

**SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE
GROWTH**

Summary of responses to a
consultation on the future
direction of skills strategy

NOVEMBER 2010

Confidentiality and data protection

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The Consultation Code of Practice Criteria

1. Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence policy outcome.
2. Consultation should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.
3. Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.
4. Consultation exercise should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.
5. Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.
6. Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.
7. Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

Help with queries

Questions about the summary of responses included in the document can be addressed to:

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The skills consultation process

Skills for Sustainable Growth: a consultation on the future direction of skills strategy ran for twelve weeks, from 22 July to 14 October 2010. It outlined the Government's principles for the skills system and acknowledged that further education and skills would not be untouched by action to reduce the deficit. It therefore asked for views on how best to deliver the various elements of the strategy in a context of less public money and as a joint-enterprise with individuals, communities and employers.

Skills for Sustainable Growth: Strategy document sets out our full response to the consultation. This is available at www.bis.gov.uk. This document provides a summary of the responses received.

Responses were encouraged from all interested parties by:

1. Making the consultation documents and questions available publicly on the Department's website. A total of 564 response forms were received.
2. Creating an interactive web page on which members of the public were invited to leave comments and responses. A total of 88 individuals left comments on the web page.
3. Organising stakeholder events held during the consultation period. More than 150 employers and providers attended two bespoke events.
4. Partnering with Business in the Community to convene two meetings where over 30 employers shared experiences of the publicly funded further education and skills system and means of improving its responsiveness.
5. Hosting an online learner panel at which more than 50 individual further education learners discussed views and experiences on a range of topics.

The interest and insight shown by individuals, employers and training providers shows that there is a vibrant and thoughtful constituency which seeks to play a more active role in delivering Further Education and Skills. The skills strategy sets out the means through which we will together create a freer and more simplified further education and skills system that is able to respond efficiently and effectively to what individuals, employers and communities want.

Full responses – breakdown by category

Category	Total	
Businesses/Employers (including micro, small and medium enterprises and large employers)	57	10%
Charities and social enterprises	41	7%
Colleges and other training providers	93	16%
Individuals	88	16%
Local authorities, Employment & Skills Boards, Central Government	98	17%
Representative organisations, professional bodies, Trade Associations and Trade Unions	110	20%
Other	77	14%
Grand total	564	100%

1. Principles

Consultation questions

- We welcome views on these principles and whether there are others we should consider.
- How can we further simplify the skills system, including the number, roles and responsibilities of the many organisations working in the system?
- In view of the current fiscal deficit, what areas of public investment in skills could be reduced and where could private investment be increased?
- What are the main constraints on changing the balance between public and private investment and how could these be overcome?

1. Most respondents feel able to support the principles set out in the consultation document but there were different views around how the principles should be made real. In general, there is wide-spread acceptance that a skilled population is essential for a more competitive economy and a means through which individuals are able to make real their ambitions for a more prosperous life for themselves, their families and communities.
2. The majority of respondents feel it is necessary to re-assess the role of Government as funder and regulator. There is a broad acceptance that people and employers who benefit from training should share the cost. Most providers who responded see the future of further education to be increasingly based on co-funding rather than 100% state subsidy. But there was also support for full public funding of basic skills that help individuals develop the capacity to read and write and incentives for Small and Medium Enterprises so that they are able to invest in development of their workforce. Many providers feel that targets have constrained their ability to respond to what individuals and employers want and that Government should set fewer targets.
3. Many respondents want the quality of further education to be improved and state that spending cuts make a focus on quality even more important. A wide breadth of views were offered on how to improve quality including better aligning systems at transition points such as those between school and colleges, colleges and universities and between skills and employment, increasing the use of technology to open opportunities for learning between providers and ensuring that provision is tailored to the needs of employers. A significant proportion of respondents want a focus on those skills and qualifications that have sustainable benefits for individuals and employers.
4. A wide range of respondents including individuals, employers and providers highlight the important role that businesses have in contributing to the development of communities in which they operate and accept that lots of companies already have well-established corporate social responsibility policies but that the promotion of learning and skills could and should feature much more.

2. A Respected and Credible Training Offer

Apprenticeships

Consultation questions

- How could the Apprenticeship programme be improved? What can be done to increase the proportion of apprentices progressing to Level 3 and beyond? What and how should employers contribute to Apprenticeships?
- We welcome views on how best to support people who might in time benefit from an Apprenticeship but who do not currently have the skills to begin one.
- We welcome views about progression from Level 3 Apprenticeships into higher education, including whether there is demand for Higher Apprenticeships at Levels 4 and 5.

5. On the whole, respondents endorse the view that Apprenticeships should be the primary work-based learning route because Apprenticeships have earned the respect of learners and employers and success rates have increased year on year, giving them credibility. While mostly positive, some offered views on how to improve the Apprenticeships programme so that it provides individuals and employers with the skills they need to progress.
6. Some employers who responded feel that that while they support Apprenticeships, they may not be suitable for individuals and employers in all sectors. Some believe that there is currently a 'one-size-fits all' approach which may offer a useful route for individuals and employers in some sectors, but not in all. In particular, some employers, especially smaller companies highlight that greater flexibility should be allowed so that sectors can implement frameworks to suit their particular needs. Others argue that on the job learning, which often cannot be accredited, can deliver real benefits to individuals and employers.
7. Several voluntary organisations and some colleges spoke about the transition into and out of an Apprenticeship. The general view of respondents is that pre-apprenticeship training can provide valuable opportunities for individuals to develop skills in preparation for the demands of a full Apprenticeship. Some respondents state that the Diploma qualification for 14–19 year-olds is the best way to support young people who might in time benefit from an Apprenticeship. Others suggest that programmes for potential apprentices, traditionally offered by further education colleges should be protected. A significant number of respondents believe that improving access to higher education in further education is a good way of ensuring that links between vocational and higher education programmes are developed.
8. Apprentices were consulted in the online learner panel about what might encourage them to progress from foundation to advanced level. Responses include offering a pay rise for higher level apprentices, providing more time for study, ensuring that opportunities to progress into a permanent job at the end of the Apprenticeship are good and giving higher level apprentices an improved job title and additional responsibilities in the workplace.

Other work-based learning

Consultation questions

- How can we ensure that training leads to real gains in skills, knowledge and competence and not just the accreditation of existing skills?

9. When asked for views on how to ensure training leads to real gains in skills, knowledge and competence, and not just the accreditation of existing skills, respondents were divided between those who saw accreditation as an inefficient by-product of the existing funding methodology and targets driven system and others who felt able to respond positively to accreditation for its intrinsic worth. They argue for accreditation because it can boost workers' confidence and facilitates progression in the workplace.

10. There were many suggestions about how to achieve real gains in skills, knowledge and competence which are summarised below.
11. There is strong support for skills assessments undertaken by individuals and training needs analysis at the employer level. Many suggest that it is important for employers to be clear about what skills are required in any role and the development of role profiles. Using measurement and evaluation techniques that map knowledge and competence progress achieved by the learner during the training was also suggested as being important.
12. Some respondents, notably employers and representative organisations state that Government funding should be demand-led and want funding to be prioritised for specific units which meet employers' needs, not full qualifications that may not be relevant for either individuals or their employers. More broadly, most employers who responded to this question want to see colleges and awarding organisations develop and design an offer which is based on requirements of the job, a sector's skills priorities and accessible delivery models which depart from centrally defined training formats and qualification targets.
13. Some respondents suggest that Government should allow colleges to accredit their own qualifications to ensure qualifications are relevant, flexible and meet business need and that there should be mechanisms through which to recognise informal learning taking place in the workplace, and in particular, in small and medium sized enterprises.

Training for people who are out of work or at risk of becoming unemployed

Consultation questions

- How can we incentivise colleges and training organisations to offer a flexible and cost-effective 'needs-led' offer for people who are out of work or at risk of becoming unemployed?
- How can we encourage colleges and training organisations to make the transition from learning to work as smooth as possible, enabling progression in the workplace, as well as to further learning?

14. The economic downturn and resulting impact on employment feature in most responses. The majority of respondents call for better alignment between skills and employment systems and offer an assortment of ideas on how this might be achieved. A large proportion of respondents who are providers spoke about the multiple funding streams from central Government designated for training those out of work and the bureaucracy this creates. Many providers wish to see funding organisations pool their resources for specific programmes for unemployed people in a local area and ensure provision links clearly to the needs of employers.

15. While training is seen as important to bring about sustained employment, many respondents who are voluntary organisations focus their comments on the long term unemployed and importance of holistic support which deals with all the needs that make it difficult for this group to access and sustain employment.
16. For example, some cite basic literacy, numeracy, socialisation and general employability skills including addressing low self esteem which some long term unemployed might have. Many respondents feel that removing restrictions on funding part qualifications or units is an important step to being able to access timely and employment-oriented training for those out of work. A significant proportion of respondents, who said they were unemployed, suggest these restrictions are a significant barrier to finding training that they feel is relevant.

College-based routes

Consultation questions

- How can we better promote enterprise education in further education colleges and throughout the training system?

17. Most respondents who commented on college-based routes spoke positively about the role of colleges in the community. Amongst learners who responded to the consultation, there is a general perception that colleges do a good job in forging links with the local community. Other learners feel their local college spends too much time on bureaucracy associated with accessing funding and that this results in less time available to build links with the community. Many learners who participated in the online learner panel mentioned other, non-college based learning they had attended, and spoke positively about learning undertaken in schools, adult education centres, music libraries, church halls and community centres.
18. There were lots of ideas about how to promote enterprise education in further education colleges and throughout the skills system more generally. The majority of respondents think that enterprise education is central to Government's ambitions for private sector growth and as a key part of what they think ambitions for the 'Big Society' should be – namely that in a context where Government does less, there is an increased need for the private and voluntary not-for-profit sector to innovate, develop and deliver services that individuals and communities want. These ideas can be summarised as follows.
19. There is a view that enterprise education in colleges and in the wider skills system should be delivered by people with real hands on experience of running a business. Some respondents highlight the need for colleges and providers to forge stronger links with businesses and that enterprise education should not be theoretical but should rather comprise the application of key skills needed to plan for and sustain a business.

20. Many respondents state the importance of good information, advice and guidance to school-aged children and those in colleges so that they are made aware of opportunities that exist around starting their own business. Some respondents feel there is too much of a focus placed in careers guidance at school on academic routes.
21. Other ideas put forward include the integration of enterprise into Apprenticeship frameworks and integration of communication, presentation and personal effectiveness skills into all academic and vocational routes. Some highlighted the potential value of integrating enterprise education into leadership and management training.

3. Funding and entitlements

Consultation questions

- Should the Government continue with an entitlements based approach? How can we ensure that Government money is targeted where it is needed most and where it will achieve most value?

22. Most respondents accept that there is a need for an entitlements-based approach and that government should target its subsidy on those who need it the most. For some respondents, entitlements offer clarity for individuals in an otherwise complex system whilst for others, Government should remain wary of any approach that hinders the ability of colleges and other training organisations to respond to local needs.
23. There were a wide range of views on who should be entitled to subsidised learning. For example, some respondents are keen to see entitlements based on income rather than on qualifications and age. Others are keen to see entitlements for skills which are in short supply and not based on age or ability to pay while some call for a cash-based approach where those on the lowest income would receive a higher cash sum for learning and wealthier individuals would receive something, but less. Some highlight how existing entitlements need to be enforced. For example, Government may need to do more to ensure that existing entitlements to fully-subsidised provision for students with learning disabilities up to the age of 25 are promoted and taken-up.
24. There is a broadly held view that entitlements and funding changes in further education should be consistent with what is being asked of learners and employers who engage with higher education.

4. Helping individuals and employers choose the learning they want

Consultation questions

- How can the learning market be made to work more efficiently, effectively and economically and to be more responsive and accountable to demand by individuals and employers while delivering value for money?

25. There is uniform acceptance that the skills system is complex and difficult to navigate – with some individuals and employers finding it difficult to make informed decisions on whether to invest and participate in training. Most respondents hone in on one or more of the following issues as bottlenecks to a well-functioning market: centrally-driven targets, lack of a coherent approach to information and advice, too many intermediary organisations, and qualifications which are not relevant to what individual and employers want.

Employer Leadership

Consultation questions

- We welcome views on how best to ensure employers are able to shape the skills system to meet their needs.
- We are interested in views on what more might be needed to make the system responsive to employer needs.
- Which qualifications have most value for employers and learners? Which do not have value? How do we evolve the Qualifications and Credit Framework so that it focuses on the former and removes the latter?

26. The majority of employers who engaged with this theme think that it is important to ensure employers are able to shape the skills system, and that there is much to do to ensure that qualifications offered are of value to employers and their employees. There were many ideas offered on how to make the skills system more responsive to employers needs.

27. Employers, whether large or small, highlight the importance of attributes and competences of employees and ability to do the job at hand as well as the qualifications held by them. Many respondents focus on the importance of developing new skills and especially through flexible, bite-sized employment related training packages which allow individuals to build up a portfolio of units that are relevant to their goals and aspirations and needs of their employers.

28. Several large employers highlight the important role of Sector Skills Councils, especially in influencing qualification development. Some respondents feel that the role of Sector Skills Councils as it currently stands is one that should continue and that the introduction of the Qualification and Credit Framework with qualifications based on agreed National Occupational Standards has had a positive impact on improving the offer of qualifications to employers. The work of Sector Skills Councils to create job-profiles, career pathways and qualification route-ways which provide a picture of what is available and how qualifications can assist employment and personal development is mentioned as a positive development.
29. Some respondents, overwhelmingly those who are not employers, challenged any assumption that all public subsidy should focus on employment-related skills. On the whole, such respondents highlighted the social objectives of learning and that too much focus on 'employment-related' skills at the expense of informal learning would have negative effects on social mobility and community cohesion. For example, many seek to ensure that employers themselves recognise the role that informal learning can play in improving the skills, morale and motivation of their employees.

Independent careers guidance and lifelong learning accounts

Consultation questions

- How can we improve the accessibility and quality of careers information, advice and guidance services for adults?
- We welcome views on the vision for lifelong learning accounts and their potential usefulness.

30. There is universal acceptance amongst those who responded that impartial, accessible and timely careers advice is an essential pre-requisite of a well-functioning skills market. There were mixed views about the value-added of lifelong learning accounts and in particular, some suggest that the term 'account' should refer to a money-based facility not one that is solely an information resource.
31. Amongst learners who fed into the online learner panel, the general perception is that there are a wide range of sources from which information and advice can be sought, and often this information varies from source to source. Therefore, many learners see the value of a one-stop-shop for relevant information, advice and guidance. Many learners speak positively about guidance they receive from their tutors on specific pathways and college-based careers advisors when seeking more general information, advice and guidance.

32. When asked about how they felt information, advice and guidance could be improved, ideas ranged from investigating learner's long term goals to ensure short term plans are appropriate, helping learners develop long term career strategy plans and advising on different routes to reach their goal, and that advice should be based on the local labour market so that learners know what skills gaps exist. Respondents were keen to see adequate financial resource was allocated for effective marketing of career advice services so as to ensure that all individuals know how they can access support.
33. Several respondents want to see a 'no-wrong door' approach to careers advice, whereby all public services, no matter what their purpose (health, housing, and employment) could sign-post individuals to relevant careers advice services. Some of those who responded said that it may be valuable for Government to focus publicly funded careers advice on sign-posting individuals to relevant sources of information and advice on the internet and through sector representatives. Others would like to see a system of government-accredited but independent providers of information, advice and guidance.
34. Lastly, there was much debate on the value-added of lifelong learning accounts and comments varied from those that were positive to those that were less so. For many learners, lifelong learning accounts could be useful if they would allow them to keep all information about learning done in one place, is easily accessible, allows them to distribute CVs and allows employers to verify learner's qualifications. Concerns were expressed about how information held on the account and information on courses and careers would be kept up to date and whether accounts would be available for older learners not in the workforce. For others, lifelong learning accounts could contribute to additional complexity in an already complex system.

Informed learner and employer choice

Consultation questions

- We welcome views on approaches to informing learners and employers including how better information can be made available while reducing bureaucracy.

35. Better information on quality of provision is viewed by most respondents as an essential component of a well-functioning skills system. College business plans and 'food labelling' type data on provider performance were mainly viewed in a positive light, however, there were some differing views about what might be included in any system of information on quality of provision.
36. A significant proportion of individuals who responded suggest that while measures such as completion rates, employment and wage gains associated with particular provision is important, it is equally important to have clear and accessible information on the where courses are delivered and how local provision is, the cost and modes of delivery.

37. Employers who responded were keen to point to the role of Sector Skill Councils and National Skills Academies. Many mentioned that they have formal training provider approval schemes which they consider to be a useful information point for employers. Together with quality labelling, many respondents feel there is a sufficient and relevant means of sharing appropriate information with employers. However, some employers wish to see more accessible information which utilises a wide range of communication tools to disseminate information.

5. Giving colleges and training organisations the freedom to respond

Consultation questions

- We welcome views on our planned measures for simplification and freeing colleges and training organisations.
- How can we enable colleges and training organisations to be more efficient and responsive to the needs of employers, learners and their community but without adding new layers of control by local bodies?
- What mechanisms could we use to hold colleges and other training organisations to account for their performance in responding to employers' needs and for prioritising training that adds real economic value?

38. Many respondents highlight how a demand-led system where colleges are increasingly accountable to customers and communities is needed to ensure that providers are able to respond swiftly to demands of learners, employers and communities in which they operate. However, there was also a clear view that mechanisms need to be in place to address poor performance.

39. First, there is a broadly consistent view that a localised approach is appropriate. However, many respondents are keen to ensure provision continues to meet the needs of sectors. Others were concerned that replacing a centrally driven system of targets with increased freedom for providers may create a new set of complex alternatives and regional variation which become just as difficult for employers to navigate.

40. Second, the separation of arrangements for young people in further education from those of adults is an area that had considerable response. For a lot of providers, this leads to duplication of effort and expense. Several respondents highlight how they would like to see a single funding body for post 16 Further Education provision. For others, much progress is needed on initiating a programme across the whole further education and skills sector on collaboration and shared services, with a particular focus on improving data collection, dissemination and undertaking collaborative procurement to deliver administrative efficiencies.

41. Third, there are many suggestions about how to measure the performance of colleges and other training providers. A significant majority of respondents state that tracking the employment of leavers is a key measure that colleges and providers should publish while for others, learner destinations while in principle a good approach to showing performance, are often resource intensive and sometimes, difficult to quantify. For such respondents, simplification of the Individual Learner Record is essential, in particular, the number of returns should be reduced to save time and costs. Many colleges commented on the value of annual statements. These would set out a college's approach to responding to the needs of individuals, employers and communities and would be used to open a discussion on strategy with funders and customers.

6. Incentives to train in priority areas

Consultation questions

- Do we need a framework that will enable and encourage employers and individuals to invest in training in priority areas and for colleges and other training organisations to provide appropriate courses?
- Should we promote training innovation particularly in rapidly changing or wholly new areas of the economy? If so, how might we do this?
- How can we ensure employers can access high quality labour market information?

42. Respondents to this theme focused comments on a wide range of areas they perceive to be 'priority areas.' A significant number of those who responded argue for government intervention in areas such as low carbon, science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Others want government to prioritise basic employability skills and modern languages.

43. A significant minority suggest that in a demand-led system, providers will respond to what employers and individuals want. In particular, many highlight how skill gaps and shortages are now well researched and understood and give providers sufficient information on which to base provision on priority areas. While many see a role for Government in supporting uptake of skills in priority areas, some suggest that more detail is required on the development of any framework, its maintenance and how it would, if at all, be enforced. Central to this view is that there needs to be an accurate and evidenced understanding of what constitutes a priority area.

44. There is a general acceptance that innovation is a driver of growth and some respondents want government action to promote innovation. Many suggest the value of sharing more information on good-practice in and between sectors. Some state that any approach to supporting innovation in new areas of the economy necessitates a structured approach which identifies individuals requiring training, at what level in the organisation skills will be required and then developing the best approach to deliver that training.
45. Lastly, labour market information was uniformly viewed as central to a well-functioning system that is able to respond to needs in priority areas. Several sources of labour market information were referred to, including data provided by Sector Skills Councils, Regional Development Authorities and the Learning and Skills Councils/Skills Funding Agency. There was much focus on the role of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and the value employers and providers attach to their Strategic Skills Audit.
46. While there are plenty of sources of information, several respondents highlight how there are sometimes conflicting messages from different sources and that a useful advance might include involving Sector Skills Councils, employer representative organisations, trade unions, training providers, academia, professional bodies and representative consumer interest groups in the development of a single preferred model of intelligence gathering and dissemination.

7. Encouraging a more productive workforce

Consultation questions

- What would enable businesses to use skills as a real driver of productivity and business improvement?
- We welcome views and ideas on ways in which businesses can be encouraged to increase the UK's leadership and management capability to create better run and more highly performing businesses.

47. There were many ideas on tools, levers and incentives to raise business utilisation of skills ranging from thought-leadership work to promote the value of training, tax incentives, support for leadership and management and use of public procurement.
48. Many individuals feel that some smaller employers could be helped to understand how skills are associated with productivity improvement and that there is a real role for new Local Enterprise Partnerships, trade associations and local business forums to promote this basic understanding. One idea raised to promote general awareness amongst Small and Medium Enterprises about the value of investing in skills is to develop a skills investment calculator that allows employers to calculate the economic return of particular workforce training. In addition, there is appetite from many employers for reform of tax to better promote employer investment in skills. Ideas include the reduction in national insurance contribution for employees on training or a tax incentive scheme for small businesses who contribute towards the skills training of their workforce.

49. For many respondents, especially smaller employers, the economic downturn has made them more aware of the need to develop strategic capabilities across a wide range of areas and many have defined this general desire to plan for the future as core to what they take leadership and management to mean. For those who have had experience of leadership and management support, the feedback is mixed. Many say that it added real value to their approach as owners and managers of smaller companies in areas such as human resource management, innovation and developing new product strategies. Others feel that it is most useful when leadership and management courses do not 'sell' pre-determined models and concepts, but rather, providers should work with employers to develop approaches which meet their specific needs. Others are not sure as to why Government has a role to play in developing the leadership and management skills of any company.
50. There was limited engagement with the role that occupational licences to practise and industry levies might play as a means of improving skills acquisition and utilisation. Some see the value added of an approach which raises skills levels and protects consumers. For example, a few respondents flagged the need for suitably qualified operatives in specialist areas and that a requirement for market entry is a legitimate mechanism to achieve this.
51. Many cite examples of well-functioning schemes such as those in the utility sector where individuals must be accredited by a recognised body and where possession of the relevant qualification is a pre-requisite for accreditation. Other views centre on the importance of sectors themselves deciding whether this course of action is appropriate and despite the benefits of any approach, it is important to ensure that additional burdens and costs to businesses are proportionate.

8. Reinvigorating adult and community learning

Consultation questions

- How could we encourage the development of productive partnerships with third sector organisations?
- We welcome views on new ways that colleges could be used to support the community.
- How could adult and community learning be reinvigorated? We especially welcome ideas for how businesses and others could be encouraged to engage in supporting local community learning to help create local ownership and momentum.

52. The argument that learning has wider benefits is made by many respondents, especially third sector providers of training. Many respondents speak about the need to protect Government spending on community-based learning because it is sometimes a first-step into learning for those who have had previously had negative experiences of learning as well as contributing to community well-being.

53. There were a multitude of ideas about how to improve the delivery of adult and community learning, and these focused mainly on simplifying funding streams, increasing the role of third sector organisations and ideas to maximise the contribution and role of colleges in the community. Many respondents referred to the resonance of messages being promoted on the 'Big Society' and felt that thinking on education and training should be central to what the 'Big Society' is about.
54. Third sector and voluntary organisations focused on the value-added of their role. Many focused on the familiarity voluntary and third sector organisations have with a diverse range of groups in any community and how smaller organisations can often tailor provision, including through co-design. Further, they are able to refer individuals and families to other sources of support, as well as education and skills.
55. Many cite the successful approach to engaging with individuals and families through close partnership working between libraries, schools, the education welfare service and Jobcentre Plus. Several also highlight the close relationship many voluntary and third sector organisations have formed with local and national businesses who support them as part of their corporate social responsibility strategies.
56. Most colleges who responded feel that they are well-placed to promote and deliver adult and community learning and provided examples of how colleges have a key role in promoting the learning agenda in communities. Some respondents suggest that links between colleges and services for families could be better and that colleges could do more to partner with a wider set of services and not just academic or employment-based organisations such as schools and Jobcentre Plus. There were several ideas on how the role of colleges could be maximised including removal of VAT barriers that some believe are a disincentive to colleges opening all their facilities and co-locating other services such as probation, health and social services in college buildings.

Cross-cutting issues

Measuring success

Consultation questions

- We welcome views and ideas on those indicators that would be most useful to you or your organisation.

57. A range of opinion was expressed on what how to measure success. For most respondents, some sort of framework and indicators to assess success at an individual, organisational, local, national or international level is an important component of ensuring value for money in a financially constrained environment. Others highlight a difficulty in developing success measures pertaining to skills because of the intangible nature of the asset itself and difficulty is establishing causality between an intervention (or training) and any particular outcome.

58. A wide range of respondents, including individuals and some colleges focused their response on the need to include measures of success developed by individuals and employers themselves. For example, an individual and employer may have specific objectives they seek to meet through learning and training and that there should be a mechanism to assess success from the personal perspective of customers and that the best measure of success is the percentage of learners who successfully meet their own objectives at whatever level those objectives may be.
59. Other respondents reflect on the value of tailoring success measures to reflect different organisational types. For example, the success of colleges that actively seek to engage disadvantaged and low-skilled individuals should be viewed differently to that of more selective and less accessible institutions. Some respondents suggest there should be a wide set of indicators which includes measures of social cohesion and community responsiveness of a college or other provider.

Equality and diversity

60. A wide range of organisations raised equality and diversity issues relevant to skills strategy and policy. The majority of respondents who highlight equality and diversity issues feel that the opportunity to improve skills is as pertinent for minority groups as they are for the wider population. There were some cross-cutting issues raised by many of those who responded and these can be summarised as follows.
61. First, some responses focused on the needs of people with physical disabilities and the important strides which have been made to date on making colleges and their buildings accessible. Some respondents suggest there is more work to be done to ensure accessibility of college buildings but also to making vocational qualifications accessible to people with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities. For some, information, advice and guidance for the school-aged is an important mechanism through which to promote vocational routes amongst young people with disabilities.
62. Second, on the whole, organisations working with and for older groups are keen to ensure that the term 'lifelong learning' should not be shorthand for learning undertaken by the working-age population alone, but rather, that it should include those who are retired. Some respondents cite the need to have more joined-up strategy and delivery at the national and local level and suggest that central government as well as local authorities should do more to recognise the health and welfare benefits to older people of being engaged in learning.
63. Third, of those respondents who suggest that some minority ethnic groups experience problems in accessing vocational learning opportunities, the majority viewed this as a part of a wider problem characterised by a general lack of tailored information and advice for minority groups on public services. Ideas on how to improve information and advice for minority groups hone in on the positive impact role models can have on promoting learning opportunities. More generally, some respondents would like to see engagement with minority and disadvantaged sections of the community as a component of college's performance management.

Annex: List of organisations who submitted responses

&Coaching Ltd
157 Group
ADS
Adult Community learning Essex
Adult Education College Bexley
Adult Education Service, Wolverhampton
City Council
AdviceUK
Age and Employment Network, The
Age UK
Aimhigher Greater Manchester
Alliance of SSCs
ALP
Amber Foundation
Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network
(AAN)
Asset Skills
Association for Careers Education and
Guidance
Association for Learning Technology
Association for UK Interactive
Entertainment (UKIE), The
Association of Accounting Technicians
(AAT)
Association of Colleges
Association of Managers in Education
(AMiE)
Association of National Specialist Colleges
(Natspec)
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
(ATL)
Association of the British Pharmaceutical
Industry (ABPI), The
Axia Solutions Ltd
BAE Systems
Balfour Beatty
Barchester Healthcare
Barking & Dagenham College
BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT
Bedfordshire Adult Skills & Community
Learning- Central & Bedford Borough
Birmingham & Black Country City Region
Employment and Skills Board
Bishop Auckland College
Black Ethnic Minority Community
Organisations Network
Blackburn with Darwen Local Strategic
Partnership's Strategic Employment Group
Blackpool and The Fylde College
Blackpool Council
Bolton Council
Boots Opticians
Borough Council and Burnley Action
Partnership
Boston College
Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Employment
& Skills Board
Bradford College
Brakes Group
Brighton & Hove Adult Learning Group
Bristol City Council
British Association of Construction Heads
British Ceramic Confederation
British Chambers of Commerce
British Gas
British Institute of Innkeeping (BII)
British Property Federation
British Psychological Society, The
British Retail Consortium
Buckinghamshire Adult Learning Service
Burton College
Business Link West Midlands
Cambridge Regional College (CRC)
Cambridgeshire County Council
Camden Adult and Community Learning
Service
Campaign for Learning
Capacity
Capel Manor College
Capita Group PLC, The
Careers Development Group
Careers Solutions
Careers SW
CASCAiD Ltd
Caterite Food & Wineservice Ltd
CBI
Centre for Education and Industry,
University of Warwick
CfA
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Chartered Institute of Housing
Children's Workforce Development Council
Church of England
CILT, the National Centre for Languages
CIPD
City & Guilds
City & Islington College
City Lit

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (CBMDC)
CMS Vocational Training Ltd
Cogent SSC Ltd.
Colchester Institute
College of West Anglia
Community Action Hampshire
Community Sector Coalition
Compass Group UK & Ireland
Complete Assessment and Training Solutions
Confederation of Forest Industries
Connect South West Ltd
Construction Skills
Construction Skills Certification Scheme
Cornwall College
Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Orgs
Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)
Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Partnership Ltd
Coventry City Council
Crafts Council
Creative and Cultural Skills
Crisis
Cross Industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force (CCATF)
Cumbria Employment and Skills Board
Dart Ltd
Department for Work and Pensions
Derbyshire County Council
Derbyshire Employment & Skills Board
Derwent Training Association
Devon Community Learning Partnership
DHL Express UK & Ireland
Doncaster MBC
Dorset County Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Dunelm (Soft Furnishings Ltd)
Durham County Council
DWP
East Midlands Universities Association
East of England IDB
East of England Rural Forum & Rural Action East
East Riding College
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Easton College
Economic Development Department at Plymouth City Council
EDF Energy Plc
Education for Engineering (E4E)
Educational Centres Association
EEDA
EEF
Electrical Contractors' Association
EMB Ltd
Employers Forum on Age
EMTA Awards Ltd (EAL)
Energy & Utility Skills
English Speaking Board (International) Ltd
Enterprise and Innovation Team and ONTrack (14-19) Team, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.
Equality and Human Rights Commission
E-skills UK
Essex County Council
Essex CVS Partnership Voluntary Sector Training (VST)
Exeter & Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board
Federation of Awarding Bodies
Federation of Small Businesses
Financial Services Skills Council (FSSC)
Fircroft College
Fitness Industry Association
Flesh and Bones Family History
Food and Drink Federation
Forestry Commission England
Foundation Degree Forward
Franklin College
FSB East Midlands Area
Gateshead Council
General Motors UK and Ireland
Glass Qualifications Authority (GQA)
Gloucestershire First (Strategic Economic Partnership)
GoSkills
Greater Manchester 14 – 19 Sub-Regional Group
Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network
Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership
Greater Merseyside Learning Providers Federation
Greenwich Community College
Greenwich Council
GTA England
Guardian Marine Technology
Habia

Halton Borough Council
Hampshire Learning (part of Hampshire County Council)
Harrow Informal Adult Learning Partnership
Hartpury College
Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association
Hemel East Ring of Extended Schools
Heritage Crafts Association
Heritage Lottery Fund
Hertfordshire County Council
Hertfordshire Training & Development Consortium
Highbury College
HOLEX
Homeless Link
HomeServe
Hugh Baird College
Hull City Council
Hull College
Hull College Group, The
Humber Compass (the Hull and Humber Ports City Region's Board for Employment, Enterprise and Skills)
Humberside Engineering Training
IBM
Ifs School of Finance
Improve Ltd
Indigo Business Services
Information Society Alliance (EURIM), The
Instam
Institute for Learning (IfL)
Institute of Directors
Institute of Economic Development
Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment
Institute of Leadership & Management
Interserve
IoD
Isle of Wight Council
ITEC Learning Technologies
Jaguar Land Rover
Jarvis Training Management Ltd
Jasper Gilder Ltd
JD Wetherspoon plc
Joint USG/BG Skills project
Jospeh Chamberlain Sixth Form College
JTL
Keith Cook Training Ltd
KEITS

Kent & Medway NHS and Social Care Trust
Kent Association of Further Education Colleges (KAFEC)
Kent County Council
Kent Economic Board
Kingfisher
Kingston Maurward College
Kirkdale Industrial Training Services Limited (KITS)
Kirklees Adult Learning Partnership
Knowsley Community College
Knowsley MBC
Laisterdyke Business & Enterprise College
Lancashire Probation Trust
Landex
Langdon Industries Ltd
Lantra
Learning Advocates – The Johnston Partnership
Learning Curve, The
Learning Skills Employment Network
Learning Trust, The
Leeds City Region Employment and Skills Board
Leicester and Leicestershire MAA
Leicester City Council
Leicester College
Leonardo UK National Agency
Lewisham College
Lifelong Learning UK
Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities
Lincolnshire & Rutland Employment and Skills Board
Linking London Lifelong Learning Network
Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
Liverpool City Region Employment & Skills Board
Liverpool Community College
Local Education Authority Forum for the Education of Adults
Local Government Group
Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH)
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Newham
London Councils
Longley Park Sixth Form College
LSEN Manchester
LSIS
LSN

Lucite International
Macclesfield College
Manchester City Council
Manufacturing Technologies Association,
The
Martin Yarnit Associates
Mary Ward Centre
Mayor of London - Greater London
Authority
McDonald's Restaurants Ltd
McLaren Coaching
Mencap
Merseyside Colleges' Association
Merseytravel
Michael Woodgate Training Consultancy
Milton Keynes Council
Ministry of Defence
MITIE Group PLC
MOD (ARMY)
Morley College
Motorola Ltd
Moulton College
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
Myerscough College
N G Bailey
NAEGA (National Association of Guidance
Advisers)
NATECLA
National Apprenticeship Network Group
National Association for Voluntary and
Community Action (NAVCA)
National Bureau for Students with
Disabilities
National Care Advisory Service (NCAS)
National Council for the Training of
Journalists (NCTJ).
National Council for Voluntary
Organisations
National Council for Voluntary Youth
Services (NCVYS)
National Federation of Young Farmers'
Clubs
National Grid
National Research and Development
Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy
(NRDC)
National school of Furniture
National Skills Academy Creative and
Cultural
National Skills Academy for Nuclear
National Skills Academy for Social Care
National Skills Academy Strategic Network
National Union of Students (NUS)
Navigate Group
NCFE
Network Rail
New College Swindon
New Economy
New Engineering Foundation (NEF)
Newcastle City Council
Newcastle College Group
NFU
NIACE
Norfolk Employment and Skills Board
North Devon Employment & Skills Board
North East Chamber of Commerce
North East of England European Social
Fund Project
North East Regional ESOL Group
Newcastle ESOL Partnership
North Hertfordshire College
North Lincolnshire Council
North Norfolk District Council
North Norfolk Skills Partnership
North Tyneside Employment and Learning
Strategy Group
North West Universities Association
Northamptonshire CC Adult Learning
Service
Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd
Northern Arc on behalf of the South West
Leadership and Management Advisory
Service
Northern College for residential Adult
Education, The
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland National Park Authority
Nottingham City Council
Nottinghamshire Employment & Skills
Board
Novas Scarman
Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and its
contracted Site Licence Companies
(Sellafield Ltd, Magnox North Ltd, Magnox
South Ltd, Reactor Sites Restoration Ltd,
Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd, Low Level
Waste Repository Ltd.)
Numatic International Ltd
NW Regional Strategic Skills Partnership
OCR
Office Depot
Ofqual

Ofsted
OPITO (The Oil and Gas Academy)
Oxfordshire County Council
Partnership for Urban South Hampshire
Pat Clarke Total Training
Pearson UK
Peninsula Enterprise
Pennine Lancashire Employment and Skills Board
People 1st
Plumpton College
Pluss
Plymouth Employment & Skills Board
Policy Exchange
Potter Group Ltd, The
Preston City Council
Prince's Regeneration Trust, The
Private Equity Foundation (PEF)
Pro Enviro
Proper Oils
Proskills UK
Public and Commercial Services Union
Puffins of Exeter
RAISE
RathboneUK
Reading Informal Adult Learning Network
Reaseheath College
Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC), The
Reed in Partnership
Renaissance East of England
Research and Practice in Adult Literacy
Rexel UK Ltd
RNID
Rochdale MBC and Greater Manchester 14-19 Strategic Partnership
Rotherham Adult Learning Partnership & Rotherham Adult Learning and Skills Strategy Group
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Royal Mail
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and Action for Blind People
Royal Society, The
Ruskin College
Salford City College
Salford City Council
School for Social Entrepreneurs

School of Management, University of Southampton
Screen England
SEEDA
Semta
SERCO
SFA Employer Reference Group
Sheffield City Council
Sheffield College, The
Sheila Caulfield.com
Singulier
Sittingbourne Community College, The
Skills - Third Sector
Skills for Health
Skills for Justice
Skills for Logistics
Skillsbase at Leek College
Skillsmart Retail
Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders Limited, The
Somerset College
South East Diamonds for Investment & Growth (SEDfIG)
South Essex College
South Staffordshire College
South Thames College
South West Leadership and Management Advisory Service
Southampton City Council
Southend on Sea
Southgate College
Sparsholt College Hampshire
St Helens College
St. Mungos
Staffordshire County Council
Stockport Adult Education, Skills & Employment Partnership
Stockton Borough Council
Stoke on Trent City Council
Suffolk County Council
Suffolk New College
Surrey County Council
Sussex Council of Training Providers (SCTP).
SW Business Link Consortium
Tesco
Third Age Trust, The
Third Sector National Learning Alliance (TSNLA)
Thurrock Council/Shaping Thurrock LSP
Tourism South East

Tower Hamlets College
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
Travis Perkins Group
Truro and Penwith College
TUC
Tyne and Wear City Region
UCAS
UCATT
UCLH NHS Foundation Trust
UCU Derbyshire ACE Branch
Ufi / Learndirect
UK Contractors Group
UK MUSIC
UK National Agency for Leonardo,
Grundtvig and Transveral Programmes
UK online centres
UK Trade & Investment (UKTI)
UKCES
UKRC
UNISON
Unite
United Kingdom Forest Products
Association (UKFPA)
Universities South West
Universities UK
University and College Union (UCU)
University of Derby (incorporating Buxton
College of FE)
University of Derby and a group of HEIs
that deliver further education
University of Plymouth
Usdaw
UVAC
V, The National Young Volunteers Service
Valuing People Now team, Department of
Health
Vision+Media
Voyage Care
Wakefield College
Walsall College
Wandsworth Borough Council
Wandsworth Lifelong Learning
Development Group Responses to 27-29
West Berkshire Adult and Family Learning
Partnership
West Cheshire College
West Herts College
West Lancashire Borough Council
West Midlands Skills Partnership
West of England Partnership
West Sussex County Council

West Yorkshire Learning Providers
Whitbread Group PLC
Wiltshire Council
Wincanton
Wirral Council
Wirral Economic Development & Skills
Partnership
WOA
Workbase Training
Workers' Educational Association
Working Men's College
YCUK
Yorkshire and Humber Community
Development Network
Young Ambition
YWCA

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