plans to register or regulate the rapidly growing number of personal assistants directly employed by service users.

To ensure that personal assistants have the knowledge and skills to provide safe and high quality care throughout their careers, the Task Group recommends that the Government and General Social Care Council consider scope for increasing access to training for personal assistants.

<sup>33</sup> Available at: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/workforcematters/080715\\_joint\\_statement.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/workforcematters/080715_joint_statement.aspx)

<sup>34</sup> Cabinet Office press release, 15 July 2008



**Recommendation 5 (Cont'd):** The Task Group calls on the Government to urgently assess how the current plans to expand personal assistants will impact on the quality of skills and service delivery in the sector, and how to guarantee the principle of parity with the rest of the workforce.

In addition, the PSF should initiate a wider review of the implications for workforce development of the commissioning process and also the move towards greater personalisation of public services.

## 5. Skills Pledge and Train to Gain

**This chapter sets out progress to date and the challenges ahead for the Skills Pledge and Train to Gain in the context of public services skills.**

### 5.1 Skills Pledge – Progress so far

At September 2008, 7,628 employers had made a formal commitment to the Skills Pledge covering over 5.1 million employees.<sup>35</sup> Of these 1,116 (14.6%) come from within the key public service sectors including health, local authorities, justice and central Government. In these four sectors alone, over 2.5 million employees now work in public sector organisations that have made the Skills Pledge – this is equivalent to 50% of all employees covered by the Skills Pledge.

While many challenges lie ahead, we should celebrate the positive progress in take-up of the Skills Pledge across much of public services. The Task Group has helped to develop an appreciation of the positive impact that the Skills Pledge can have on organisational performance and employee well-being and satisfaction.

In collaboration with the Learning and Skills Task Group, the TUC and unionlearn held a Skills Pledge event in April 2008 which attracted around 100 union representatives and employers. The event showcased a number of best practice case studies of joint working between employers and unions and helped to identify some of the key challenges and potential solutions.

#### Case Study – Portsmouth City Teaching Primary Care Trust

Portsmouth PCT signed the Skills Pledge in a joint venture between the trade unions and the employer in March 2008, building on a positive legacy of union activity in promoting workplace learning. This activity had been coordinated by Jenny Ford, Lifelong Learning Coordinator for UNISON. With the backing of her manager and learning and development staff, Jenny had established a learning centre for facilities staff and helped 60 staff complete NVQs, many of whom had left formal education without any qualifications.

The impetus for the Trust to commit to the Skills Pledge was further energised by the appointment of Anne Axford as Associate Director of Learning and Development in early 2008. Anne brought to the Trust a real commitment to develop a comprehensive strategy to support all staff to work towards Level 2 qualifications and she worked closely with Jenny to develop a genuine partnership between management and the trade unions on workplace learning. The next logical step was to underpin this partnership approach by jointly signing up to the Skills Pledge.

Anne and Jenny highlight the major benefits of a partnership approach, and successfully made the link between supporting staff to become more competent and confident in their posts and the delivery of high quality services. There is also now a clear understanding across the PCT that learning is for everyone – not just clinical staff – and that this impacts positively on staff motivation and job satisfaction, leading to improvements in recruitment and retention. There is also a part time 'essential skills champion' to encourage staff to take up the opportunities on offer.

Both sides believe that the Skills Pledge commitment will extend and deepen the joint approach on workplace learning and maximise the benefits for both service users and staff development.

<sup>35</sup> See Annex 4 for a detailed breakdown of Skills Pledge data for public services. All the data in the report and the annex are for the period since the launch of the Skills Pledge up to September 2008.

## 5.2 Skills Pledge – Challenges

The LSC has identified the following two key challenges in achieving its objective of driving up take-up and implementation of the Skills Pledge across public services:

- Achieving greater momentum for public service employer take-up;
- Turning the commitment into action and the speed of implementation in some workplaces.

Public service organisations tend to have a complex employer network through which action must be channelled. This can lead to communication and implementation challenges in ensuring take-up and action on the Skills Pledge amongst public service employers and their partners, including trade unions.

The LSC continues to work with public sector organisations on a national and regional basis, and now needs to develop joint strategies with unions and other key contributors to drive up interest and demand.

## 5.3 Train to Gain – Progress so far

Recent statistics estimated that approximately 900,000 public service employees – around a fifth of the workforce – do not hold a Level 2 qualification or its equivalent.<sup>36</sup> There are particularly low levels in local government, health and central government.

There is therefore a real need to establish joint funding opportunities in order to keep the skills improvement strategy affordable. This means ensuring effective use of all public funds supporting skills, including Train to Gain, in order to add value and so that funding support is optimised and consistent.

The level of funding, and the combination of how this will be sourced from employer investment and the public services skills purse, needs to be clarified to ensure maximum leverage of all partners' contributions and to agree at the highest level how funding should best flow. This process also needs to make accessing funding support more straightforward.

The LSC Train to Gain Plan for Growth (published in November 2007) endorsed Sector Compacts to be developed within Train to Gain.

## 5.4 Funding Skills – Challenges

There is a range of funding sources available from across Government to support organisations in meeting skills needs. However, the range of funding sources contributes to the continuing confusion in some sectors within public services over eligibility for accessing this support, including through Train to Gain.

The Task Group and its partners continue to work in partnership to deliver real, practical solutions to these challenges.

For example:

- Clarifying and aligning the additional funding sources available for skills in public services in each region;
- Ongoing development of Sector Compacts setting out a specific Train to Gain offer tailored to the needs of particular sub-sectors;
- Producing advice and guidance for skills brokers, providers and Union Learning Reps working with public services employers;
- Development of joint union and employer agreements to harness and generate employee demand for skills.

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<sup>36</sup> Office of National Statistics, Labour Force Survey (Q4 2007)

### Case Study – Joint Investment Framework for Health Services Sector

In July 2007 Skills for Health, Strategic Health Authorities and the LSC agreed on a commitment for funding learning and skills in the sector via a Joint Investment Framework.

This Joint Investment Framework will be focussed on staff in bands 1-4 to fund skills development and qualifications at Levels 2, 3 and 4, Apprenticeships and Skills for Life. Agreed regionally, in response to a shared skills action plan, this will be delivered through an investment of up to £50 million from the sector itself and £50 million LSC funding in England.

For the first time this has enabled a focus to be placed on those who are most likely to need the support for the achievement of these skills.

## 5.5 Skills Pledge and Train to Gain – Recommendations

Task Group colleagues recognise the need to tailor the Skills Pledge commitment and Train to Gain delivery to the specific organisational, operational and workforce needs of different sectors.

The example of positive progress in the health sector in Skills Pledge sign-up rates appeared to Task Group members to be hugely assisted by the alignment of funding from Train to Gain and employer funding via the development of the Joint Investment Framework.

The other factor in the health sector has been the ‘tipping point’ scenario, where the momentum on Pledge sign-ups accelerates as the number of employers in the sector giving their commitment moves into the majority.

**Recommendation 6:** There is an urgent need to tackle the degree of variation in take-up of the Skills Pledge by public services employers, especially the relatively slow progress in some sub-sectors (e.g. adult social care).

The Task Group supports the Sector Skills Compact approach for Train to Gain and in particular to support a better take-up of the Skills Pledge in all parts of public services. However, such an approach would also have to tackle the irregular fit between parts of public services and the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) network.

In addition, the Task Group has been particularly impressed by the Joint Investment Framework model developed for the NHS, which has greatly supported progress in take-up of the Skills Pledge in this sub-sector. Although it recognises that this model is not completely appropriate for all parts of public services, the Government should also look at extending this approach where possible.

**Recommendation 7:** The Task Group has been concerned that there still appears to be a degree of confusion about the eligibility criteria for Train to Gain provision for different parts of public services. Whilst this would be clarified by the roll-out of public services sector skills compacts, the Task Group recommends that the Government should immediately issue a clear policy statement to clarify the situation as it stands and that this should be followed up by a marketing and communications strategy by the LSC to make sure this message reaches all employers and trade unions across public services.

## 5.6 Proposed right to request time to train

All public services employees - especially front-line staff at lower grades - should have the opportunity to have their skills assessed in the context of their current job and potential career progression. This should be matched with appropriate learning/ training.

While it is the case that many public services employees do have an annual review of their training and development needs with actions flowing from it, practice is not uniform across the sector and lower-grade staff are disproportionately likely to be excluded from such a process. The Task Group believes that the anticipated introduction of the right to request time to train in 2010 offers a real opportunity to herald a call for all public service employees to be given access to an annual training review linked to initiatives such as the Skills Pledge and Train to Gain.

**Recommendation 8:** The proposed right to request time to train, the Skills Pledge and developing best practice should be used as an opportunity to launch a new comprehensive culture of regular dialogue on learning and skills, thereby empowering all public services employees to access suitable training to develop their job role. The Task Group therefore recommends that the Government should lead by example by making a commitment that all public services employees should have an annual review of their training and development needs with actions flowing from it, especially in those occupations where this is currently not the norm.<sup>37</sup> This commitment would strengthen and promote best practice in training and development across public services as well as providing a positive example for private sector employers.

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<sup>37</sup> If possible, a question should be included in the National Employer Skills Survey asking whether employees are having annual reviews of their training and development needs.

## 6. Young people and apprenticeships

**This chapter sets out progress to date and the challenges ahead for supporting young people to achieve sustainable employment in public services, especially by enabling them to access suitable learning and skills provision.**

### 6.1 Progress to date

The public service workforce is proportionally older than the norm of other sectors and this has significant implications for the future workforce. For example, the high percentage of workers aged over fifty in local government is not matched by a correspondingly high proportion of young people joining the sector to compensate for the aging profile.<sup>38</sup>

Within twenty years nearly half the public services workforce will have retired, leaving a substantial gap in skills and experience. The extent and pace of change required by employers in the sector to respond to this challenge is substantial and will mean creating new opportunities and role models for young people and older learners.

Significantly increasing the number of, and widening access to, a comprehensive range of public services Apprenticeships is a shared ambition for the Task Group. However, progress has been poor, with public services accounting for less than 10% of all Apprenticeships while its workforce is a fifth of the total economy-wide workforce.<sup>39</sup>

### 6.2 Government Apprenticeship Strategy

A great deal of work is now in progress to meet the Apprenticeship challenge in public services and this was given further priority as a result of the Government's Apprenticeships Strategy.<sup>40</sup> This set out a framework in which the LSC will develop a comprehensive Apprenticeship

strategy for public services – and will also be a key priority within the new National Apprenticeships Service. Key recommendations include:

- Developing or identifying a suite of relevant frameworks to ensure that the Apprenticeships programme is fit for purpose for public services employers;
- Helping employers identify additional places;
- Understanding the starting point and identifying successes to better inform and guide individual, sector and collective action;
- Taking a simple and relevant message to individuals and employers;
- Creating a network of sources of advice;
- Developing capacity and capability in the provider network.

New routes to Apprenticeships have also been progressed with individual sectors:

- Central Government agreed to train 500 new Apprenticeships of all ages starting in September 2008 and has already reached 800.
- Skills for Justice with their Employer Boards are considering potential opportunities, including how to develop Apprenticeships for the many volunteer organisations in the justice sector.

### 6.3 Challenges

LSC research investigating barriers to take-up of Apprenticeships across public services<sup>41</sup> concluded that:

- Take up of Apprenticeships among public services organisations is “patchy” with wide variations in involvement within different departments of the same organisation and between equivalent organisations in the same service area;

<sup>38</sup> Learning and Skills Council.

<sup>39</sup> As at end 2008

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/world\\_class\\_apprenticeships.pdf](http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/world_class_apprenticeships.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> *Research into Increasing Apprenticeships in the Public Sector: final report*, LSC, December 2008 (available at: <http://research.lsc.gov.uk/Latest+Updates/>)

- Employers in local government, education and health sectors are more likely to participate but there are some key areas of inactivity (e.g. the use of administration and professional frameworks in the health sector is substantially higher than use of health and social care frameworks). Lower participation rates are found among public protection and central Government departments;
- There is a great deal of interest in Apprenticeships amongst the organisations surveyed. There is also a strong social as well as business rationale, with Apprenticeships being used to support policy targets in relation to worklessness, equality and social inclusion;
- There is a long way to go in translating this into participation. Current participation by public sector organisations is narrow – two-fifths of participants currently offer a single framework and on average organisations participate on just two frameworks. This is low, given that respondents on average employed around 3,800 employees across a large range of business areas.

The research also highlighted a number of key barriers identified by public services employers. For example, there was a lack of awareness about Apprenticeships in general, including the available funding and exact eligibility criteria. There were also a number of major misconceptions, including that the programme is only open to young people, and that Apprenticeships are only suitable for traditional industries. However, there were some justifiable concerns about the time that it takes to achieve new or changed Apprenticeship frameworks to meet the specific needs of sectors.

There was a belief among some parts of public services that Apprenticeships are not relevant because the workforce is too highly qualified and that in some sectors existing terms and conditions discouraged consideration

of the Apprenticeship route. A number of very practical considerations were also cited, including: lack of funding and/or resource in the organisation to support delivery; limited number of young employees did not make Apprenticeships cost effective; inconsistent advice from different sources and delays in responding to requests for information; and a deficient supply of appropriate training in the locality.

## 6.4 Raising aspirations

There is a real need to establish a suitable scale of ambition for embedding Apprenticeships across all parts of public services. Each part of the sector should take on individual responsibility - with the support of government agencies - for building a range of Apprenticeship pathways in their areas. This approach should be based on an analysis of the profile of the workforce in each sub-sector and official projections of employment change over the coming years in order to arrive at aspirations that are realistic and achievable.

**Recommendation 9:** The Task Group recommends that the PSF should set aspirations for the number of Apprenticeships that each part of public services should be supporting over an appropriate timeframe in order that the sector delivers its fair contribution to doubling the total number of apprentices by 2020. This should be developed in consultation with employers and trade unions and these aspirations would be based on a realistic projection of the capacity of each sub-sector to support growth in the number of Apprenticeships. The achievements of the constituent parts of public services in developing 'home-grown' Apprenticeships should be published regularly in order to recognise the contribution of those that deliver on this agenda whilst also highlighting those sub-sectors where there is particularly slow progress.

## 6.5 Role of public procurement

The Task Group has been encouraged by recent policy initiatives designed to significantly strengthen the role of public procurement policies in driving up the number of Apprenticeships, especially during the economic downturn.

Procurement can also play a vital role in tackling equality and diversity issues. Due consideration should be given to supporting disadvantaged groups in the labour market to access high quality Apprenticeships in public services.

As previously referenced, the Task Group welcomed the commitment in the 2008 Pre-Budget Report to use public procurement to drive up skills investment, in particular by requiring contractors to have a certain number of apprentices: *'The Government is committed to using its leverage with contractors and suppliers to promote training in the workplace, particularly through apprenticeships. In letting contracts for construction projects, Government Departments and their Agencies will now consider, on a case-by-case basis, making it a requirement that successful contractors have apprentices as an identified proportion of their workforce.'*<sup>42</sup>

The Government has subsequently announced that it expects this new commitment 'to see upwards of 7,000 new Apprenticeships in construction' over the next three years and that the extension of this approach to other sectors is being actively considered.<sup>43</sup> For example, it is estimated that the Government spends around £14 billion each year on IT contracts and the Government is shortly going to host a summit of Government IT suppliers to look at the potential role of procurement in increasing the number of Apprenticeships.

As highlighted in Recommendation 10 below, the Task Group supports extending this approach as quickly as possible so that businesses which win government contracts outside the construction sector are also obliged to deliver a specific number of Apprenticeship places.

**Recommendation 10:** Government, employers, trade unions and partners should develop strategies in all parts of public services to ensure that new government guidance on procurement and skills (see recommendation 3) is used proactively to drive up the number of apprentices and to tackle equality and diversity issues, especially by improving access to high quality public services Apprenticeships for women and black and minority ethnic communities.

## 6.6 Building on best practice

There are positive and innovative examples of best practice in Apprenticeships in all parts of public services. These examples demonstrate how much can be achieved if leadership gives strong backing to a strategy to make Apprenticeships a central element of the recruitment of young people and also the upskilling of adult employees.

Our research found that an 'Apprenticeship strategy' is much more likely to be successful if it is mainstreamed throughout the whole organisation so that all managers (especially front-line supervisors) backed it and it was also promoted and supported by the trade unions.

In local government, the examples of the Apprenticeship strategies in individual local authorities such as the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and Kent County Council (see case study below) provide a model for other local authorities to emulate.

Other excellent models include the Apprenticeship Plus model in the NHS, the Apprenticeship strategies in the West Midlands and Apprenticeship mentoring initiatives by union learning representatives. The LSC also has case studies available on its website.<sup>44</sup>

These examples should be more widely publicised (e.g. by disseminating case studies) with the aim of promoting similar approaches by many more employers and trade unions across public services.

<sup>42</sup> *Pre-Budget Report, Treasury, November 2008, paragraph 4.40*

<sup>43</sup> *Employers and Public Sector to Create 10,000 Apprenticeship Places, DIUS Press Release, 8/12/08*

<sup>44</sup> [http://217.160.210.43/lsc\\_campaignresources/login.asp](http://217.160.210.43/lsc_campaignresources/login.asp) (Please note that you need to register online before accessing these resources).

**Recommendation 11:** Best practice should be a key means of driving forward a new approach on Apprenticeships in public services and innovative approaches already in development in different sub-sectors should be more widely publicised with the aim of promoting similar approaches by employers and trade unions across all parts of public services. The Task Group has been made aware of a number of pioneering approaches in different parts of public services and some of these are highlighted in the main body of this report.

**Recommendation 12:** The expansion of adult Apprenticeships should be a major plank of the Government's strategy to rapidly increase the number of Apprenticeships in public services. This would demonstrate a strong commitment to progression for the current workforce. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that adult Apprenticeships are proving to be an effective means of supporting access to high-quality training for women employees and black and minority ethnic workers, many of whom previously faced skills barriers in the workplace.

## 6.7 Adult Apprenticeships

In the financial year 2008-2009, the Government has invested £330 million in Adult Apprenticeships and this will increase by 12% to over £360 million in 2009-10.

Adult Apprenticeships offer opportunities for upskilling the existing adult public service workforce and there is some evidence that this route has been crucial in supporting the Government's current drive to rapidly increase the number of Apprentices in central government departments.<sup>45</sup>

While it is true that the skill needs of many adult employees in public services will be suitably met by enabling them to access training for Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications via mainstream Train to Gain provision, there is anecdotal evidence presented by Task Group members showing that there is a real demand for Adult Apprenticeships among those aged over 25.

Adult Apprenticeships could make a real impact in supporting access to high-quality training by disadvantaged groups in the public service workforce, especially women and Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Many of these groups completely missed out on accessing Apprenticeships or a similar quality training pathway the first time around in their working lives and Adult Apprenticeships are thus proving to be a crucial measure in tackling equality and diversity issues in the skills arena.

On this basis the Task Group is recommending that Adult Apprenticeships should play a central role in the expansion of Apprenticeships in public services.

### Case Study – Kent County Council

In 2006, the Leader of Kent County Council (KCC) set out a plan for the next four years which outlines a very clear commitment to prepare the young people of Kent for employment. It includes careers guidance, expanding vocational learning for 14- to 16-year olds, introducing a Kent Apprenticeship programme called 'Kent Success' and increasing and enhancing business link activity.

The Apprenticeship programme is designed to manage and facilitate the creation of 1,000 Apprenticeship opportunities across the county, both within KCC and in other public and private sector organisations.

The leader of KCC, Paul Carter, said: 'As the largest employer in Kent, KCC has pledged to provide a minimum of 250 Apprenticeship placements to young people in 2010 in an initiative branded as Kent Success. The Apprenticeship programme will also assist our priority in reducing the number of 16-18 year-olds who are not in education, employment or training.'

The business case is based on the need to encourage young people into the organisation to replace the ageing workforce. Since October 2006, 128 young people have completed their Apprenticeships in one of six frameworks: Business and Administration, Customer Service, Health and Social Care, Warehousing, Hospitality and Catering, and Early Years Childcare. The majority of trainees have gained permanent employment with KCC.

*Continued overleaf*

<sup>45</sup> DIUS.

Now that Apprenticeships are established, KCC are considering other frameworks, such as Vehicle Maintenance, Landscape Services and Printing. KCC, LSC and the Kent Association of Training Organisations (KATO) have now formed a strategic board to manage and oversee all aspects of strategy, policy and delivery across Kent.

## 6.8 Apprenticeships and the economic downturn

It is no coincidence that the Task Group's first recommendation is focused on the urgent need for Government, public services employers and trade unions to commit to maintaining investment in public services skills during the economic downturn. As argued throughout this report, maintaining skills investment will be essential in order to boost the capacity of public services to support individual citizens, communities and the wider economy through the downturn and also to help maximise the benefits of the upturn when it arrives.

While it is highly commendable that the Government is forging ahead with its commitment to expand public services Apprenticeships, Task Group members are concerned that individual apprentices in parts of public services may be at risk of not completing their training due to financial pressures impacting on their organisation during the economic downturn.

Discussions are ongoing with regard to safeguarding apprentices in other parts of the economy, and especially in construction where the Government is working closely with the sector to devise a 'Clearing House' model. This approach aims to ensure that where apprentices are at risk of redundancy because of the more challenging economic circumstances they can be matched with employers needing new staff elsewhere.

The Task Group believes that there is potential for developing a similar model in public services and that the Government needs to give a commitment to work with all partners to safeguard any public services apprentices whose training is at risk due to the challenging economic times.

**Recommendation 13:** The Task Group has called on the Government to make a clear statement about the need for employers to maintain their investment in skills (see recommendation 1). However, there remain concerns that some apprentices in public services may be at risk of not completing their training due to financial pressures in the areas where they work. The Government must therefore make a clear commitment to work with employers, unions, training providers and apprentices to minimise the risk of non-completion and maximise the employment opportunities open to public sector apprentices. Such an initiative could draw on the 'Clearing House' model developed in the construction industry to tackle this challenge.

# 7. Leadership and management

**This section of the report assesses recent progress in management and leadership as well as setting out the key challenges ahead.**

One of the four key policy priorities identified by the Task Group was to identify good practice in leadership and management facilitating access to skills in public services. In addition, the Task Group discussed at some length the idea that public services workers should have the ‘right to be managed well’ and the importance of the role that front-line supervisors in particular play in either unlocking the potential of the workforce or alternatively acting as a barrier to skills development.

## 7.1 Progress to date

There are a number of academies currently offering leadership training in the public sector.<sup>46</sup> Three have student numbers in excess of a thousand each year while others have student numbers in the hundreds. Thus there is a considerable supply of and appetite for leadership and management training but more can be done to highlight the importance of developing staff.

*Who Learns at Work?* (2005)<sup>47</sup> found that one of the best ways to learn at work is “being shown how to do things and then practising them”, but across all sectors only 21% had received one-to-one coaching in the previous year from their line manager.<sup>48</sup> This suggests that line managers are not taking learning sufficiently seriously in the context of their other priorities.

The Leitch Review highlighted the importance of “portable” skills and qualifications and the Government aspires to 90% possession of a full Level 2 qualification by 2020<sup>49</sup>, providing funding through Train to Gain. The 2008 CIPD report *Learning and the Line: The Role of Line Managers in*

*Training, Learning and Development* shows that manager confidence both in terms of their own skills and support from senior leaders is vital to facilitate access to training for staff.<sup>50</sup>

Informal consultations with union representatives and a seminar run at the West Midlands Social Care Conference on management and skills produced a number of examples of successful methods of tackling skills gaps set out below under “meeting the challenges”.

CIPD has identified a number of key areas where the line manager role is fundamental in developing and training staff:

- Induction activities, coaching and guidance, and provision of informal training activities e.g. over the lunch period as a team;
- Access to challenging work and projects, variation of role (job rotation) and the development of multi-skilling;
- Arranging secondments within or outside the organisation and identifying and providing external training programmes;
- Responsibility for career development and promotion (in partnership with the employee); and
- Emphasising knowledge sharing through group activities.<sup>51</sup>

As part of driving Professional Skills for Government forward this year, Government Skills is rolling out a common competency framework for staff below Grade 7. The people management skill covers “Developing others” at HEO level and above. Government Skills is making early plans to develop a qualifications strategy which will look at how qualifications can be used to improve skills in the central government sector. For examples it will look at the role of qualifications in helping people gain skills that are set out in the PSG competency framework. The strategy will also make recommendations about what new qualifications might need to be developed to fill any gaps identified.

<sup>46</sup> The ten academies which belong to the Public Service Leadership Alliance are: Defence Leadership and Management Centre; Fire Service College; Improvement and Development Agency; Leadership Academy for Policing; Leadership Centre for Local Government; Leadership Foundation for Higher Education; The Learning and Skills Improvement Service; National College of School Leadership; National Health Service Institute for Innovation and Improvement; and National School of Government.

<sup>47</sup> CIPD, *Who Learns at Work?* (2005)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> DIUS, *World Class Skills* (2007) <http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/worldclassskills.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> CIPD, *Learning and the Line: The Role of Line Managers in Training, Learning and Development* (2008).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

## 7.2 Meeting the challenges

During the current economic downturn there is increasing pressure on managers to juggle resources. The environment for delivering public services is becoming ever more complex and financial constraints are ever present. This means that managers at all levels – including supervisors and first line managers – are having to develop and use greater levels of expertise in deploying resources.

If frontline managers are not themselves properly trained, they could fail to provide the training that will enable their staff to deliver public services in these difficult times. It has become clear that new line managers are not always supported to develop their staff, however, and thus they may lack the confidence and ability to manage work pressures to allow staff time to train.

### Case Study – Barking and Dagenham

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham ran a three year training programme – the ‘Done in One’ Academy – to support its aspiration to be an organisation that genuinely responds to customer needs. It aims to provide a ‘Done in One’ approach to customer service, putting things right first time for every customer. The Academy gives staff the skills and knowledge to deliver the highest possible level of customer service.

Managers knew that it was vital that this training was accessible to all grades, specialisms, levels of ability and work patterns within the Council. They therefore worked alongside the corporate learning and development team to provide learning opportunities in a number of formats. For example, some workshops were run on site with

sessions staggered throughout the day - ensuring service needs could continue to be met. Managers and trainers worked together to offer out of hours training to accommodate shift patterns. Workshops for some frontline staff were adapted in order to meet basic skills needs. Managers also offered on-site accommodation to further support and reassure those who may have felt uncomfortable with classroom learning.

During its three year lifecycle, over 2000 staff were trained including managers and front line staff. The innovative and collaborative approach to training demonstrated by the Done in One Academy helped towards Barking winning the prestigious ‘Most improved Council of the year’ award at the 2008 local government awards.

There is also a huge body of information and training available to employees but it is not always easy to identify which formal qualification or piece of learning would be most appropriate. Line managers lack confidence to develop their staff and need strong support from organisational leaders.

Some types of skills needs around literacy and numeracy are particularly embarrassing for employees to discuss with managers or training providers (although union learning reps can help). Basic skills gaps have been shown to lead to employees dropping out of professional training. Undiagnosed dyslexia and dyscalculia are also a problem.

Government provides funding for skills and qualifications through Train to Gain – publicity for this scheme is currently being increased and the knowledge that this funding is available will assist line managers to have the confidence to investigate skills solutions in partnership with a skills broker.

**Recommendation 14:** The Government's vision for achieving world class public services is increasingly based on developing a new professionalism where managers and front-line staff have freedoms and flexibility to shape how services are delivered.

Developing leadership and management skills is a crucial component of this approach and the Task Group has been struck by comments from employers and trades unions alike that public service managers and supervisors responsible for front-line staff can often lack the skills, confidence and organisational support to develop the staff for whom they are responsible.

The Task Group considers it extremely important that the training and development needs of all new public sector managers or supervisors are reviewed on their promotion into a management role. Where necessary, actions should be put in place to enable new (and potential) managers to access appropriate training and development so they can develop staff reporting to them effectively. New and existing supervisors and managers should receive support with their responsibility to consider the training and development needs of the staff they manage.

This could include extra development in managing a team's workload to allow time for training for team members. Employers and unionlearn should both play a role in supporting new supervisors and managers to develop their staff.

**Recommendation 15:** The Task Group also recommends that a number of other initiatives are developed to support such a strategy including:

- Asking the PSF Chair to write to the main, sector based, public service training and development organisations inviting them to promote the importance of developing staff and supporting frontline managers to promote training in their courses, and to review their curriculum to ensure that managers and supervisors will be equipped with the skills to be able to detect learning needs in staff and take actions to address them.
- Recommending that senior managers lead and enable training provision throughout their organisations to empower frontline managers to promote training and development opportunities for their staff. Lessons should be learnt from existing good practice and carried across sectors, where possible. The work underway at Barking and Dagenham local authority (for example, their Done in One Academy) is a compelling example.
- Requesting that unionlearn develop a strategy to address Skills for Life challenges in managers which impede their role and on which they are too embarrassed to ask for help.

## 8. The role of trade unions

**This section looks at the challenges facing trade unions in order to increase their presence in supporting learning and skills in the sector.**

The Task Group specifically considered the role of unions in promoting skills development in the workplace and especially how they could further build the capacity of their union learning representatives (ULRs) to achieve a stronger and more strategic approach in all public services workplaces.

It is recognised that unions are also playing an increasingly important role at the sectoral level in partnership with those Sector Skills Councils which cover the public services workforce. Nationally negotiated agreements between employers and unions at the sub-sector level also continue to play a major role, in particular Agenda for Change in the NHS and its specific skills component, the Knowledge and Skills Framework.

### 8.1 Union learning representatives

As in other parts of the economy, ULRs in public services initially gained widespread recognition and respect from proving to be highly effective intermediaries in engaging and supporting low-skilled employees to take up training, especially Skills for Life courses. However, the role of ULRs has changed considerably since their inception in 1997 and they are now playing a key role in supporting public services employees to access CPD and professional training whilst continuing to support take-up of Skills for Life and vocational qualifications, including Apprenticeships.

However, one of the key ULR strengths remains the role they play as a valued colleague and confidant that empowers individuals to embark in learning for the first time, to renew their skills at a wide range of levels, and to widen their personal development. The Task Group recognised the

crucial importance of building on the ULR role and integrating it with other strands of what unions do on training in public services, especially relating to negotiation and collective approaches at the workplace and sectoral levels.

An early paper presented to the Task Group highlighted some parts of public services where the challenge was not just to build the role of ULRs, but to ensure that there were adequate numbers of reps in place. For example, it showed that the ratio of ULRs to union members in the health & social care and education sectors is much lower than the ratio found in both central and local government. There is anecdotal evidence that this is influenced by a number of factors.

For example, in the early days ULRs made their name through their evident expertise in addressing Skills for Life issues among the workforce and this was not always perceived as being relevant to the teaching workforce in schools. However, ULRs in schools are now increasingly offering CPD and ICT courses to teaching staff and it is anticipated that this will lead to further growth in ULRs in this sector.

The reasons for the lower ULR ratio in the health and social care sector, where there is a relatively high incidence of employees lacking skills at Level 2 and below, are more difficult to disentangle. Part of the explanation may be attributable to the adult social care sector – our case study has highlighted that ‘ULRs are much thinner on the ground in the private and voluntary’ organisations that now make up the majority of providers. However, the Task Group also agreed that there was a need to build the numbers of ULRs in the health sector and that unions should give more consideration to the role for ULRs in supporting the Knowledge and Skills Framework within Agenda for Change.

## 8.2 Union learning – what works?

The paper to the Task Group showcased a number of best practice examples of union involvement in the learning and skills agenda and highlighted a number of obvious common themes which contributed to their success, including the following:

- A strategic approach across a number of workplaces which achieves a uniformly high quality ‘union learning’ offer aimed at a large number of union members;
- A strong partnership between employers and trade unions on the workplace learning agenda involving a strategic approach that gives union learning reps a central role in the planning and delivering of learning opportunities which are also integrated into the organisation’s wider workforce development strategy;
- A framework agreed by employers and trade unions usually through the drawing up of a joint learning agreement that sets out the aims and objectives of the strategy and the rights and responsibilities of both sides (e.g. setting out rights to paid time off for ULRs to be trained and to fulfil their duties and also for employees to gain suitable skills and/or qualifications);
- Maintaining momentum on progressing the strategy by giving ownership of the strategy to a forum or workplace committee comprising employer and union representatives and other interested parties (e.g. local LSC, training providers, Open University, regional unionlearn etc.)
- Ensuring that employees have an accessible and supportive learning environment at the workplace level, preferably by establishing union-led workplace learning centres;
- Making best use of the sectoral approach which offers opportunities for employers and trade unions to scale

up best practice and to develop sector-wide skills strategies where union learning reps play a significant role in planning and implementation.

Our case study reinforced the benefits of the above approach, saying that ‘unions and unionlearn may wish to consider how to build the expertise and capacity of the adult social care ULR network to help build long-term workforce strategies in individual workplaces.’ It also flagged up the positive partnership at the sectoral level between Skills for Care and unions which is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding.

The case study also reiterated the call by Lord Leitch in his final report for unions to play a greater role in promoting and supporting implementation of the Skills Pledge and Apprenticeships at the workplace and at sectoral levels. The TUC and unionlearn are currently considering further strategies to build the union role in these specific areas and to build on best practice where it exists.

**Recommendation 16:** The Task Group recommends that unionlearn should work closely with all public services unions to assess how they could further build the capacity of union learning representatives to achieve a stronger and more strategic approach in all unionised workplaces alongside a greater focus on supporting the introduction and delivery of Apprenticeships and the Skills Pledge.

# Annex 1 – Task Group remit

## **Paper produced for the Public Services Forum, May 2006: Plans for establishing a Learning and Skills Task Group**

### **The Summary**

This paper details a proposal to set up a Public Services Forum (PSF) Learning and Skills Task Group to consider the cross-public services priorities in learning and skills.

The PSF are asked to agree:

- 1) Creation of a PSF task group to consider the cross public service approach to learning and skills.
- 2) The proposed scope of the task group.
- 3) Key themes for the group to consider.

### **Introduction**

Over recent months there have been ongoing discussions between the TUC, Cabinet Office and the LSC about the potential contribution of the PSF to the Government's strategy to improve the skills of employees delivering public services.

The LSC has given a high priority to this area and is already taking forward a programme of work to deliver on this, including establishing a Stakeholder Forum to bring together senior representatives of the various government departments and agencies, employers and trade unions with a stake in this particular skills agenda.

At the same time the PSF continues to focus on wider workforce development issues in public services and there is a great deal of crossover with this work and the LSC's remit on skills.

While these respective strategies on skills and workforce development are focused on improving public services, there is a case for developing a more 'joined up approach' between government, trade unions, employers and skills agencies as well as between different sectors. Establishing a cross-public service approach to skills and workforce development via the establishment of a PSF Task Group would bring a unique perspective and tangible outcomes.

The unique role of the PSF offers a genuine opportunity to achieve strategic progress along these lines. The PSF brings together senior representatives of employers and trade unions whose leadership and commitment is essential to achieving the co-ordination and improvements necessary.

### **Proposed Task Group**

The purpose of the task group, which would include government, employers and trade unions, would be to:

- Scope out the major long-term skills priorities for public services in the context of workforce development and the overall aim of improving public services.
- Address some key strategic public sector skills issues on a cross-sector basis.
- Develop an action plan for employers and trade unions to take forward and that would influence the LSC's remit on skills.

### **Key Themes**

There is a degree of consensus among government, employers and trade unions about the key skills/workforce development challenges facing our public services workforce. On this basis it is anticipated that the task group would address some of the following themes in its programme of work:

- Career Pathways: Enabling less skilled public sector employees to acquire qualifications and develop skills that enhance employability and transferability.
- Young people and skills: how to build tomorrow's public sector workforce.
- Improving customer service skills in order to develop highly responsive public services.
- The equality and diversity agenda: addressing the complexion of the workforce and opening up learning and development opportunities for all employees.
- Value for money: Exploring opportunities for cross-public service collaboration with LSC and its stakeholders on common skills priorities in order to improve use of resources.

### **Structure and timescales**

It is envisaged that membership of the Task Group would be drawn from the PSF itself, comprising a relatively small number of trade union and employer representatives. There would be a facility for trade unions and employers to co-opt senior representatives with appropriate experience and expertise onto the task group.

The Cabinet Office and LSC would also be represented on the task group and it is envisaged that there should also be input from the network of Sector Skills Councils.

There would need to be a detailed discussion about how the PSF task group would engage with the LSC Stakeholder Forum. The Forum will be addressing a wider spectrum of operational issues and will feed its work and views into the PSF task group where appropriate and engage more widely in other areas. Nevertheless, the PSF task group's strategic work should provide valuable guidance for the overall direction of the Forum's programme of work.

Importantly, there will be a number of specific skills initiatives arising out of the work of the task group which can be taken forward by the LSC and its partners. The task group could also establish an agenda for employers and unions to take forward actions, both individually and collectively, to contribute to the overall public service skills strategy.

At this stage it is being proposed that the task group would be jointly chaired by a high profile individual from the employer and trade union constituencies. In addition, the task group should be time-limited with the aim of initiating joint activities as soon as possible to test out proposals under discussion. On this basis it might be productive to initially plan a work programme based on a one-year timescale with an option to extend beyond this if it is clear that this would bring significant strategic benefits.

## Annex 2 – Task Group membership

### Co-Chairs

David Amos - Director of Workforce, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Frances O'Grady - Deputy General Secretary, TUC

### Members

Nigel Carruthers, Head of SkillsPlus UK, Local Government Improvement and Development Agency

Gail Cartmail - Assistant General Secretary, Unite

Tony Chandler – UNISON and Skills for Health

Paul Cottrell - National Head of Cross-Sectoral Professional Policy, UCU (University and College Union)

Nic Greenfield – Director of Workforce, Department of Health

Teresa Harper - Skills Team Leader, Supply and Skills Unit, School Resources Group, Department for Children, Schools and Families

Hugh Lanning – Deputy General Secretary, PCS (Public and Commercial Services Union)

Alan Lazell - Head of Skills, Learning & Enterprise, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Christina McAnea - National Secretary for Education Services, UNISON

Paula McDonald - Deputy Director (Public Service Workforce Reform), Cabinet Office

Kirsty Pearce – Deputy Director, Skills Directorate, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Neil Riddell – Department for Communities and Local Government

John Rogers - Chief Executive, Skills for Health

Gill Sellix – Qualifications Policy Manager, Government Skills

Steven Weeks – Head of Policy, NHS Employers

David Way – National Director, Adult Learning Skills and Employment Group, Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

### Secretariat

Iain Murray, Senior Policy Officer, TUC

Rebecca Rhodes, Skills Director, Learning and Skills Council

Hazel Roberts, Senior Policy Adviser, Public Service Workforce Reform, Cabinet Office

# Annex 3 – Learning and Skills in Adult Social Care: Report to the Public Services Forum Learning and Skills Task Group

## Executive Summary

(A copy of the full report is available at:

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/workforcematters/stakeholder\\_fora/public.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/workforcematters/stakeholder_fora/public.aspx))

## Introduction

The Public Services Forum's Task Group on Learning and Skills commissioned the IPA to assess the appropriateness and practicability of its draft recommendations for improving workforce skills in a single sector - adult social care – through several months of evidence gathering, analysis and dialogue.

It is hoped that the work of the Task Group will enhance and support skills and career progression for a significant section of the UK workforce - providing an opportunity to make a real impact on the achievement of progress on skills at a national level across all sectors.

The Task Group will deliver its final set of recommendations and set out a future campaign for public service skills in Autumn 2008. It is then the intention that employers and trade unions will ensure action on these themes through their own networks in the context of public service improvement.

Some key messages for learning and skills in adult social care have emerged from this study, and the Task Group is making a number of recommendations arising from these.

## Access to funding for skills and the use of Train to Gain in the sector

Accessing funding for training adult social care staff is a complex process as there are a significant number of separate funding streams. Some funding streams are national whereas others have regional priorities that are not necessarily replicated in each English region.

There has been a substantial uptake of Train to Gain in adult social care and employers and employees value the training that it has funded. Organisations have seen benefits in terms of lower staff turnover and better quality service delivery. There are some concerns within the sector about the Train to Gain brokerage service, and eligibility for funding.

### *Funding streams and processes*

The fieldwork revealed that some employers were unclear about what provision is available for them to access and which individuals were eligible for support through Train to Gain. This was also an issue across other funding streams.

We suggest that eligibility criteria – about organisations and individuals - need to be clear and consistent and stated in an accessible format in order to improve understanding and use of this valuable support mechanism for employers. This should apply to other funding streams including the Train to Gain service.

Some form of “map” may help employers navigate their way through the funding architecture and other service offers. This may help to dismantle the reported perception from some that Train to Gain was “bureaucratic”.

Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) single funding stream from 2009 will be a useful step forward in simplifying funding streams.

Other parts of public services may find a clear and comprehensive policy statement on eligibility of organisations and individual workers for Train to Gain helpful.

#### *Brokerage*

Brokerage is an integral part of the Train to Gain service. Our research found varying degrees of success and appetite to use Train to Gain brokers. Some of those interviewed said there was a need for brokers to better understand the adult social care sector.

A possible way forward that would not involve changing current Train to Gain architecture would be to develop some standard learning briefings to help brokers better understand the particular needs and priorities for the sector. These should be part of the Sector Skills Compact and should be renewed and reissued on a regular basis to ensure they are fresh and up to date. In tandem, LSC and Skills for Care may wish to consider developing some real life case studies about how brokers have added value to adult social care providers. This could help to articulate to employers and trade unions where and how a broker could provide support to their service/business, and help to clarify where employers can reasonably expect to receive support from brokers.

The proposal to introduce regional lead skills brokers for adult social care as part of the sector's compact is already a step forward, and those colleagues should take a leading

role should any of the suggestions set out here be taken forward. In addition, it should be noted that Skills for Care are already funding joint working on a sector specific brokerage with Train to Gain, which will help to further improve clarity.

#### *Quality*

LSC's 'Employers Guide' to Good Training will be a welcome innovation for employers in adult social care and no doubt to other parts of public services. The Guide will provide an access point for employers looking for information on training providers in their area. The Guide will highlight those providers offering specialist training, those whom have been assessed by Ofsted or have been assessed against other standards, for example the Training Quality Standard. Getting the message out about this new guidance to those colleagues using Train to Gain in their organisations/sectors will be important.

#### **Skills Pledge**

Organisations want to see evidence that the Pledge adds value. There is a sense that the employers who are signing the Pledge are already committed to training and that the Pledge is not reaching organisations who need to do more. Hands-on help for these employers, including funding for training and backfill, may be needed.

#### *Reach*

Our research suggests that the Skills Pledge needs to extend its reach beyond those organisations that are already committed to training and development of their organisation, to those who need to do more.

LSC and Skills for Care may wish to consider how the Skills Pledge could reach those workforces most in need. In particular, there may be a case for building upon existing work across relevant colleagues (including trade unions) to target institutions with a poor CSCI report. One of the local

authorities interviewed had built this form of targeted support into their workforce development strategy.

#### *Joint commitment*

There should be a joint commitment to deliver the Skills Pledge to all organisations delivering publicly-funded services, whether public, private or voluntary sector, while ensuring that the Pledge is always meaningful. There is a danger that the Skills Pledge will become discredited if organisations sign it purely as a result of external pressure to do so, rather than because it meets their needs and they intend to implement it.

#### *Demonstrating value*

Employers said that “positive peer experiences about the value it adds and financial support” would encourage them to sign the Skills Pledge.

The development of additional case studies to supplement those already available and specifically articulating how organisations have been supported to achieve the Skills Pledge through the external support of Train to Gain may help to increase its profile within the sector. In particular, any messages about the long-term benefits that have been experienced as a result of signing the Skills Pledge would help. This could help to create bottom-up demand for the Skills Pledge and Train to Gain, rather than relying on top-down pressure.

More generally, we suggest this needs to go hand-in-hand with information about the additional financial support that exists for small organisations. This is particularly important for adult social care where many organisations are small-scale and where additional financial support could help to deliver positive change in the workplace.

In the wider public sector, the Skills Pledge needs to make a real connection with employers’ needs on the ground. It needs to be seen to add value – any communications should seek to pull out a strong narrative around the value for the employer organisation and their workforce.

#### *Investors in people*

Although the Investors in People (IiP) standard is a separate to the Skills Pledge, some colleagues interviewed felt that they “preferred” to invest efforts into IiP as an alternative to the Skills Pledge.

It may, therefore, be worthwhile for LSC to extend its work with IiP UK to better communicate the complementary relationship between IiP and the Skills Pledge to employers in the sector. At a national level across public services, DIUS and LSC may also wish to consider strengthening the messaging around the relationship between the Skills Pledge and IiP, to better cross-promote both.

#### **Apprenticeships and skills pathways**

The small minority of adult social care employers who employ apprenticeships value them highly, but many either do not know that Apprenticeships in adult social care exist, or do not see the added value of investing in an Apprentice.

#### *Long-term benefits*

We suggest that there needs to be a stronger articulation of the long-term benefits of Apprenticeships both for employers and individuals, and of the different benefits and opportunities. For example, an apprentice should have a more rounded skill set that can be applied to different parts of an organisation – particularly important should an employer diversify their service offering. Better articulation of these differences could help employers to make an informed

decision about what is the right choice for their service or organisation at that time as part of a continuum of different options.

#### *Increasing awareness*

The study has highlighted a lack of awareness in the sector about the rules governing whether under-19s can provide adult social care. In addition, there was also a reported lack of general awareness about new Apprenticeship frameworks in the sector (with some interviewed not knowing they existed).

Relevant bodies should consider an awareness raising programme in the sector to jointly promote these issues. This may reap benefits in terms of (i) generating employer demand for Apprenticeships more generally; (ii) opening up career opportunities for young people in the sector. Although out of scope in terms of this report's analysis, it is recommended that any such campaign should explicitly state that adult learners are also eligible for Apprenticeships so as to diversify career pathways for existing (adult) workers as well as new, younger workers.

In particular, it is suggested that Job Centre Plus (JCP) colleagues might benefit from refreshed, new briefing outlining potential opportunities and career pathways available in adult social care, so JCP advisors can provide accurate advice to their clients in turn.

In the public sector as whole Apprenticeship communications

and marketing should make clear to employers that there is no age limit to Apprenticeships for most parts of public services – improving opportunities for existing, older public service workers as well as young people who have recently left full time education.

#### *Care Ambassadors*

The sector should continue to support and recognise the good work of the Care Ambassador scheme in attracting young people into adult social care.

Where other parts of public services wish to increase the diversity of their age profile and attract more young people, they should consider what value a model such as “Care Ambassadors” might provide.

#### **Trade unions**

Trade unions are playing an important role in supporting skills development in the sector. They do this at both national and local levels. Their usual approach to supporting skills development is through Union Learning Reps, but as these are generally found in large organisations throughout the economy, and adult social care is provided mostly by small independent organisations, which in turn are less likely to recognise unions, they have had to think again.

### *Union Learning Representatives in the adult social care workplace*

ULR's should continue their good work in supporting individual learners in the workplace, which is widely regarded as a positive workplace contribution. Unions and unionlearn may wish to consider how to build the expertise and capacity of the adult social care ULR network to help build long-term workforce strategies in individual workplaces and to expand their support to reach out beyond basic skills.

In particular we suggest that adult social care trade unions could work together with employers, learning providers and Skills for Care to improve the success of training courses provided by local authorities for their regions/ areas, e.g. by encouraging learners to take up and commit to training opportunities.

### *Promoting Apprenticeships and skills*

Trade unions should take a more proactive role in the sector in promoting Apprenticeships and skills investment (including through the use of Train to Gain and the promotion of the Skills Pledge), by encouraging employers to consider Apprenticeships and supporting employers in implementing the Skills Pledge.

### *Strategic role*

Trade union expertise and support should be used more strategically at a national and local level to help employers and Skills for Care in their efforts to deliver better quality of care, building on the Memorandum of Understanding with Skills for Care. The trade union movement may consider where similar Memorandums of Understanding with sector skills councils could add particular value in other public services.

## Annex 4 – Skills Pledge Statistics (Source: LSC)

### June 2007 - September 2008 Figures

Representative of Skills Pledge Data cumulative from June 2007 to September End 2008

#### a. Skills Pledge Headlines

|                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Number of Skills Pledge Referrals | 10,031    |
| Which have now Pledged            | 7,628     |
| Employees covered by Pledges      | 5,102,370 |

#### b. Public vs. Private Breakdown within Skills Pledge

|                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Total Pledges    | 7,628 |
| Public sector    | 1,116 |
| Private sector * | 6,512 |

\*Figure includes those employers which have been unable to assign.

#### c. Local Councils and Local Authorities

LSC is currently working from a confirmed baseline of 388 Local Councils / Authorities within England with regard to the Skills Pledge.

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Pledged              | 75  |
| Referral Stage       | 34  |
| Still to be targeted | 279 |

#### d. NHS Organisations and the Skills Pledge

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Pledged              | 262 |
| Referral Stage       | 42  |
| Still to be targeted | 166 |

The NHS Organisations group within the Skills Pledge contains employers including Strategic Health Authorities, Primary Care Trust, Acute Trusts, Mental Health Authorities, Care Trusts and other associated Health Sector employers. LSC is currently working from a baseline of 470 employers within England.

#### e. Public Sector Performance and Sectors within the Skills Pledge

|                                       | Pledges associated with SSC |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| GoSkills                              | 61                          |
| Government Skills                     | 181                         |
| Skills for Justice                    | 7                           |
| Skills for Health                     | 370                         |
| Skills for Care & Development         | 806                         |
| Lifelong Learning UK                  | 317                         |
| Skills Active                         | 76                          |
| Pledges mapped to other SSC's         | 5,810                       |
| <b>Total Pledges to September End</b> | <b>7,628</b>                |

NB - Data is based on the SIC 2003 codes. Re-licensing is currently taking place, and the SIC 2007 code list is expected to be released in early 2009







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