

Spotlight on Learning and Skills Improvement Service 2012/13 Offer

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Learning and Skills Improvement Service 2012/13 offer

As the improvement body for the further education and skills sector, LSIS has a responsibility to provide sector colleagues with the support they need to continuously improve their practice and performance. The ultimate goal is to ensure that all learners have an inspiring and quality experience.

In the past year LSIS has streamlined its activities and approach and refocused on the areas of need where working with, and for, the sector it can make the most significant difference.

LSIS's focus for the 2012/13 year is around three priorities:

Spotlight

Welcome to this month's Spotlight supplement to our FE and Skills e-newsletter. Each Spotlight focuses on a policy or theme of interest to the FE sector and those who support it. We plan to publish three or four Spotlights a year and welcome feedback on both supplement and newsletter (email: fe.reform@bis.gsi.gov.uk).

1. To lead the sector to achieve outstanding teaching and learning – by equipping sector colleagues with the tools to help them improve learners’ outcomes and experiences, deliver better teaching and assessment and achieve their individual and organisational goals.
2. To ensure the sector has excellent leadership, management and governance - by supporting existing and future leaders to be effective, entrepreneurial and successful, and to work with and respond to the needs of their communities.
3. To mobilise effective and timely intervention both to avoid and resolve cases of failure – by supporting sector colleagues in developing their capacity to self-improve wherever they are in their journey, with a focus on upward movement, LSIS will provide them with intensive support and direction when they need it.

What this means to the sector

It means that the sector, and everyone working within it, can get what they need from LSIS:

- all of the support and resources sector colleagues need are in one place
- colleagues can choose from bespoke and in-house solutions as well as public programmes to ensure their needs are met
- grants and funds are available to support the drive for improvement.

Priority 1: LSIS will equip sector colleagues with the tools to help them improve learners’ outcomes and experiences, deliver better teaching and assessment and achieve their individual and organisational goals.

Teaching, learning and assessment are the core business of the further education and skills sector. Teachers and all those who support learners and potential learners – enabling them to connect, develop and progress – are providing a direct service which makes a difference to people’s lives and delivers the skills businesses need.

Recent changes to the inspection regime have put outstanding teaching and learning at the heart of organisations, providing a further challenge to providers. A holistic approach to the whole learning process - often known as the learner journey - will be under as much pressure as the actual planning, delivery and assessment of learning itself. It is therefore more important than ever that all learners get the right learning for them to achieve and progress. In the future providers will not be able to get an overall outstanding Ofsted judgement unless their teaching, learning and assessment are also judged to be outstanding.

LSIS recognises that excellent teaching and learning, putting students at the heart of the system, delivering relevant learning programmes and qualifications and providing a ladder of opportunity from basic skills through to higher level apprenticeships and higher level skills add up to a big challenge to the sector in a time of economic austerity.

Lord Lingfield's review

The announcements to date from Lord Lingfield demonstrate confidence in the further education and skills sector's ability to continue to improve itself. LSIS supports and enhances professionalism in the sector through its services and welcomes the focus of the second phase of the review on how this can be strengthened. LSIS is committed to ensuring that those working in the further education and skills sector have access to the professional development they need to be able to provide outstanding teaching and learning opportunities. LSIS is pleased that the second phase of the review has been considering those teaching basic skills in literacy and numeracy, or working with learners with disabilities or learning difficulties. LSIS has a high level of expertise in these areas and looks forward to contributing to discussions.

To support the delivery of excellence in teaching, learning and assessment LSIS is:

- supporting the independent Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning and the development of a framework for improvement
- spreading effective teaching and assessment approaches, including developing new models of initial teacher education, continuing professional development and advanced practitioners
- undertaking a Council-led assessment of the impact of LSIS services to identify the most effective ways to improve teaching, learning and assessment
- improving curriculum planning and development skills for teachers in an era of freedoms and flexibilities
- driving the application of technology to enhance and extend learning and
- enabling providers to maximise the potential of observation as a means of improving the learner experience and outcomes for learners.

Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning

Announced by the Government in [New Challenges, New Chances](#) in December 2011, the sector-led Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) has been tasked with raising the quality and improving the outcomes and impact of adult vocational teaching and learning in the further education and skills sector for learners and employers. LSIS is proud to be supporting CAVTL alongside the Institute for Learning (IfL) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

The final findings and recommendations of the independent Commission are due to be published in spring 2013. The announcement of CAVTL's review offers the sector an opportunity to turn the spotlight on this priority. Providers, employers and anyone with an interest in vocational teaching and learning are invited to submit evidence of excellent practice. For more information on CAVTL, submitting evidence and how you can get involved see the [CAVTL website](#).

FE advice service

LSIS has recently launched the [FE advice](#) service. This is a free service staffed by experienced education practitioners and teacher trainers with extensive knowledge of further education, training to teach in further education and the associated qualifications. The service offers confidential, specialist advice to sector colleagues or those considering a career in the sector on all aspects of working in further education and skills.

Priority 2: LSIS will support existing and future leaders to be effective, entrepreneurial and successful, and to work with and respond to the needs of their communities.

Being a leader in the further education and skills sector is a demanding and challenging role and the policy intent of greater freedoms and flexibilities create additional demands and expectations. Leaders are now expected to operate successfully in a fast moving connected world where the college principal is also a chief executive.

Whatever their role, leaders are expected to lead excellence in learning and team development; and manage business operations and relationships with a wide range of employers, stakeholders, business and political leaders. They also need to be able to operate effectively within the fast-developing policy context; manage increasingly complex and diverse governance arrangements; and explore new delivery models and outsource and share services in order to make the most of budgets.

Focusing on improving leadership and governance remains paramount in the new environment of flexibility but we know it is a weakness in some parts of the sector.

Leadership Exchange

LSIS is leading the establishment of the Leadership Exchange, which will act as a sector-wide organisation to ensure that leaders, managers and governors have access to the best support and development available, in order to be outstanding leaders of learning, and leaders of outstanding learning organisations. The Leadership Exchange will act as a key agent of change for the sector, and will be fully operational by September 2013.

LSIS is pleased to have Asha Khemka, OBE, Principal and CEO of Vision West Nottinghamshire College, as its nominated trustee in support of the project; and to have recruited Craig Crowther as project director to move this project from concept to reality. A project board drawn from across the learning and skills sector has been established to provide advice and ensure the varying needs of the sector are heard and addressed.

The Leadership Exchange will be engaged with the development of leaders at all levels, not just senior leaders. It will take the lead in addressing the widely recognised, sector-wide shortage of senior leaders, by proactively supporting the development of the next generation. The Leadership Exchange also has a vital role to play in ensuring the current and future generation of governors are able to steer the sector's organisations to provide outstanding learning, delivered within efficient and commercially sustainable organisations.

Priority 3: LSIS will support sector colleagues in developing their capacity to self-improve, wherever they are in their journey, with a focus on upward movement LSIS will provide them with intensive support and direction when they need it.

The new Ofsted approach means new challenges for providers. They are operating in a high risk environment. Their performance is linked to their viability and sustainability.

Creating a confident sector which is free from central controls and bureaucratic burdens and able to excel and respond even more effectively to learner and employer needs is a major aim of the Government's reform plan. However, with the new freedoms and flexibilities come additional responsibilities for providers to ensure they deliver high quality services to learners and their local communities.

Ofsted: How colleges improve

Ofsted has recently released [How colleges improve](#), a report commissioned by LSIS highlighting how colleges can build on best practice and ensure their provision is at least good or outstanding.

During May and June 2012, inspectors visited ten general further education colleges, two land-based colleges, two sixth form colleges, two independent specialist colleges and two specialist designated colleges of adult education. An analysis of the published inspection reports of 55 colleges inspected between September 2009 and May 2012 provided further evidence. The report found that good and outstanding colleges were not afraid of the self-assessment process even if it was self-critical as they understood it was integral to their improvement.

While there was no single explanation as to why colleges under-performed, there were many inter-related reasons and common features. Often there was complacency and lack of ambition, direction and vision from senior staff. Too often leaders and managers were overly preoccupied with finance or capital buildings projects to the detriment of promoting good teaching and learning or developing the curriculum.

Self-assessment reports in weaker colleges were often over-optimistic and lacked critical insight, which brought about limited improvements. This was often also coupled with a defensive inward-looking approach, where colleges were slow to accept change or act when data showed decline.

Improvement services

LSIS has an important role in developing providers' capacity to self improve from good to great. It supports sector improvement by undertaking organisational health checks and providing support for providers preparing for inspection.

To support the sector LSIS has developed four levels of intervention services:

- organisational performance support and coaching to help providers move through their improvement journey, whatever stage they are at
- a new approach drawing on improvement partners to support those providers found to require improvement on more than one occasion
- individually designed packages of support for providers in receipt of an unsatisfactory Ofsted judgement or Notice to Improve from the Skills Funding Agency
- a new escalated intervention service for inadequate colleges. As stated in [New Challenges, New Chances](#) (stage 2 Intensive Support), LSIS will provide intensive peer support to these colleges to help them carry out a structure and prospects appraisal that will help develop a robust proposal to bring about significant new opportunities and outcomes for learners. The proposal must have buy-in from local stakeholders and supported by funding bodies. Colleges eligible for this support will be notified by the Skills Funding Agency.

Further information

For more information on LSIS and to find out how they can help, visit www.lsis.org.uk or contact them by email at enquiries@lsis.org.uk or by phone on 02476 627953.

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET
Tel: 020 7215 5000

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