

Shaping the Future: The Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England 2011 and beyond

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'A highly-qualified, professional workforce is one of the hallmarks of good provision.'

Association of Learning Providers, Member of the Workforce Strategy National Partner Group

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Definitions

National partners: describes those organisations within the sector that are working with Lifelong Learning UK at a national level to develop and support the Workforce Strategy. They include: government departments; strategic organisations; and unions, employer and employee representative organisations.

Further education or sector employers: describes learning providers in the sector who employ the workforce encompassed by the Workforce Strategy.

Sector stakeholders: a wider grouping that includes any of the national partners but also other organisations and employers in the further education sector.

Foreword from the members of the National Partner Group

The National Partner Group for the Workforce Strategy is delighted to present the Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England 2011. Developed by Lifelong Learning UK through consultation and collaboration with the National Partner Group and the wider further education sector, this resource offers further education and skills employers an overarching framework and direction for workforce development.

The further education sector lies at the heart of the economic recovery because our workforce has a unique role in training and qualifying the rest of the country. Therefore a diverse, confident, talented, up-to-date, and flexible further education workforce is essential to respond to the challenges and opportunities of our times. We know the quality and commitment of our workforce and those of you that employ them, but we also understand the challenges ahead.

Of course, we are familiar with change and challenge in the further education sector, but it is difficult to recall a time when there has been such a plentiful supply of both as there is at present. Lifelong Learning UK and the National Partner Group are working with the sector to promote workforce development because we understand how important it is for our workforce to be able to grasp the opportunities that change brings. In this context, those of us involved in developing the Workforce Strategy have agreed that its priorities and themes provide valuable continuity to support workforce development in changing times. We have a commitment to an ambitious and sustainable shared vision for the further education workforce and an enthusiasm and desire to achieve it.

We know that now, more than ever, you need this document to be a practical tool and not just a strategy. So this year we are taking an exciting new approach. Following on from the publication of this Workforce Strategy document, there will be four supplementary implementation documents developed by and for the further education communities of work based learning, adult and community learning, colleges and specialist colleges. The national partners are working closely with sector employers in our respective further education communities to produce these very practical supplements to the Workforce Strategy. It is our intention that they will enable those of you in each community to interpret and act on the priorities and themes of the Workforce Strategy in a way that is relevant for you. We believe that by taking this approach, we will achieve our shared vision for the further education workforce together.

We would like you to read this document and its vision, priorities and themes and use it to shape your vision for your own workforce. Electronic copies will be published in December 2010 at <http://www.lluk.org/england/workforce-strategy-for-the-further-education-sector-in-england/>. This is an evolving document and so the four Workforce Strategy supplements will follow over the next four months. They will support you to make the vision of the Strategy a reality by outlining shared actions tailored to your further education community. Bookmark the page, so that you can download the relevant supplement as soon as it becomes available. We warmly welcome your comments and encourage you to provide feedback about any of these resources at <http://www.lluk.org/contact-us/feedback-form/>

As a group and as individual organisations, we pledge to support you to achieve the vision of the Workforce Strategy.

“Learners, employers and society need and deserve excellent teaching and training provided by brilliant teachers, trainers and support staff.”

Institute for Learning (IfL), Member of the Workforce Strategy National Partner Group

The National Partner Group for the Further Education Workforce Strategy

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Association of College Management (**ACM**)

Association of Colleges (**AoC**)

Association of Learning Providers (**ALP**)

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (**ATL**)

Becta

Department for Education (**DfE**)

Department of Work and Pensions (**DWP**)

HOLEX

Institute for Learning (**IfL**)

Learning and Skills Improvement Service (**LSIS**)

National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (**NIACE**)

Network of Black Professionals (**NBP**)

Office for Standards in Education (**OFSTED**)

Sixth Form College Forum (**SFCF**)

The Association of National Specialist Colleges (**Natspec**)

Unison

University and College Union (**UCU**)

Young Peoples Learning Agency (**YPLA**)

An introduction to the Workforce Strategy

What is the Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England?

The Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England is the overarching strategic document that offers employers in the sector a framework and direction for workforce development. It aims to ensure that the further education workforce continues to be made up of talented and appropriately trained people, who are able to respond to changing needs and deliver excellent learning provision.

First published in 2007, the Workforce Strategy is a result of collaboration between national employer and employee representative organisations, sector employers and other stakeholders from the further education sector brought together to work in partnership by Lifelong Learning UK.¹ The Strategy is refreshed annually, following renewed consultation with national partners and employers in the further education sector, to ensure it continues to reflect the challenges and needs of the further education workforce.

Who is it for?

The Workforce Strategy is an enabling tool for leaders and senior managers who have a responsibility for workforce development in college, work based learning and adult and community learning provision. If you are in this type of role, the Workforce Strategy will support you in developing and implementing your workforce plans for employees at all levels.

The Workforce Strategy covers the whole of the further education workforce including leaders, managers and all other employees in:

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

Everyone has a role in fulfilling the vision for the further education workforce outlined in this strategy and the priorities and themes apply equally to all sector stakeholders, not just individual providers.

¹ Lifelong Learning UK is the Sector Skills Council for the lifelong learning sector with a vision of 'a world class lifelong learning workforce that enables a more prosperous economy and an inclusive society.'

Why is it needed?

The Strategy is informed throughout by an awareness of the unique role of the further education and skills sector in training and qualifying the rest of the country's workforce, a fact that places the sector at the heart of the economic recovery. In a context of continuous change, a talented, up-to-date and flexible workforce is essential. A consistent and coherent Workforce Strategy designed by and for the sector enables the sector to shape its own response to emerging challenges and opportunities and meet the changing needs of learners, employers in all sectors and the Government.

The organisations that have contributed to this document have in depth knowledge of the sector. They have worked to ensure that the strategy not only reflects today's demands on the further education sector, but also looks ahead and anticipates what employers in all sectors, communities and learners will want from the sector in future years.

By outlining a shared vision and agreed priorities for workforce planning, the Workforce Strategy provides a reference for senior managers in the sector that will inform and guide the development of their own workforce plans; it gives a rationale and legitimacy to workforce initiatives and it offers a focus for initial training and continuing professional development.

How does this document work?

The Workforce Strategy presents an agreed vision for the further education workforce and outlines four priorities and ten underpinning themes that together support the achievement of that vision. These are illustrated with suggestions of how national partners, employers and practitioners in the further education system can work together to enable the vision to be realised.

“The Workforce Strategy provides a platform for staff, colleges and stakeholders to establish a robust vision of what we all want: a further education sector that is synonymous with high aspirations and high quality.”

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), Member of the Workforce Strategy National Partner Group

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The future of the further education workforce Strategic context: 'Change brings opportunity'²

Over recent years, there have been considerable changes in the further education sector. In 2010, the election of a new UK Government and the ongoing action to reduce the budget deficit are likely to mean further changes to policy, funding, and strategic organisations and structures.

Recently, there has been a major independent review of vocational education for 14-19 year olds and two consultations, *Skills for sustainable growth: consultation on the future direction of skills policy* and *A Simplified Further Education and Skills Funding System and Methodology*. These consultations are shaping skills policy at a crucial moment, as the Government makes departmental budgetary decisions following the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The challenge for everyone in the sector is determining how high quality services can continue to be delivered with less funding, and some organisations are facing difficult decisions around workforce changes and reductions, and programme delivery. There are few who can be certain of the exact shape and nature of their organisation or the sector in the future.

However, even in this context there are still opportunities for the further education sector.

- The learning and services provided by the sector remain essential to economic recovery and to support individuals to increase their social mobility. Learning providers are well-placed to support and respond to both local skills needs and the Coalition Government's Big Society policy.

- There is a potential for greater autonomy for learning providers as a result of Government policy.
- A change in the pre-entry attainment levels of those studying higher education delivered in further education is particularly likely, as good quality A-level graduates look to local provision to secure a place and reduce expense.
- The development of new partnerships with business and other local institutions will support emerging local and regional needs and may provide new funding opportunities.
- As technology continues to develop and become increasingly affordable it provides opportunities to deliver learning in innovative and flexible ways.
- Providers can lead on sustainable practice and respond to the need for sustainability and 'green' skills.

The further education sector needs its leaders, managers and wider workforce to be skilled, confident and adaptable in order to grasp these opportunities and respond to the challenges, while continuing to provide all learners with high quality and flexible provision.

In this context, the organisations involved in developing the Workforce Strategy have agreed that its priorities and themes are universal and provide much needed consistency and structure to support workforce development in changing times.

² Nido Qubein, speaker, author & educationalist.

A shared vision of the further education workforce

Following consultation with partners and sector stakeholders, facilitated by Lifelong Learning UK, the sector has developed a shared vision for the workforce:

The vision is:

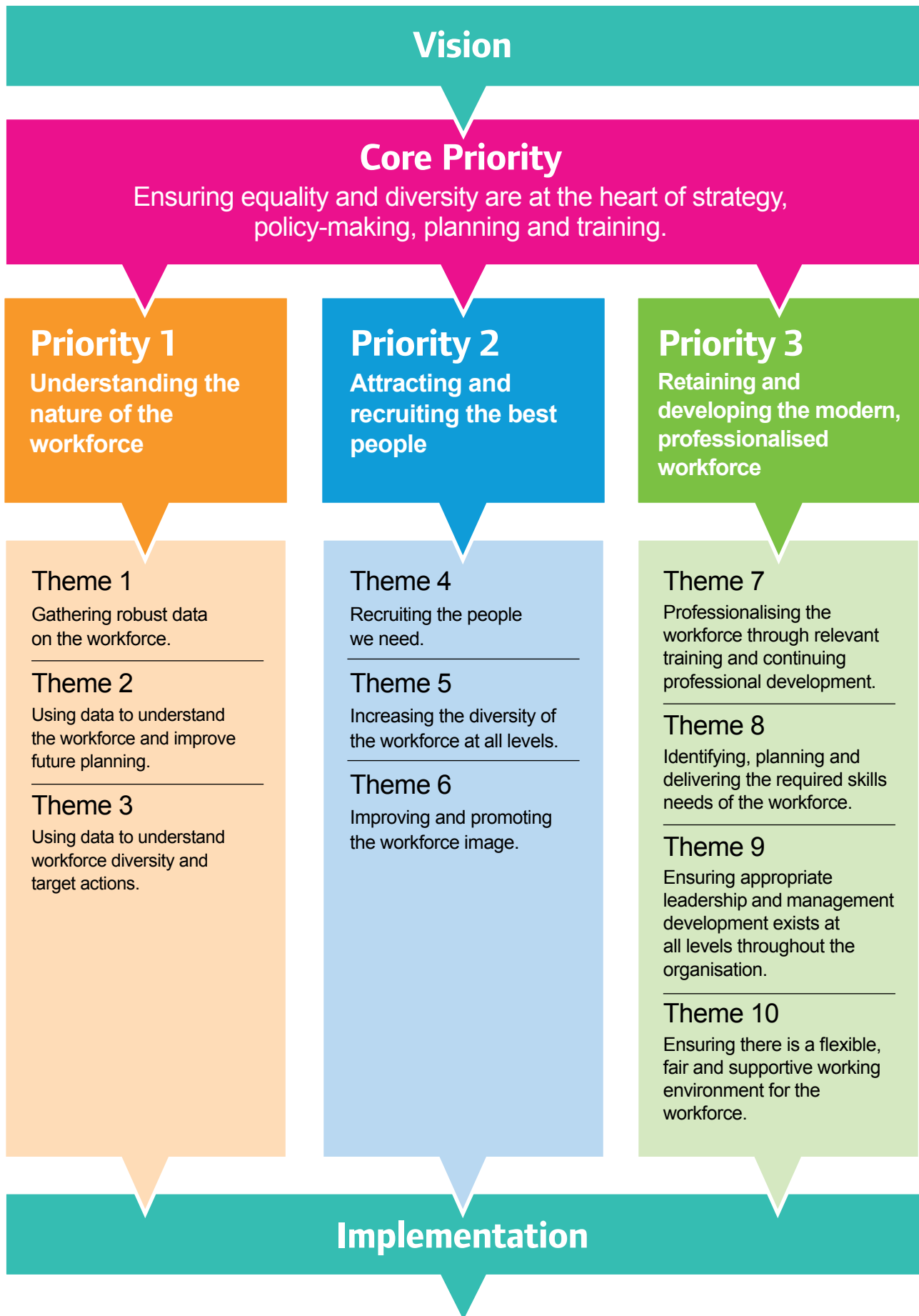
- to have a workforce that is highly skilled, qualified and committed to continuing professional development
- to have a workforce of professionals who drive forward their own levels of expertise
- to have a workforce that is flexible enough to meet the changing needs of learners, employers, the community and the wider economy
- to have a workforce that is excellent at designing, delivering and supporting learning including making effective use of the potential of technology to deliver improved outcomes for learners
- to have a workforce that can provide learning effectively in a variety of physical and technological settings including both educational and workplace environments
- to have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the sector's learners and communities.

“The sector must be the true champions of lifelong learning. Providers must lead by example by investing in the future development of their workforce. Learners deserve no less.”

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), Member of the Workforce Strategy National Partner Group

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A shared strategy for success: an overview



A shared strategy for success: priorities and themes

Four priorities together with ten underpinning themes support the achievement of the vision for the further education sector workforce. The themes give more detail on the type of activity that further education employers and other sector stakeholders can engage in under each of the four priorities. These are intended to be high level examples.

Core priority

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

Equality and diversity are integral to the other three priorities and as such this priority is not broken down into themes of its own. Its influence can be seen in the examples described under the priorities and themes below.

We live in a diverse society which contains a wealth of skill, talent and expertise. It is essential to the future prosperity of our society and of the further education sector that it makes use of that skill, talent and expertise

by ensuring that all individuals can participate equally. The broader approach to equality and diversity in the public sector, which considers age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, will require learning providers to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. The influence of the sector on individual learners, their employees and their local communities can be profound, and therefore our workforce must reflect and understand the diverse needs and aspirations of the communities of which it is part.

Despite the sector's legal responsibilities it must move beyond compliance and create inclusive working environments that value diversity and encourage participation from the whole workforce. Embracing difference will ensure that regardless of individual starting points, everyone has an equal chance to achieve their potential within our sector.

Priority 1

Understanding the nature of the workforce

As further education employers move towards self-regulation, they must take greater responsibility for workforce development. This is particularly challenging at a time of uncertainty around future funding. A thorough understanding of the characteristics, skills and skills needs of the further education workforce, gathered in a systematic way, is an essential first step towards informed workforce planning. It identifies gaps in training and skills; exposes under-representation within the workforce; and allows organisations to benchmark their performance. With a clear understanding of their workforce, leaders and managers will be in a stronger position to improve how they deploy their employees, make future forecasting predictions to identify skills gaps, and make informed decisions on prioritising investment in employee recruitment and development.

Priority 1 themes

1. Gathering robust data on the workforce

- National partners will develop and improve data collection systems.

- Employer representative organisations will seek to make data collection accessible and appropriate for all parts of the further education sector and support their members to participate.
- Employee representative organisations will use data to inform constructive and authoritative negotiations on behalf of the workforce.
- Further education employers will seek to participate in requests for workforce data.
- Learning practitioners will register with the Institute for Learning (IfL) and respond to data requests on workforce qualifications.

2. Using data to understand the workforce and improve future planning

- Appropriate national partners will produce reports and analytical tools to support sector employers with their workforce planning.
- Employee representative organisations will use comprehensive data on the workforce to enable collective bargaining at regional and national levels.
- Further education employers will use data reports and organisation and training needs analysis tools to identify skills gaps and under-representation and to undertake benchmarking and workforce planning.
- Providers of training for the further education workforce will use data to identify gaps and skill shortage areas developing new/more provision to meet emerging needs.

“Workforce development is important to our members in the further education sector because it enables them to obtain appropriate qualifications through initial training and continuing professional development so that they can continue to deliver the highest quality teaching to their students and learners.”

University and College Union (UCU), Member of the Workforce Strategy National Partner Group

3 Using data to understand workforce diversity and target actions

- Appropriate national partners will collect and analyse data about workforce diversity.
- Employee representative organisations will use data to address issues around workforce diversity and to inform collective bargaining at local and national levels.
- Further education employers will seek to use appropriate data to identify under-representation, benchmark and inform workforce planning.
- Further education employers, supported where necessary by national partners, will establish sector-led interest groups on equality and diversity.

Priority 2 Attracting and recruiting the best people

In order to provide the very highest quality of experience for all learners it is essential that the sector identifies, attracts and recruits outstanding individuals from a diverse talent pool. Further education employers trying to maintain tighter control of training budgets and manage new and existing demands on their employees will give greater importance to recruiting the right people with the right skills. While there is likely to be a reduction in workforce numbers in some parts of the sector, there are a number of current or emerging skills gaps and shortages.

Further education employers will be seeking greater flexibility from their employees in order to respond to

the changing needs of learners, local communities and employers in other sectors. One of the ways that this can be achieved is using recruitment to ensure that the workforce reflects and understands the diversity of its learner base and local community, to create inclusive and responsive approaches that meet needs more effectively.

Priority 2 themes

4 Recruiting the people we need

- Further education employers will seek to use National Occupational Standards to support the creation of effective job descriptions and to inform employee selection.
- Appropriate national partners will provide training and development on recruitment and selection.
- Employer representative organisations will work together on national pay and other agreements.

5 Increasing the diversity of the workforce at all levels

- National partners will work with sector employers to produce research, advice and guidance on reducing barriers to participation and good practice on equality and diversity.
- Employee representative organisations will deliver initiatives to increase the representation of minority groups in leadership and management.
- Further education employers will develop and implement policies on equality and diversity that take their practice beyond compliance and use tools to assess, benchmark and improve their equality and diversity practice.

6 Improving and promoting the workforce image

- National partners will conduct national campaigns to highlight the importance of the sector and promote its image.
- Further education employers and national partners will undertake activity that supports practitioners to gain qualified status and increases the recognition of the profession.
- Further education employers and national partners will support national or local recognition and reward schemes for individuals who make an outstanding contribution to the sector.

Priority 3 Retaining and developing the modern, professionalised workforce

The further education sector is experiencing significant change, together with increasing pressure on organisations and individual workloads to 'provide more for less'. Therefore it is vital that the skills and knowledge of the workforce remain comprehensive, relevant and current. Change brings opportunities for organisations that can adapt and an adaptable workforce can be

cultivated through professional development to build on and extend experience and skills. Due to the likely funding pressures on the sector, further education employers are examining how they can provide an effective professional development system for all levels of the workforce with reduced training budgets.

Priority 3 themes

7 Professionalising the workforce through relevant training and continuing professional development

- National partners will provide information and guidance to practitioners on the range of continuous professional development available, including the application of statutory requirements such as equality and diversity, health and safety, stress management, safeguarding and so on in their professional work.
- Further education employers will seek to use innovative delivery to provide training and development.
- Further education employers will develop and support industry placements for practitioners to update their skills.
- Provider networks will develop on a local/regional basis to provide specific training interventions in response to need.

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

- National partners will survey members to identify the learning needs of practitioners and provide supporting information for those delivering professional development.
- Employer representative organisations will provide programmes of learning, case studies and guidance for individuals and sector employers.
- Employee representative organisations will support in identifying, planning and delivering the required skills needs of members through networks of branch officers and union learning representatives and through appropriate national and local collective bargaining.
- Further education employers will use available tools to support their workforce development planning and processes.

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

- National partners and other appropriate sector stakeholders will offer a range of leadership development programmes to develop capacity at all levels across the sector, including programmes that focus on under-represented groups.
- Employer and employee representative organisations will develop case studies to advise their members of best practice in developing managers in a particular context.

- Further education employers, in consultation with appropriate trade unions, will support individual career progression and produce employee appraisal and development plans that include leadership and management pathways.

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

- Unions, national partners and other sector stakeholders will work to support further education employers to implement model policies, such as those for working hours, pay or bullying and harassment.
- Further education employers will seek to use toolkits produced by national partners, advisory groups and forums to support development of good practice.
- Further education employers will endorse and implement relevant equality and diversity recommendations that have been developed through reputable research and reports.

Moving forward together

Over the past few years national partners, employers and practitioners within the further education sector have shown their support for the Workforce Strategy by developing and implementing plans and undertaking projects that together move everyone towards a shared vision for the workforce.

From 2010, national partners leading on the Workforce Strategy are taking a brand new approach to its implementation, facilitated by Lifelong Learning UK. The Strategy itself has been refreshed with its priorities and themes retained, but this year national partner organisations, working together in their respective further education communities, will produce a supplementary implementation document for that community. There will be four supplements reflecting the four sub-sectors or communities of work based learning, adult and community learning, colleges and specialist colleges. These documents will enable further education employers to interpret and implement the priorities and themes of the Workforce Strategy in a way that is relevant for them and will make the Strategy truly 'sector-owned'.

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Notes

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More information

> For more information about this document please visit

<http://www.lluk.org/england/workforce-strategy-for-the-further-education-sector-in-england/>