# Preparing for work

**A report on the**

*Skills for Work* **pilot programme**

**September 2007**

**HMIe**

improving Scottish education

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# Foreword

Despite the many strengths of Scottish education, too many young people do not develop sufficiently the attitudes, skills and competencies which will enable them to contribute fully to society and the world of work. In *Improving Scottish Education,* I expressed the view that vocational education should be integral to the learning experience of all young learners, not simply a bolt-on or alternative to their other school subjects. I remain of that view and am pleased that the current review of the curriculum 3-18 is encouraging us to think about outcomes for all young people which do not require compartmentalisation into exclusively vocational or academic streams. As part of *Curriculum for Excellence*, a range of *Skills for Work* courses has been developed to enable young learners to gain and receive formal recognition for the acquisition of appropriate, work-related skills.

In 2005, HMIE published *Working Together*, which considered aspects of vocational education for school pupils. While its scope was wider than that of *Skills for Work* courses, its recommendations were highly relevant to their development. It is reassuring that many of these recommendations have been met. However, in a few important areas, further progress is needed.

This evaluation of the pilot phase of *Skills for Work* courses demonstrates many strengths. The report includes many examples of innovative good practice, which HMIE will disseminate and promote through events and a range of media. It is particularly encouraging that almost all learners had a very positive experience and gained increased confidence and maturity. Strategic partnerships between local authorities, schools, colleges and other providers, had been formed or extended with clear rationales designed to

meet the vocational needs of young people. In many of these partnerships there remained scope to improve continuity in the curriculum and learning and teaching, and to develop more concerted approaches to quality assurance and improvement. In these cases, the most problematic practical issues were around transforming timetable arrangements to enable all learners to fully engage in *Skills for Work* courses.

*Skills for Work* courses offer the prospect of real educational gain for young learners and resultant advantages to the economy and society. The findings in this report suggest that Scottish education is well placed to build on the good progress that has been made in this area.

Graham Donaldson
HM Senior Chief Inspector of Education
September 2007

# Part 1:

## Introduction

*Curriculum for Excellence*[1] sets out a clear vision of the purposes to which the education of Scotland's young people should be directed. The four key purposes are to enable young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society and the world of work.

The Ministerial response to *Curriculum for Excellence* made a commitment to deliver a set of new qualifications, called *Skills for Work*. Their design and delivery aimed to help achieve the purposes of the *Curriculum for Excellence*, by ensuring that activities for school-based learners included:

- learning through practical experience;

- learning through reflecting at all stages of the experience; and

- developing employability skills and specific vocational skills.

The courses were intended to provide progression pathways to employment, training or further learning opportunities for all learners. The successful completion of a *Skills for Work (SfW)* course provides formal certification in the same way as for any other Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualification.

*SfW* courses also address part of the Scottish Executive's lifelong learning strategy, *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life.*[2] This strategy aimed to "*encourage locally relevant links between schools, FE colleges and local employers to ease school leavers' transitions into further learning, training or employment.*" Collaboration and partnership between local authorities, schools, colleges and other providers were considered essential for the delivery of *SfW* courses. *Lifelong Partners,*[3] the Scottish Executive strategy for school-college partnerships, provides guidance on partnership working and other features of effective provision.

1 *Curriculum for Excellence,* Scottish Executive, 2004, ISBN 0-7559-4215-9, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/11/20178/45862

2 *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life,* Scottish Executive 2003, ISBN 0-7559-0598-9, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/02/16308/17750

3 *Lifelong Partners,* Scottish Executive, 2005, ISBN 0-7559-46294 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/12141846/18473

In May 2005 SQA devised and developed *SfW* courses which were delivered as a pilot in two phases. In phase one, five individual courses were piloted from 2005/06, with certification for most candidates expected at summer 2007:

■ Construction Crafts – Intermediate 1

■ Sport and Recreation – Intermediate 1

■ Early Education and Childcare – Intermediate 1

■ Early Education and Childcare – Intermediate 2

■ Financial Services – Intermediate 2.

In this phase, 21 local authorities were involved in *SfW* partnerships, with 39 centres delivering the courses to 1466 candidates. These delivery centres consisted of 29 colleges, two private training providers (PTPs), seven schools and one prison.

In phase two, a further five courses were piloted from 2006/07, with certification for most candidates expected at summer 2008:

■ Practical Experiences: Construction and Engineering – Access 3

■ Rural Skills – Intermediate 1

■ Hairdressing – Intermediate 1

■ Construction Crafts – Intermediate 2

■ Sport and Recreation – Intermediate 2.

During this phase, 31 local authorities were involved in partnerships and the numbers enrolling on the courses expanded by approximately 4000.

Almost all of those who took part in the *SfW* pilot were school-based learners and, in most cases, *SfW* courses were delivered through partnership agreements within a further education college. However, a few *SfW* courses were delivered in a range of other learning contexts.

In most cases, schools and authorities selected learners for *SfW* courses. Selection procedures usually involved guidance staff from secondary schools advising learners whom they considered would gain most from the experience. On *SfW* courses 86% of all learners were in S3 and S4, 7% in S5 and S6, and 7% of learners were adults from the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) or other adult learners.

The criteria for selection usually centred on learners' motivation to participate in the course, their attendance and behaviour. However, for Intermediate 2 *SfW* courses, selection criteria also included whether learners were studying Credit or General level Standard Grades.

In 2005, HMIE agreed with the then Scottish Executive Education Department, as part of evaluative support, to visit centres delivering *SfW* courses over the two years of the pilot phase and identify strengths and areas for development. The evaluation visits included:

■ observations of learning and teaching;

■ scrutiny of records and other documents; and

■ discussions with:

    – learners

    – teaching staff

    – managers in schools and colleges

    – headteachers and principals from schools and colleges

    – local authority staff

    – employers, PTPs and the SPS.

They focused on:

■ learning through practical experience;

■ learning through reflecting at all stages of the experience;

■ developing appropriate employability skills;

■ developing specific vocational skills/knowledge; and

■ related guidance and support, communication and quality assurance issues.

Also in 2005, HMIE published *Working Together*,[4] a major report on the provision of vocational education for Scotland's school pupils. Some of the points made in the recommendations in that report were as follows:

■ All education authorities should develop further their strategic leadership of vocational education for school-based learners.

■ Schools, colleges and other providers should communicate effectively with pupils to provide information on vocational course options and the kinds of learning and teaching experiences which pupils will have in college.

■ All partners should communicate effectively with each other to enable well-planned recruitment, delivery, learner support, assessment and quality assurance arrangements.

■ College and school teaching staff should cooperate more closely in identifying and developing opportunities for collaborative delivery of vocational courses.

■ Partners should implement effective models of quality assurance which inform quality improvement and enhancement plans.

These recommendations are all directly relevant to delivery of *SfW* courses. Accordingly, the present report summarises progress on the recommendations above, as applicable to this context.

Included in Appendix A is a list of the delivery centres HMIE visited for this report. HM Inspectors planned sampling to provide appropriate coverage across courses and modes of delivery. Additionally, the ongoing programmes of school inspections and college reviews included evaluation of *SfW* provision where it was offered.

4  *Working Together,* HMIE, 2004, http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/wtcsp.html

# Part 2:

## Outcomes and impact for learners

Most *SfW* learners planned to complete the course over two years. At the time of the HMIE monitoring visits most learners were making good progress in their coursework. They had successfully attained outcomes in units and were on track to attain their qualifications.

At summer 2006, 208 *SfW* certificates were awarded to learners who successfully completed courses scheduled over a single year. However, 45% of learners who were scheduled to do so did not complete their courses. Of these learners, 65 could not complete because of problems related to poor selection procedures or their premature recall by schools for the main exam diet or associated study leave. Forty other learners did not complete their course because the wrong year of completion had been entered in error during enrolment procedures. Other categories for non-completion included learners who did not commence the course and learners who left school during it.

By the summer of 2007, 1571 candidates planned to complete their *SfW* course, some of these over the one year 2006/07, and others over the two years 2005/07. As at 7 August 2007, 78% were recorded by SQA as successful. This figure was set to increase as centres processed final results for learners. The majority of courses had high attainment rates. These courses were:

- Construction Crafts – Intermediate 1

- Sport and Recreation – Intermediate 1

- Early Education and Childcare – Intermediate 1 and 2

- Rural Skills – Intermediate 1

- Construction and Engineering – Access 3

- Hairdressing – Intermediate 1.

Attainment for Construction Crafts Intermediate 2 was low. It was very low for Financial Services Intermediate 2.These low rates of success were ascribed to a combination of factors including learners having their completion dates extended by centres and more than a few learners awaiting their final *SfW* results.

*SfW* learners were making progress in achieving the outcomes of the curriculum as stated in *Curriculum for Excellence*, that is, in developing as successful learners, responsible citizens, confident individuals and effective contributors. They were developing relevant vocational skills, enhancing their core skills and improving their personal and learning skills.

Most learners had made good progress in developing a range of skills associated with the workplace and gained the employability skills and attributes that form a central core in each of the *SfW* courses. These skills included attendance and punctuality, customer-care skills, time management and tidiness, working with others and developing a positive attitude to their learning.

*SfW* courses had a very positive impact on learners engaged in the pilot. Almost all learners stated that one of the main benefits of *SfW* courses was the significant increase in their self-confidence and self-esteem. Learners' attitudes to learning in their other subject areas, and their maturity in general, had improved as a result of undertaking the course. In more than a few cases, schools publicly reaffirmed the achievements of *SfW* learners by celebrating their success at assemblies or award ceremonies.

Most learners who attended *SfW* courses within a college perceived this opportunity as a challenge which would help them with their transition into further education, training or employment.

Most learners were interested in the subject area, enjoyed the practical content of the course, and were enthusiastic about the range of activities in which they took part. This generally involved working as a part of a team and

having an area of responsibility within a task. Almost all stated that their experience of their *SfW* course had met or surpassed their expectations. Many perceived their course as one of their most positive educational experiences.

Most learners had engaged in reflective activities or self-evaluated their performance on the course. These processes helped learners to understand what they had already learned and identify areas for improvement in their learning. However, in a few cases where the course did not promote self-evaluation or reflection, learners' understanding was restricted and their experience diminished.

In general, learners in college were taught alongside apprentices and other adult learners and, as a result, adopted similar learning attitudes and behaviours. The most significant factor for these learners was that they appreciated being treated as adults and responded well to expectations to behave appropriately and fulfil their responsibilities on each task.

Most learners taking part in the *SfW* pilot were in S3 and S4 and, at this stage in their schooling, their career options were fluid and open to change. *SfW* courses helped them to make a judgment on whether or not they would pursue a particular vocational option and offered them an opportunity to consider alternative routes into post-school education, training or employment.

Other benefits gained by participants in the courses included:

■ attaining a National Qualification;

■ gaining an understanding of the world of work and what would be expected from them when they moved into employment; and

■ getting a taste of what it was like doing further education in a college.
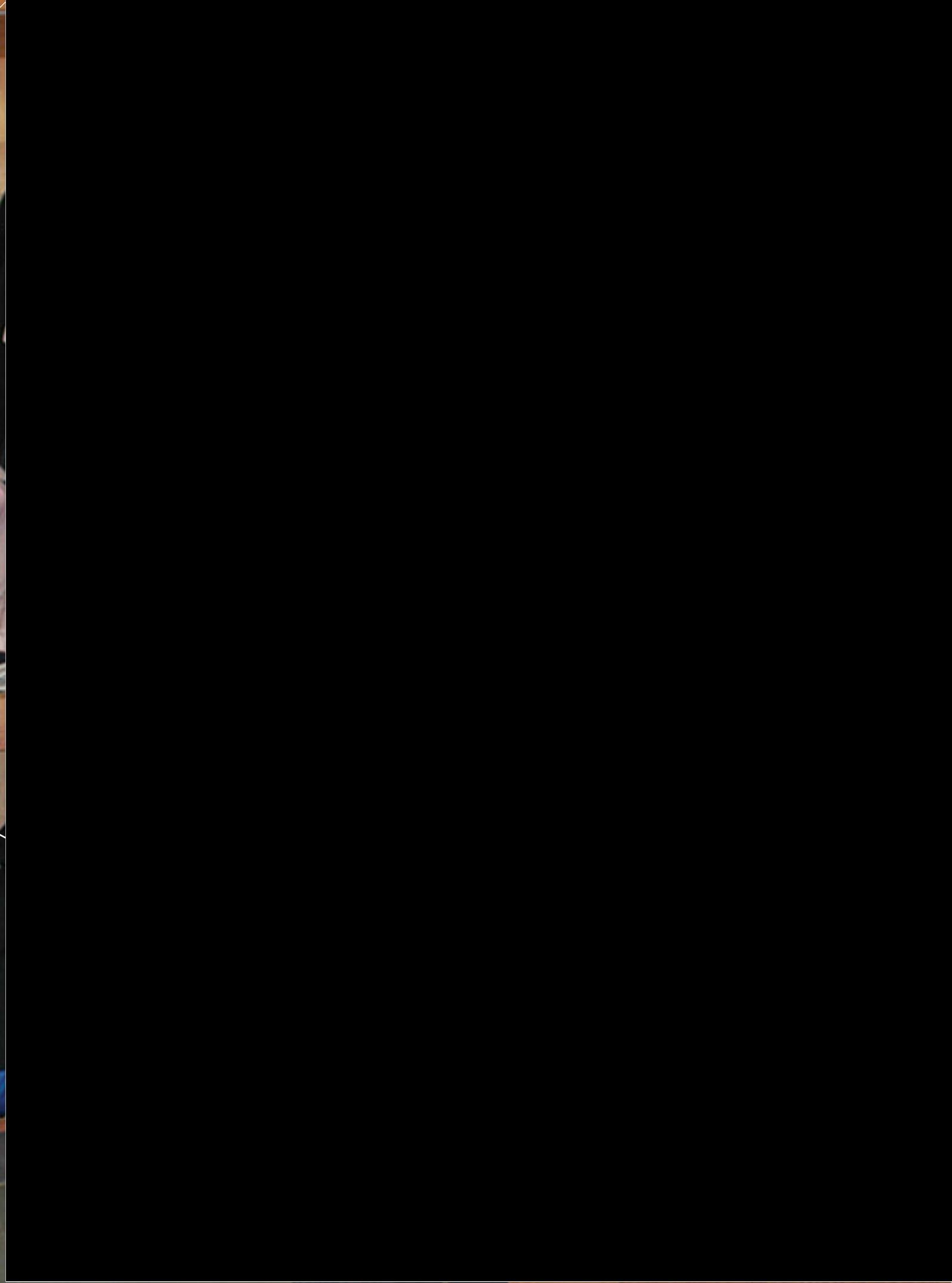
# Part 3:

## Learning and teaching approaches

### Key factors contributing to effective learning and teaching in *Skills for Work* courses

- Almost all learners were well motivated and engaged in their studies.

- In most cases, resources to deliver courses were of a high standard and contributed to a positive learning experience.

- College teaching staff provided almost all learners with helpful and effective support.

- Very positive relationships between teaching staff and learners enhanced the learning experience.

- Learners appreciated being taught by staff with recent experience of working in the relevant vocational area.

- Procedures and arrangements for assessments were effective. Tutors provided helpful and regular feedback which helped learners progress in their learning.

- In general, where schools and authorities deployed staff to assist learners attending college, the support delivered was of a high standard and the learning experience was improved significantly.

### Areas for development

- In a few cases staff did not fully integrate the development of employability skills into their teaching plans and did not relate learning sufficiently to the world of work.

- In most cases, learning from *SfW* courses did not transfer into learners' other subjects in school. In general, teachers of other subjects were unaware of learner progress and the nature of the learning on *SfW* courses.

- In a few cases, courses were not sufficiently practical in nature to provide a distinctive and engaging experience.

- In a few cases, teaching staff did not deploy a sufficiently wide range of teaching approaches and questioning techniques to judge and improve learners' understanding.

### 3.1 Learning approaches

*Taking forward learning to improve,* a report for the Scottish Executive by the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC),[5] states that:

*Learning is not a product created by educators and delivered to learners…It is the learners who create the learning, in their heads or in their hands, and it is the job of the educator to facilitate, guide and support the learner to make this transformation of themselves, their knowledge, attitudes and abilities. Active participation by the learner is required if learning is to take place.*

**Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**

**Learners:**
- experience new ways of learning
- use a range of resources to help them gain in self-confidence and develop their skills

Learners on *SfW* courses displayed high levels of engagement and motivation. On more than a few occasions, staff in schools stated that the high level of motivation had a significant impact on the way learners approached their activities in their other subjects. They gained a range of skills and developed their self-confidence and self-esteem. Learners took part in a range of activities such as delivering presentations to groups of their peers and leading group tasks, and spoke enthusiastically about their experiences. Such activities encouraged learners to take more responsibility for their own learning.

> **The course has given me a good understanding of what it will be like when I start work. I've learned about respect for others. I know I need to have the right attitude – I have to smile, I need to communicate. I've learned I need to be able to start a conversation.**
>
> S4 Care *SfW* learner

**Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**

**Staff:**
- deliver an appropriate range of practical activities

**Learners:**
- understand the importance of working with others to achieve outcomes

In almost all courses, learners were enthusiastic and well behaved, and applied themselves to the tasks in hand. A critical element of *SfW* courses was the high level of practical and hands-on learning. This practical nature of most

5  *Taking forward learning to improve,* Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, page 5, 2006, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/12/0994621/46213

courses appealed to learners and they fully engaged with their activities. Another major element of the courses involved learners working in groups to achieve their learning targets collaboratively. This feature was very important in developing the core skills of *working with others* and *communication*, and the capacity of *effective contributors* from *Curriculum for Excellence*.

> **The course has taught me how to approach people. I know the importance of having a good attitude towards your job – about being on time, being reliable, about being ready, looking smart, wearing your uniform and acting happy – even if you're not really! It's also made me realise I need to be more responsible for my own actions. I can't always just rely on my family. It's made me realise I need to be independent.**
>
> S3 Hairdressing *SfW* learner

*SfW* courses not only broadened the curriculum but helped learners improve their personal and learning skills. Many learners were better prepared to take on independent study tasks, for example in the development of a portfolio. In many cases, learners were involved in a range of investigative tasks, took responsibility for their learning and had made progress in developing their independence in learning. However, in a few cases, the pace of learning did not fully realise the potential in some learners, in particular, by not providing sufficient challenge for higher-attaining learners. In these cases, while they were given opportunities to work collaboratively, learners were not always encouraged to think for themselves or to take responsibility for aspects of their own learning.

Most teaching staff, in both schools and colleges, perceived *SfW* courses as a pathway to further vocational education, training and employment opportunities, and also as a means to help young learners gain self-confidence in their abilities more generally, whether in groups or in developing independent study skills.

**Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**

**Learners:**
- take responsibility for their learning and their progress
- work independently to achieve tasks and gain a deeper understanding of the world of work

*" **SfW courses are very important from my point of view as a science teacher because we see pupils coming into our classroom with more motivation and they see much more relevance in what we try to teach them. They can take it forward into their adult life and the world of work.** "*

Staff delivering courses generally took good account of learners' prior attainment and experience when planning learning activities. This helped learners develop their skills at an appropriate pace and maintain their interest levels.

### Increased confidence and self-esteem

During a lesson in a Sport and Recreation Intermediate 1 course, the teacher explained to a group of learners that each learner would lead an activity in the swimming pool. They had to plan the activity, state its aims and objectives, and explain and instruct the group on how the activity was to be carried out. Peer assessment of each leader's performance at the end of the lesson provided effective feedback. This proved to be a very useful method of allowing learners to take responsibility for their learning and use feedback from peers to plan for improvements in their future activities.

**Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**

**Learners:**
- develop the ability to make reasoned evaluations of their progress

In most cases, learners made good use of reflective and self-evaluative logs that were included in their teaching packs. These packs, prepared by SQA and the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU), helped learners to establish learning targets. Learners regularly used these resources to assess their progress in the development of their skills and consider how they might improve in future learning activities.

## 3.2 Teaching approaches

In most cases, *SfW* courses were delivered by college staff in a college setting, but they were also delivered effectively across a range of other settings which met the needs of learners well. These settings included:

- college staff delivering courses in school;
- school staff delivering courses in school;
- SPS staff within SPS establishments; and
- PTPs delivering courses in or out of school premises.

Almost all staff planned their teaching activities effectively. This was important since for many of the learners this was their first experience of vocational education. A particularly effective example was evident in one Scottish prison location where adult learners completed a fast-track course within six weeks. Prison officer instructors delivering sport and recreation courses prepared very well-organised teaching plans and materials which ensured that all learners had a balance of activities that maintained their levels of interest.

Most teaching staff used a range of appropriate and well-conceived teaching activities in the *SfW* courses. These activities included:

- presentations to groups of learners;
- demonstrations of activities for groups of learners and individuals;
- use of effective questioning techniques to judge and improve learner understanding;
- use of worksheets with clear instructions on activities and prepared to a high standard;
- provision of effective feedback to individuals and groups; and
- use of praise to reinforce self-confidence and further encourage learners to develop their skills.

In most cases, teaching was delivered by staff with recent relevant work-related experience who provided helpful and effective support to

> **Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**
>
> **Staff:**
> - foster a positive attitude to learning and a motivation to learn further

learners and treated them with respect. Timely feedback from tutors helped learners gain a better understanding of their work on the course and supported them to improve and develop their skills.

Staff ensured that learners followed instructions and engaged effectively in their activities by offering individual assistance at appropriate points to confirm their understanding. Almost all staff planned assessments effectively and briefed learners in advance about the nature of assessment arrangements.

> **" It's great to come to college. You get to do more practical stuff than you would at school. It has made me more confident because I am able to see what things I'm good at. It has made me think about what I would like to do for a career. "**
>
> S3 Construction *SfW* learner

In most cases, teaching was delivered by staff who related activities to their own experiences of the workplace and introduced industry-related examples in their teaching. This approach helped learners gain a better understanding of how their learning related to the world of work. An example where this worked well occurred in a school where the owner of a local hairdressing salon delivered the *SfW* hairdressing course. She engaged learners effectively by referring to interesting and realistic examples from her salon experience and contextualised the learning experience well.

In a few cases, staff did not use a sufficient range of real-life examples during practical tasks to anchor learning in an appropriate vocational context. This was particularly the case with school staff delivering courses within a school setting. Their lack of direct vocational experience restricted their ability to use a sufficient range of examples in their teaching to make the learning relevant to employment. Commendably, in several schools, teaching staff delivering *SfW* courses had, as part of continuing professional development, enrolled on college courses to upgrade their technical qualifications and background for delivering the courses.

**Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**

**Staff:**

■ encourage learners to take responsibility for, and develop independence in, learning

**Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**

**Staff:**

■ contextualise learning to provide an understanding of the workplace

Teaching staff confidently explored the levels of understanding within groups and also at individual level. In most cases, they used a good range of effective questioning techniques to judge learner understanding. This approach encouraged learners to participate in class and contribute to task discussions. Staff checked learner understanding by engaging with them as they took part in tasks and, where appropriate, demonstrated practical techniques to ensure that learners appreciated the nature of the tasks and to ensure the development of their skills. Learners were able to demonstrate improved understanding as a result.

However, in a few cases where college staff did not use an appropriate range of questioning approaches, learners were unable to engage fully in the learning process and extend their understanding of the subject area sufficiently. The insufficient range and poor targeting of questioning did not sufficiently promote knowledge and understanding. This generally resulted in learners becoming bored, unable to participate effectively and, in a few cases, becoming disengaged from the learning activities.

There were very good relationships and rapport between learners and teaching staff. The friendly and positive approach from most staff helped to put learners at their ease. These constructive relationships helped to encourage learners to improve their skills, develop a sense of pride in their work and be more responsible for their learning activities.

> **" I like the way the lecturer speaks to me. She speaks to me with respect all the time and in a civil manner – not as if I'm just a wee lassie. "**
>
> S4 Care *SfW* learner

**Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**

**Staff:**
- use an appropriate range of questioning techniques to gauge learners' understanding

Most staff explained the aims and objectives of lessons clearly and discussed the purpose of activities effectively with learners. They provided good explanations, instructions and directions to learners and ensured activities were set at an appropriate level of challenge. For example, in one school where a course was delivered by a PTP, a particularly effective approach included asking learners at the beginning of the class what they expected to gain from the lesson.

There were several examples of local authorities, colleges and other providers funding auxiliary support workers to accompany learners to *SfW* courses in colleges. In almost all of these cases, the support workers helped with administration duties such as registration and travel arrangements. In a few cases, they provided valuable additional support to tutors during classes, as well as providing pastoral support to learners outside of class time.

A recommendation from *Working Together* was that centres should:

> *have regard to achieving an appropriate balance between theory and practical work, and consider carefully the attention span of pupils when planning classroom and workshop activities.*

In most cases, centres had met this recommendation and delivered a sufficient level of practical activities for learners.

However, in the sport and recreation, financial services and early education and childcare courses, feedback in the first pilot year from learners and staff indicated that the practical component was a smaller proportion of the course than in other cases. This had a particular impact on learners who had anticipated a more practical, hands-on element to their course. Some learners in these subjects were demotivated and restless because of this mismatch with their expectations.

SQA and SFEU addressed this issue for the second year of the pilot by modifying assessment arrangements and teaching materials to deliver an increased practical component.

In the majority of cases, staff capitalised on practical classwork to develop effectively with learners the links between practical classes and the development of relevant employability skills. They encouraged learners to gain an understanding of how their attitudes and behaviour at work were as important as the development of their other skills. They enabled learners to develop in:

- taking advice and feedback from others;

- customer care and dealing with clients;

- having a positive and flexible attitude to work;

- awareness of health and safety procedures;

- ability to carry out several tasks simultaneously; and

- review and self-evaluation skills.

However, in several cases, staff did not sufficiently integrate and exemplify employability skills within the delivery of the course to enable learners to appreciate their importance or judge their own progress in developing them.

### 3.3  Joint working in learning and teaching

In most cases, college staff used an effective range of learning and teaching approaches for learners. However, schools and authorities provided too little advice on the most suitable type of learning and teaching styles to meet the needs of the full range of learners. Partnerships did not have well-developed plans for joint working on learning and teaching approaches. Although centres recognised in principle that joint working could improve the quality of the learning experience, this happened in only a few cases. Decisions on how courses were delivered, including teaching styles, were made by the delivery centre.

*Working Together* recommended that:

*college and school teaching staff should cooperate more closely in identifying and developing opportunities for collaborative delivery of vocational courses.*

However, *SfW* partners did not yet collaborate effectively enough with each other to share good practice in learning and teaching. In a few cases staff from schools and colleges had engaged in joint staff development sessions, but these sessions were mainly limited to discussions on behaviour and behaviour management rather than on approaches to learning and teaching.

**Signpost to improvement in learning and teaching:**

**Staff:**

- plan effectively to develop an interdisciplinary approach to ensure that learning from *SfW* courses is integrated in other subject areas
- develop a culture of joint working
- facilitate collaborative activities to develop core, personal and employability skills

In most cases, school staff had not yet made significant connections between learning in *SfW* courses and other subject areas of the curriculum. There were examples where learners made connections between craft subjects and mathematics and *SfW* construction courses, and between science subjects and care courses. However, these connections relied upon learners identifying them as they progressed. The connections, even when identified by learners, were not made explicit by teaching staff or used by them to help learners deepen their understanding of other subjects.

In general, school teaching staff were unaware of their learners' progress on *SfW* courses delivered in colleges or elsewhere. This was particularly the case for the development of core, personal and employability skills. They were also not familiar with the nature of the learning activities on these courses. It was rare for staff from school to accompany learners to their college or elsewhere.

# Part 4:

## Partnership and management arrangements

### Key factors contributing to effective partnership and management arrangements in *Skills for Work* courses

- Local authorities, in conjunction with their partners, had organised strategic groups to plan and manage *SfW* courses.

- Most partnership documentation set out well-defined roles and responsibilities.

- Partnerships had adopted a strong rationale for the *SfW* courses.

- Staff in delivery centres were committed to the courses and had built good relationships with colleagues across the partnerships.

- In most cases, resources were sufficient and appropriate, and supported the learning experience well.

### Areas for development

- In general, college staff were not involved in the selection of learners for courses. Consequently, some learners were placed on courses at an inappropriate level.

- Many schools did not include *SfW* courses as an integral part of the option choices at course selection time.

- For some learners, induction arrangements and pre-course information did not make the nature and demands of courses explicit and did not focus sufficiently on progression opportunities.

- Formal communication between partners was often ineffective, with inadequate progress reporting in terms of quality and detail of reports. In several cases, schools had not shared information on learners' additional support needs and behavioural issues with the delivery centre.

- Most partnerships had not put in place fully effective timetabling arrangements to minimise time lost to other subjects and time lost due to travelling. The majority of learners needed to engage in additional coursework from their other subjects in order to participate fully in *SfW* courses.

> **Signpost to improvement in strategic partnerships:**
>
> **Partnerships:**
> - offer a clear sense of direction for planning *SfW* courses

## 4.1 Strategic partnerships

In almost all cases, partners at a senior level had agreed strategies for the management of *SfW* courses. Local authorities had created strategic partnerships to consider how best to implement them. The partnerships had developed strategic plans and partners had made strenuous efforts to create and sustain relationships with other partners. In most cases, these partnerships had built upon established school-college partnership relationships, which proved helpful in developing the new courses.

> **The partnership began as the council implemented the Scottish Executive's response to recommendation 2 of the *Determined to Succeed*[6] (DtS) report and the college responded by forming a "Schools Team" both to coordinate strategic development and execute operational matters. The "Schools Team" attends the Council Vocational Steering Group, advises on the suitability of courses and contributes good advice on the interviewing of learners, selection, and ongoing matters of course adjustment on a yearly basis. The council employs a vocational coordinator and a number of support assistants who work with the college on operational matters to do with discipline, learner support, transport, provision of protective clothing and school liaison. This works very well. A number of the courses, particularly in the construction crafts, are run jointly with the college and the Council Training Service.**

**Senior local authority officer**

6 "Determined to Succeed Enterprise in Education – Scottish Executive response." March 2003, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/resource/doc/47034/0023917.pdf

There were very strong links within many partnerships. These links had developed into formal strategic management groups which involved regular meetings between managers of authorities, colleges, schools and other organisations. In most cases, these arrangements were effective in:

■ planning the delivery of courses, providing opportunities to discuss relevant issues and inform strategic and operational plans;

■ taking account of Scottish Executive and authority strategic priorities and allocating resources to ensure effective implementation; and

■ ensuring the aims of the *SfW* courses met the needs of all learners.

**Example of local authority planning**

In one authority a clear strategic vision was shared by all partners through the establishment of a multi-agency steering group which considered all aspects of vocational provision. The education authority played a lead role in coordinating provision across the authority and had produced a memorandum of agreement in which roles and responsibilities of all partners were clarified. The steering group comprised senior representatives from each secondary school, the authority's Extended Curriculum Officer and senior representatives from the local college, universities and Careers Scotland. At an operational level a timetabling and planning group planned for the provision of the *SfW* courses agreed by the steering group.

Almost all colleges aimed to respond to requests from authorities and schools for specific *SfW* courses. Many school staff were positive about the flexible arrangements their college partners were able to put in place to accommodate their specific requests. However, not all colleges had specialist facilities and staff to offer all *SfW* courses. In making decisions about the number of places they would offer on particular *SfW* courses, colleges took account of competing priorities for other groups of learners and levels of provision. In most cases, college managers confirmed the range of provision to be offered with managers from the local authority who then arranged to distribute places on courses. In a few cases, this resulted in places being limited for learners from individual schools.

There were many good examples of partnerships working effectively to ensure *SfW* courses provided a high quality learning experience. In most authorities, partnerships had made good progress on the recommendation in the HMIE *Working Together* report that:

*All education authorities should develop further their strategic leadership of vocational education for school pupils, including authority-wide planning and collaboration with partners, based on a sound rationale of educational gain for all pupils.*

### Partnership between an island school and the Crofters Commission

The school managed a highly effective partnership with the local authority and the Crofters Commission to offer the Rural Skills Intermediate 1 programme. The Commission paid for a local crofter to deliver the practical elements of the programme, at her croft, for one day per fortnight. The Commission also provided funds towards learner travel costs to events on the Scottish mainland. Communication between the local officer from the Commission and the school included regular meetings between all partners. The Local Authority provided funding for the two-year pilot. These funds were used to purchase equipment, storage facilities, seeds, protective clothing, a polytunnel and teaching materials, and to cover residential costs for one trip to the mainland. In addition, the economic development department of the local authority provided funds for the construction of toilet facilities for learners at the croft. The Commission helped the teacher delivering the programme in the school to find places through the Excellence in Education through Business Links (EEBL) programme with a local dairy and a local potato grower. The Commission also helped find a dry-stane dyker to teach pupils how to build enclosures in which to grow produce on the croft.

**Signpost to improvement in strategic partnerships**

**Partnerships:**
- adopt strong rationales for offering *SfW* programmes

Partnerships had clear rationales for *SfW* courses. In almost all cases, the national priorities expressed by the Scottish Executive had played an important role in defining the objectives for the courses.

" **The benefit for any school offering *SfW* courses is that it will be in a better position to meet the needs of all young people in its community. I am confident we are offering our young people a range of options that meet their learning needs, meet their learning styles, and prepare them for the world of work beyond school, whether in work, college or university and that is a welcome addition to the curriculum.** "

Headteacher, secondary school.

" ***SfW* is bigger than itself – because it makes us see that schools are actually part of the world. *SfW* courses encourage the idea that education is not just a matter for schools, it is a matter for us all, because of the partnership model that *SfW* encourages. So by being partnered with an organisation in the real world, a business or an FE college, learners can enter into the workplace and the skills they learn are the kind of skills they will be able to use in the world of work.** "

Headteacher, independent secondary school.

## 4.2 Communication

By the stage of almost all HMI visits to delivery centres, formal partnership arrangements were in place and the Scottish Executive partnership agreement document had been signed, or was about to be signed, by all parties. Partnership arrangements, agreed between schools, colleges, other providers and authorities, set out the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the delivery of the courses and in supporting learners.

Staff in almost all partnerships worked well together and were committed to providing effective courses which met the needs of learners. They planned arrangements in a professional manner and generally communicated effectively on a personal level with colleagues in partner establishments. Strong personal relationships, built over a number of years, helped establish a degree of trust between partners. This factor was important for the development of *SfW* courses.

The informal channels of communication, generally based upon existing relationships, worked very well and often problems were resolved quickly through informal discussions. However, in most partnerships, there was insufficient formal communication of information between centres on learners' prior learning and achievement or their additional support needs. This was a matter of concern. It restricted the ability of staff delivering courses to plan effectively to meet the needs of all learners.

While most partnerships had agreements which detailed roles and responsibilities, the agreements did not articulate the types of information which should be shared systematically between centres and how its effectiveness would be monitored. This deficiency in formal communication procedures represented limited progress from the findings from the *Working Together* report, which recommended that all partners should:

*communicate effectively with each other to enable well-planned recruitment, delivery, pupil support, assessment and quality assurance arrangements for these courses.*

In a few cases, reporting on learner achievement between centres was highly effective and formed part of the formal reporting of learner progress within the school. However, in general, progress reporting was not sufficiently regular, detailed or systematic and did not offer a meaningful evaluation of the progress learners had made while participating in their *SfW* course. Most reports to schools from college were not sufficiently comprehensive and did not comment on learner progress in relation to core, employability and citizenship skills. Most schools did not request formal reports from centres delivering the courses and most colleges did not offer formal reports to schools.

In most partnerships, centres had agreements for the return of learner attendance data to schools. This type of data was very important given that, in many cases, learners left school premises to attend a college or a PTP. However, in many cases data were not returned until some time after the *SfW* class had concluded.

## 4.3 Selection and induction procedures

In most cases, college staff had very little involvement in the selection of learners for *SfW* courses. Their involvement was mainly restricted to preparing written materials for parents' evenings and learner course choice events. The lack of involvement by college staff in the selection of learners resulted, in more than a few cases, in learners being placed on courses at an inappropriate level.

In a few partnerships, there were no selection procedures. For example, in one partnership school learners were asked to self-select or volunteer for a *SfW* course and were simply allocated a place on the course. In others, induction arrangements and pre-course information for more than a few learners did not make explicit the nature and demands of courses or progression opportunities. These learners arrived at college on the day of enrolment with little awareness of what the course involved, a poor understanding of its demands and insufficient information about potential progression opportunities. Some subsequently felt disappointed that the experience of the *SfW* course did not match their expectations. A particular issue was when learners had expected less theory and classroom-based activity than was actually involved.

In most colleges, general induction arrangements worked well and provided learners with an appropriate level of knowledge on a range of issues including health and safety, learner welfare and guidance and codes of conduct. These arrangements met the recommendations from the *Working Together* report which stated that centres should:

> *make sure that pupils benefit from an appropriate induction to their vocational course.*

**Signpost to improvement in strategic partnerships**

**Partnerships:**
- implement selection procedures to involve fully informed staff

**Signpost to improvement in management**

**Partnerships:**
- enable learners to understand the demands of *SfW* courses and have realistic expectations of what they can achieve
- plan ongoing induction arrangements well to ensure learners are aware of realistic progression opportunities

Where college staff attended parents' evenings or course choice events they were able to explain the courses fully to learners and their parents and carers. In a few particularly effective examples, college staff teaching *SfW* courses were involved in selection activities. This arrangement offered a range of benefits such as:

■ learners being able to clarify their expectations, ask detailed questions about the nature of the course, receive knowledgeable replies and make informed decisions about their participation;

■ staff gauging whether the young person had appropriate levels of motivation and maturity for entry to the course, and whether they were likely to be successful;

■ staff outlining potential progression opportunities and the range of careers options available; and

■ learners having interviews with staff to discuss any additional support needs.

Generally, learners indicated that they had felt sufficiently well-informed about their options to make an effective choice of a *SfW* course. Most indicated they were happy with the choices they had made, and this was confirmed by the high retention rates on most courses.

## Induction arrangements

One local authority offered an induction programme that helped learners make informed choices about *SfW* courses. After discussions with guidance staff and parents, learners completed a letter of interest and underwent a group interview to ensure they met the criteria for acceptance onto the programmes. If they were successful at this stage, candidates then completed an application form and a training agreement. A summer induction programme over two or three days gave learners the opportunity to meet other learners, visit the college, receive health and safety talks and take delivery of any personal protection equipment. Once the course commenced, a support worker accompanied the learners to provide pastoral support. Learners completed a training agreement before commencing the course. The agreement detailed the roles and responsibilities for learners, colleges and schools and included a code of conduct that learners signed. Learners also received an extensive individual training plan which set out the expectations for the course and each had a tutor for a continuing process of progress review.

### 4.4  Timetabling arrangements

Timetabling was one of the main barriers to effective delivery of *SfW* courses. Learners were almost all school based, and mainly from S3 and S4. Most secondary schools required S3 and S4 pupils to study eight subjects. *SfW* courses were generally delivered in a college on one morning or afternoon each week.

> **There are, however, one or two issues which need to be addressed in an innovative way. A number of schools insist, mostly because of timetabling difficulties, that pupils undertake a *SfW* option in addition to their eight Standard Grades. This often results in pupils dropping the *SfW* option when their other studies become challenging. A number of schools also view the programmes as more suitable for the less able pupil cohort. This will be addressed as the scope and number of level options are increased and colleges become fully involved in pre-course guidance and pupil selection.**
>
> College coordinator for SfW courses

As noted previously, partnerships had developed strong rationales for the provision of *SfW* courses as part of the curriculum. However, although most schools offered the *SfW* course in place of a Standard Grade, more than a few schools did not include *SfW* courses as an integral part of the option choices at course selection time. This resulted in more than a few S3 and S4 learners arranging subsequently to take a *SfW* course in addition to eight Standard Grade subjects. Learners in S5 and S6 had more flexibility in their timetables to fit in *SfW* courses.

*Working Together* recommended that:

> *"school managers should ensure that the inclusion of vocational courses within the school curriculum has a rationale which is based on the potential for educational gain for all pupils through their study of vocational courses. This rationale should influence such aspects as option column placements and timetabling, and ensure a broadly balanced curriculum for all pupils".*

There had been limited progress in this area since 2005. For the majority of learners, the main timetabling issue was that they had to undertake additional coursework from the school subject time that they missed in order to participate fully in the *SfW* course. In most cases, learners on *SfW* courses attended additional classes or undertook homework exercises to compensate for the time lost to other subjects or in travelling to and from centres. Most learners accepted this arrangement as they appreciated the importance of keeping up with their other subjects.

**Delivering the programme as part of the school timetable**

A secondary school offered the construction crafts course on its own premises as a part of the normal curriculum for S3 and S4 pupils. Learners found they had little time in each of the three timetabled 50-minute periods to engage in activities before they had to clear up and go to their next class. This was particularly an issue for wet trades. The headteacher and senior staff reshaped the timetable in the school to provide one single and one double period per week for *SfW* course. There were still difficulties in making full use of the single period but overall, the changes to the timetable benefited the learners.

Many school staff attempted to reduce the impact of learner absence from other subjects by placing non-certificated subjects such as physical education, personal and social education and religious education at times when *SfW* courses were taking place and constituting special *SfW* learner groups for these subjects at other times. In other examples, learners missed maths, English and other subjects, but their school arranged additional classes during library time, lunchtime or as a twilight class to enable learners to keep up with the work of their other subjects.

Timetabling arrangements for *SfW* courses in colleges had to take account of a number of learners from different schools attending the same *SfW* course. In many cases, schools had different start times and lengths of subject periods, which created additional complications for learners and for centres delivering the courses.

### Effective timetabling arrangements

In one school offering an early education and childcare course, S3 learners selected the *SfW* Intermediate 1 course from two columns at course selection time. This allowed learners sufficient time to engage outwith school time with a PTP and complete the programme within one year. The PTP arranged a nursery visit for learners on Wednesday afternoons and a trainer delivered the theoretical part of the course on Friday mornings in the school. On Fridays, the class teacher taught collaboratively with the trainer by taking the pupils through the work set by the trainer after the direct teaching had been completed. In S4, learners progressed to Intermediate 2.

In another partnership between a college and a local authority, a timetabling and planning group, with representative depute headteachers, made arrangements for delivery of the *SfW* provision during a non-timetabled Friday afternoon. In addition, an Enterprise Officer attended the college every Friday, completed reports on learner behaviour, attendance and attainment and organised mini-assemblies at college to discuss issues with pupils.

## 4.5  Resources and funding

*Working Together* recommended that:

*learning experiences (should be) supported effectively by provision of appropriate accommodation, equipment and resources.*

This was met in *SfW* courses. In most cases, partnerships were adequately resourced and used accommodation effectively to deliver *SfW* courses. There were different models of delivery throughout Scotland, but it was most often within a college setting, using professional or industry-standard accommodation and resources. However, in an increasing number of cases, college teaching staff delivered the courses in a school setting. In these cases, schools and authorities had invested in good facilities and resources for effective delivery.

**Delivery by college staff in a school setting**

In one local authority, the partnership agreement with a local college provided for delivery of *SfW* courses in the authority's schools. College teaching staff travelled to the schools and delivered the courses at set times in hairdressing and construction workshops and teaching rooms which had been funded by the authority. This approach helped to place the courses firmly within the mainstream curriculum and reduced the impact on timetables of pupils having to travel to college to engage in the courses.

In almost all cases, the size of classrooms was suitable for engaging in practical activities. Centres had agreed the maximum number of places available for each course with authorities and schools. However, in a few cases, accommodation was cramped or insufficiently ventilated. Such an environment had a detrimental impact on the learning experience. Most often, this was old accommodation.

Almost all learners had appropriate personal protective equipment and made good use of this as part of the health and safety preparations and the development of their employability skills. In all cases, the equipment was provided by the college, PTP, education authority or school. Learners were

responsible for looking after their equipment and ensuring it was clean and well maintained.

Many centres welcomed the high quality materials prepared by SQA and SFEU. The resources had clear instructions and were very helpful for staff in planning lessons and ensuring learners were gaining the appropriate skills. Learners were able to document their progress through the use of personal logs designed to create a record of achievement. However, as noted previously, in the first year of the pilot, teaching resources for the early education and childcare courses were not available to centres until after the courses had commenced.

Almost all courses were delivered by college staff within a college or school setting. All colleges received funding allocations from the SFC for school-college partnership provision, and *SfW* courses were incorporated into their mainstream operational planning and budgeting procedures. However, in many cases, demand for college places outstripped supply.

More than a few schools delivered *SfW* courses by deploying their own staff or making use of PTPs. In one particularly effective example from an independent school offering an early education and childcare course, on-site nursery nurses acted as mentors to learners.

For schools and authorities, funding these activities was a challenge. In most cases, authorities drew upon *DtS* funding to ensure the delivery of courses. In other cases, authorities capitalised on additional European Union resources to fund activities. For example, in the West of Scotland, local authorities used the *City Vision* funding initiative to help schools employ vocational coordinators for *SfW* courses.

In all of these cases, funding arrangements were under review. Funds were for a fixed term and there was no guarantee that provision could be sustained in future years. This short-term provision did not meet the needs of schools or authorities for a stable and reliably-available portfolio of courses to offer to learners.

### 4.6 Child protection and welfare

The wide range of *SfW* contexts meant that learners' welfare and health and safety had to be paramount. In all cases, learners knew which members of staff to approach if they had a problem and almost all were satisfied with the support they received. All college staff teaching the programmes had undergone Disclosure Scotland procedures and more than a few had undertaken child protection training. Colleges had implemented risk assessments to ensure learners' safety.

**Signpost to improvement in strategic partnerships**

**Partnerships:**

■ ensure effective child protection arrangements are in place

In the few cases where child protection and health and safety arrangements were found to be inadequate, evaluative feedback from visiting inspectors resulted in immediate changes to procedures. For example, during one evaluation visit to an early education and childcare course the school responded immediately to concerns expressed by inspectors around levels of supervision and the situation was quickly resolved.

Where learners attended a PTP as a delivery centre, staff supervising the visit had undergone Disclosure Scotland procedures or learners were accompanied by a member of school staff. In a school where this was particularly well organised, learners on the rural skills course attended the local golf course, garden centre and small animal park. Staff from the PTP were fully disclosed, but in the early stages of the course, when they awaited their Disclosure Scotland clearance, a support auxiliary accompanied the learners.
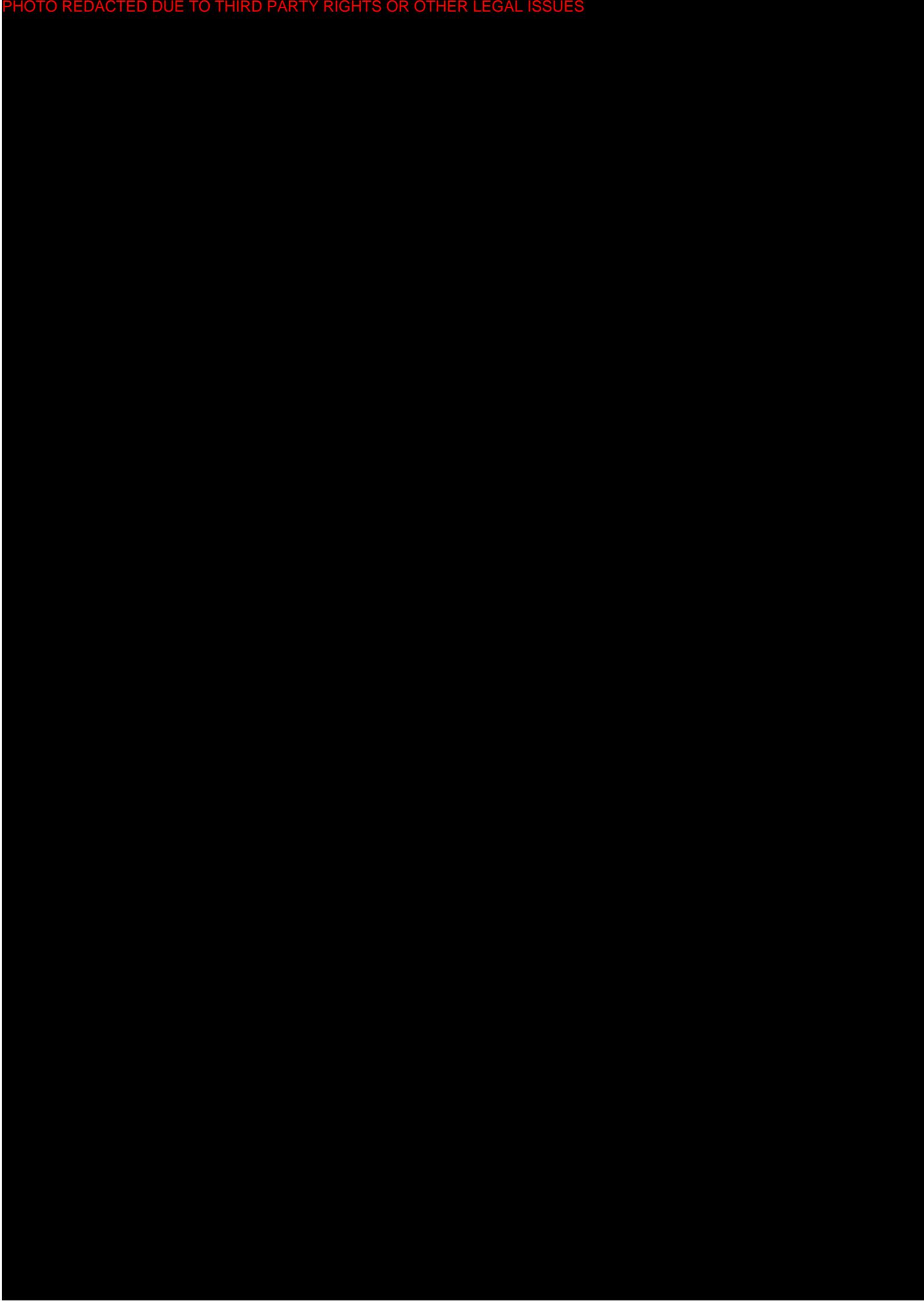
# Part 5:

## Quality assurance and improvement

### Key factors contributing to effective quality assurance and improvement in *Skills for Work* courses

- Within centres, in-house evaluation systems and reporting procedures identified issues and supported plans for improvement.

- Most centres were collecting the views of learners and partners through the use of questionnaires and guidance interviews in schools and colleges.

### Areas for development

- In general, the self-evaluation of provision was not systematic or coordinated. Joint working between partners on quality assurance and improvement had not been sufficiently developed.

- Centrally-produced resources were very rarely used to underpin self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

## Quality assurance and improvement

In most partnerships there was insufficient joint working on quality assurance and improvement. The self-evaluation procedures deployed in the quality assurance of *SfW* courses did not involve a sufficiently systematic partnership approach to allow sound judgements to be made on the quality of provision.

Most centres delivering *SfW* courses had existing methodologies for collecting learners' views on the quality of provision. Many used questionnaires to gauge learner satisfaction with *SfW* courses. For example, in one college with a large cohort of *SfW* learners, a particularly effective approach used questionnaires to ask learners:

- what new things they had learned;
- if they had changed as a result of their participation on the programme; and
- what the best parts of the programme were.

Most schools used interviews with learners to assess whether learners were enjoying their courses and making progress in appropriate vocational, personal and employability skills and attitudes.

In more than a few cases, centres used interview information to inform improvement planning for their courses. However, in general, much of it was anecdotal and not sufficiently systematic. It did not provide a suitably evaluative foundation to generate improvement action plans.

A few colleges had considered inviting school learners on to programme review teams to improve learning and teaching approaches, and had firm plans to do so. For example, in one partnership between a school and a PTP, the monthly meetings between the principal teacher and the trainer were formally recorded with an agenda item for quality improvement. There were firm plans for learner representatives to be invited to these meetings. However, overall at this stage there was little input to quality improvement planning by learners.

In a few cases, partners jointly evaluated the quality of courses and communicated and planned for improvements at regular partnership forums. This approach helped to deliver a systematic approach to *SfW* quality improvement and resulted in the production of formal reports which assigned responsibility for actions to specific partners. They implemented changes which enhanced the quality of the learning experience.

### Joint self-evaluation procedures

In one partnership, self-evaluation of the college's collaboration with local schools was undertaken against two frameworks: the delivery was evaluated by programme teams against the SFC/HMIE quality framework and the college's schools team used "*How good is our community learning and development?*" The teams considered:

– partnership working;

– the curriculum;

– support for learner development;

– ethos and values;

– resources; and

– management, planning and quality assurance.

Evaluations from learners, school and authority staff, and college teaching staff were part of the process. The team reported its evaluations to the college's community relations manager and depute principal, who shared results with all partners. This approach ensured that the provision was given the highest possible profile and scrutinised at a senior level.

In most cases, colleges used their in-house programme review procedures, based upon the SFC/HMIE subject review framework,[8] or internal verification procedures, to evaluate the effectiveness of *SfW* courses. However, these procedures rarely involved staff from schools and authorities and, in general, evaluations were rarely shared with partners or with learners.

In a few centres, there was no evaluation of the effectiveness of provision. Informal discussions between staff were not recorded and did not contribute to, or result in, quality improvement plans. In one partnership between a school and a college, there were no discussions at all between staff on the effectiveness of the course.

*Working Together* recommended that:

*partners in the provision of vocational courses should implement effective models of quality assurance which inform the quality improvement and enhancement plans for these courses. Such models should ensure appropriate contributions to monitoring, review, action planning and implementation by all partners and have particular regard to the evaluation of learning and teaching.*

While centres were gathering information from a range of sources there was still insufficient coordination of activities and little joint evaluation to inform quality improvement. The HMIE self-evaluation guide on school-college partnerships had been prepared to assist schools and colleges to work jointly to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes. Most centres were generally aware of the publication but only one of those visited used it effectively to assist evaluation and inform improvement.

8   *SFC/HMIE Quality Framework* 2004
    http://www.hmie.gov.uk/about_us/inspections/documents/sfefc_framework.doc

**Use of HGIOS school-college partnership self-evaluation guide**

One college had identified effective engagement and collaboration with school colleagues as a strategic priority. In seeking to establish a sound foundation of reflection and evaluation, the college recognised it was essential to establish strong communication links.

Using the HMIE *How good is our school? school-college partnership self-evaluation guide,* all partner schools evaluated the provision delivered by the college, and the effectiveness of the partnership with the college. The use of a common evaluation framework, focused on the needs of learners, allowed all of the partners to identify what should be done to support and develop the learner experience. These evaluations were drawn together in producing a quality improvement plan.

Appendix B highlights the key indicators from the new *How good is our school?*, published in March 2007, that are the most appropriate points of reference for planning quality improvement in *SfW* courses.

# Part 6:

## Appendix A: Centres visited

The centres visited by HM Inspectors as part of the *SfW* evaluation task can be found below. The centres were selected by HMIE for monitoring outwith school inspection and college review activity. However, evaluations of *SfW* courses from school inspections and college reviews have been included as part of the overall evaluation of the pilot.

### Colleges as delivery centres

The Adam Smith College

Angus College

Anniesland College

Ayr College

Banff & Buchan College

Cardonald College

Central College of Commerce

Clydebank College

Cumbernauld College

Dumfries and Galloway College

Forth Valley College

Inverness College

James Watt College

Jewel & Esk Valley College

Langside College

Lauder College

Motherwell College

North Glasgow College

The North Highland College

Oatridge College

Perth College

Reid Kerr College

South Lanarkshire College

Stevenson College Edinburgh

Edinburgh's Telford College

West Lothian College

## Other delivery centres

Bell Innovations

Queenslie Training Centre

## Schools as delivery centres

Peebles High School

Mid Yell Junior School

Anderson High School

Cults Academy

St George's School for Girls[9]

Glasgow Academy

## Schools delivering the programme with a private training provider or other enterprise

Nairn Academy and Nairn Dunbar Golf Club, Green's Nurseries, Skenepark Small Pets and the Windsor Hotel

Whalsay Junior School and Crofters Commission

Hazlehead High School and Aberdeen Childcare Partnership

Wester Hailes Education Centre and Halifax Bank of Scotland

St George's School for Girls and Royal Bank of Scotland

Portree High School and MacDonald Brothers

## Scottish Prison Service locations

HM Prison Glenochil

HM Young Offenders Institution Polmont

9   St George's School for Girls offered courses as both a delivery centre and in partnership with a PTP

# Part 7:

## Appendix B: *How good is our school?* and *Skills for Work* courses

The *HGIOS?*[10] guide includes a range of quality indicators to help self-evaluate provision and improve the quality of the learning experience.

Those indicators that are most relevant to *SfW* courses include the following.

### QI 1.1 Improvements in performance

How good are learners' standards of attainment over time and their overall quality of achievement in the attitudes, skills and knowledge related to *SfW*?

Some of the questions that evaluation teams might include in their evaluations are:

To what extent:

1. are learners gaining certification through their *SfW* courses?
2. are learners attaining core skills in *SfW* qualifications?
3. are learners making progress in developing practical skills, personal skills, employability, post-school education and lifelong learning?
4. has involvement in the *SfW* course improved learners' wider achievements in areas such as citizenship and self-confidence?
5. is there evidence of progression in learners' understanding of employers and other organisations as a result of their *SfW* course?

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10 *How good is our school?: The Journey to Excellence: Part 3,* March 2007,
http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosjte3-01.html

## QI 2.1 Learners' experiences

How motivated and actively involved in their own learning and development through *SfW* courses are our learners?

To what extent:

1.  are learners motivated and engaged by their *SfW* experience?
2.  do *SfW* learners engage in independent study and team working activities?
3.  do learners plan their own activities and measure their own progress?
4.  have learners reflected upon their learning experiences and used their reflections to make progress in future learning?
5.  has learning on the *SfW* course impacted negatively or positively on their other learning in school?
6.  do learners have opportunities to take responsibility in group work and teams within and outwith school?
7.  do learners learn about the value of lifelong learning, and how to continue learning after leaving school?
8.  do learners demonstrate increased motivation due to understanding the relevance of the links between school, work and lifelong learning?

## QI 4.1 The school's success in working with and engaging with the local community

How good is the school in engaging with stakeholders in the local community?

To what extent:

1.  does the school encourage engagement with a range of stakeholders in the delivery and planning of *SfW* courses?
2.  does the school take account of the views of the local community in the development of *SfW* courses?

### QI 5.1 The curriculum

How good are *SfW* courses at providing a rich experience for all learners?

To what extent:

1. are *SfW* courses stimulating, challenging, relevant and enjoyable?
2. do *SfW* courses build on prior learning and experiences and develop learners' awareness of employability skills?
3. are *SfW* courses integrated into course choice options for all learners?
4. do courses include an appropriate balance of practical and classroom-based activities?
5. do learners have opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills learned in *SfW* courses in other subject areas?
6. have staff from different establishments worked together to consider cross curricular issues?
7. are *SfW* learners encouraged to make connections between their learning across subjects and within and outwith school?
8. have progression opportunities been developed within and between establishments?

### QI 5.2 Teaching for effective learning

How well does teaching ensure learners make progress and understand the nature of courses?

To what extent:

1. are there good relationships and rapport between teaching staff and learners?
2. do staff capitalise on practical classwork to develop the range of skills?
3. do teaching staff have appropriate work-related experience to help *SfW* learners contextualise their learning?
4. do teaching staff plan lessons effectively to ensure all learners make progress in developing appropriate skills?
5. are the aims and objectives of *SfW* lessons shared with learners?

6.  do teaching staff use an appropriate range of questioning techniques to judge learner understanding?

## QI 5.3 Meeting learning needs

How well do *SfW* courses meet the needs of the full range of learners?

To what extent:

1.  do *SfW* activities provide sufficient challenge for learners of all abilities and aptitudes?
2.  do *SfW* learners make use of opportunities from providers outwith school and college to meet their learning needs?
3.  are support staff, including those providing specialist support for pupils with additional support needs, aware of and involved in *SfW* courses?
4.  are *SfW* learners involved in discussing and identifying their learning needs?
5.  do pre-enrolment and admission procedures ensure that learners are matched to appropriate *SfW* courses and levels?
6.  are support mechanisms in place to ensure that all learners can participate meaningfully in *SfW* courses?

## QI 5.9 Improvement through self-evaluation

Are improvements through self-evaluation systematic?

To what extent:

1.  do schools, colleges and other providers evaluate effectively the overall experience of learners on *SfW* courses?
2.  are self-evaluation activities systematic and reflective?
3.  have the views of learners been taken into account when evaluating the effectiveness of *SfW* courses?
4.  have *SfW* partnerships developed action plans for improvement based upon their self-evaluation activities?

### QI 8.1 Partnerships with the community, educational establishments, agencies and employers

How good are schools at developing partnerships with the community, including colleges, employers and other providers, with clear purposes and aims for *SfW* courses?

To what extent:

1. do partners work together to develop strategic plans for the development of *SfW* courses?

2. are effective procedures in place for evaluating the impact of partnership working, including seeking and using direct feedback from partners?

3. is regular, productive contact maintained with staff from local authorities, colleges, employers and PTPs?

4. is partnership working with other organisations and agencies used to improve *SfW* learners' achievements and effectively support them on their courses?

5. do partners share information on attainment, progression and pastoral issues?

6. do staff participate actively in initiatives led by other agencies, including placements for teachers through the Excellence in Education Through Business Links programme or joint CPD opportunities?

# Part 8:

## Appendix C: Signposts to improvement

Throughout this report signposts to improvement are located at appropriate points. The full set of the signposts to improvement is presented overleaf.

## Signposts to improvement in learning and teaching

**Learners:**

- understand the importance of working with others to achieve outcomes;

- take responsibility for their learning and their progress;

- work independently to achieve tasks and gain a deeper understanding of the world of work;

- experience new ways of learning;

- use a range of resources to help them gain in self-confidence and develop their skills; and

- develop the ability to make reasoned evaluations of their progress.

**Staff:**

- deliver an appropriate range of practical activities;

- contextualise learning to provide an understanding of the workplace;

- facilitate collaborative activities to develop core, personal and employability skills;

- use an appropriate range of questioning techniques to gauge learners' understanding;

- foster a positive attitude to learning and a motivation to learn further;

- encourage learners to take responsibility for, and develop independence in, learning;

- plan effectively to develop an interdisciplinary approach to ensure that learning from *SfW* courses is integrated in other subject areas; and

- develop a culture of joint working.

## Signposts to improvement in strategic partnerships

### Partnerships:

- adopt strong rationales for offering *SfW* programmes;

- implement selection procedures to involve fully informed staff;

- ensure effective child protection arrangements are in place;

- offer a clear sense of direction for planning *SfW* courses; and

- ensure *SfW* courses are integrated into course choice options for learners.

## Signposts to improvement in management

### Partnerships:

- enable learners to understand the demands of *SfW* courses and have realistic expectations of what they can achieve;

- plan ongoing induction arrangements well to ensure learners are aware of realistic progression opportunities;

- ensure the balance across all subjects for *SfW* learners between the work of the *SfW* course and other classes is appropriate;

- plan timetables to create sufficient time for learners to engage in *SfW* courses;

- have effective arrangements for communicating information on learners' additional support needs, attendance, behaviour and progress; and

- ensure effective use of resources.

**Signposts to improvement in evaluating the quality of the learning experience**

All staff should ensure that:

- partners work jointly to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of *SfW* courses;

- approaches to quality assurance and enhancement promote a coordinated approach to develop improvement action plans;

- joint evaluation of programmes leads to better understanding of different establishments' procedures and programmes and more effective cooperation between staff; and

- learners are involved in evaluating the quality of their learning experience.

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POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

CHARTER MARK

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE