

Sector Skills Assessment

UK wide summary report

November 2009



Skills for Learning Professionals

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1. Introduction

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is the independent employer-led sector skills council responsible for the professional development of those working in career guidance (CG), community learning and development (CLD), further education (FE), higher education (HE), libraries, archives and information services (LAIS), and work based learning (WBL) across the UK. Lifelong Learning UK represents around 1.2 million people working in lifelong learning in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and is the voice of employers in this sector on skills issues. Lifelong Learning UK provides the strategic perspective for workforce planning and development and influences and shapes relevant policy across the four UK nations. It leads the collection of workforce data and provides analysis on workforce characteristics and trends to better inform future workforce planning.

Like the other Sector Skills Councils, Lifelong Learning UK was required to undertake a Sector Skills Agreement. These were developed to encourage collaborative working between Sector Skills Councils and their employers, with stakeholders, the Government(s) and other partner organisations. The aim was to enable the delivery of an agreed action plan to meet the priority skills needs of the sector. The Sector Skills Agreement for the lifelong learning sector (LLUK 2008a) was completed in March 2008. As the research feeding into this work was completed at the end of 2006, the information needs to be updated as part of the Sector Skills Assessment.

The sector skills assessment has to be completed by all Sector Skills Councils on an annual basis in order to provide *'informative evidence resources that can be consulted and used as the basis for policy development'* (UKCES 2009). The main aim of the lifelong learning sector skills assessment in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is to obtain up-to-date information on: drivers of skills demand; current skills needs; anticipating what lies ahead; and training and workforce development.

2. Methodology

To meet the aims and objectives of the sector skills assessment, a multi-stranded methodology incorporating primary and secondary information analysis has been adopted, including the following strands of work:

- **Literature review** – carried out by Lifelong Learning UK to identify the existing evidence base, relating to the topics of interest and to inform the primary research and the reports.
- **Review and analysis of secondary data**¹ – carried out by Lifelong Learning UK to identify and analyse relevant existing data and to inform the primary research and the reports.
- **Research about skills needs in the Career Guidance** area of work carried out in July 2009, involving an online survey of 1,478 career guidance professionals, 39 in-depth interviews with career guidance practitioners and four skills workshops with 45 attendees.
- **Interviews with 18 stakeholders from all nations and areas of work (except CG)** – carried out with representatives from key organisations in order to gather information on drivers for skills demand, and broad skills issues relating to their sector now and in the future.
- **Interviews with 94 employer from all nations and areas of work (except CG)** – to collate detailed information mainly about issues relating to skills gaps and shortages.

¹ Key sources include the employer skills surveys for each nation, although it is important to note that the data from Northern Ireland and Wales was collected in 2005, the data from Scotland collected in 2008 and for England in 2007.

- **Analysis** to assess information from all strands of work in order to identify skills priorities for the lifelong learning sector.
- **Consultation with key sector stakeholders** will be carried out to validate the findings and reported on in the UK wide main report.

In addition to this UK wide summary report, a UK wide main report will be submitted, along with four reports detailing the skills needs and priorities in each of the UK nations.

3. Drivers of skills demand

Skills drivers

The literature review identified a series of skills drivers (confirmed through primary research) within the lifelong learning sector. According to these, a significant driver of change is public policy and legislation, which may be cross sector or sector specific, UK wide or nation specific. Policies implemented by each nation's government in relation to skills and education have an important impact in influencing skills needs and priorities across the lifelong learning sector within each nation, particularly in relation to: curriculum; working with children and young people; equality and diversity; funding; professionalisation of the workforce; quality; and regulation.

Other significant skills drivers identified through literature and primary research include: economic conditions, in particular dealing with the impact of the current recession; globalisation, including the need to interact with and enter global markets; technological change, especially the need to keep pace with new developments; and demographics, including the ageing workforce and the need for succession planning. Succession planning is essential to account for the wealth of skills and expertise that will be lost through retirements and the expected fall in the number of 18-20 year olds over the next ten years, and the potential impact on demand for HE in England (Universities UK 2009).

Additional drivers identified through the primary research include environmental issues and priorities, and consumer demand, which may be related to the demands of employers, learners or clients seeking support through career guidance. Consumer demand can be related to several drivers identified through the literature review concerning: trends in participation in lifelong learning; productivity growth; and skills utilisation in the workforce. Finally the literature review also identified expenditure on lifelong learning as a skills driver.

Drivers operate on a variety of scales, for example, local, regional, sub-national, national, UK, European and global scales and in different timescales. Some are immediate, for example, lower apprenticeship recruitment levels because of company reductions. Others take longer to filter through to local levels, especially where there is less of an immediate requirement to respond – for example the agenda associated with the low carbon industry. This may be because pressure on resources requires those in the lifelong learning sector to prioritise, which in turn has implications for the focus of national and local resources.

Evidence from the primary research suggests that the impact of these skills drivers mean the lifelong learning sector will need to continue to become more adaptable, flexible and responsive to change. There is an increased demand for efficiencies and more effective working between stakeholders, employers and employees across the sector as a whole and within specific areas of work. This will require more specialised skills sets, including collaboration and partnership working to share effective practice and take advantage of economies of scale.

Defining success

The aim of all lifelong learning providers is to help learners achieve their learning objectives. Through up-skilling and re-skilling the existing workforce across all sectors in the UK (or teaching

and training people who are entering the workforce for the first time), the lifelong learning sector aims to contribute to the economy by ensuring that the whole UK workforce is as skilled and productive as it can be. This was supported through research where stakeholders in the lifelong learning sector talked about the need to consider readily available performance indicator statistics such as league tables and retention rates as measures of success, as well as longer term indicators such as progression, impact on learners and communities, and the ability of the sector to respond to change.

Economic condition of the sector

The current economic downturn clearly impacts across the occupational spectrum. Perhaps unsurprisingly within this climate, the majority of sector stakeholders involved in the primary research reported that due to the recession, the economic condition of their areas of work was 'fragile' or 'vulnerable'. Uncertainty about funding sources was also mentioned as a difficulty. Not knowing whether a certain budget will be available for the medium-term was cited as a barrier to providing high quality services, as planning becomes difficult. This highlights an important skills need, related to bidding and negotiation skills, to ensure existing funding sources are maintained and new sources secured within an increasingly competitive arena. In addition there is a need for skills in efficient procurement and outsourcing to make the most effective use of the funds available.

Research with employers found that the key impacts of the recession across the lifelong learning sector include: diminishing funding sources, which could impact upon the level of service that can be provided; increased numbers of applicants for vacancies, although it was reported that the quality of applicants can vary significantly because people with a range of skills sets find themselves looking for work; increased student numbers, particularly within FE, which will require staff to develop the necessary skills to deal with larger class sizes and to provide a wider range of courses; a reduction in apprenticeships because companies are not recruiting within the current economic climate; and increased demand for career guidance created amongst those who want to be confident of staying in work as well as those out of work.

4. Current skills needs

This section presents key findings based on information relating to skills shortages and gaps in the lifelong learning sector. The headline statistics are drawn from the employer skills surveys in each of the four nations and broad comparisons are made across the nations where possible. This information is supplemented by primary research carried out by TBR in relation to CG and by LSN covering the other five areas of work in the sector.

Skills shortages and recruitment difficulties

Hard-to-fill vacancies are those vacancies described by employers as being particularly difficult to fill. Reasons often include skills related issues, but may simply involve such aspects as the employer being based in a remote location, poor pay or terms and conditions of employment (LLUK 2008b).

Skills shortage vacancies are those hard-to-fill vacancies which result from a lack of applicants with the required skills, work experience or qualifications (LLUK 2008b).

The review of secondary data by Lifelong Learning UK found that the number of hard-to-fill vacancies as a percentage of the total employed in the lifelong learning sector is similar in England (0.5 per cent) (Learning and Skills Council 2008), Northern Ireland (0.7 per cent) (Department for Education and Learning 2007), Scotland (0.5 per cent) (Future Skills Scotland 2008) and Wales (0.4 per cent) (Future Skills Wales 2005). Skills shortage vacancies as a percentage of hard-to-fill vacancies in the lifelong learning sector are 67 per cent for England (Learning and Skills Council 2008) and approximately 51 per cent for Scotland (Future Skills Scotland 2008). Data is unavailable for Wales and Northern Ireland because there were too few responses from the sector in these nations to generate robust statistics.

The most common adverse impacts of unfilled vacancies identified through secondary analysis and primary research include: increased staff workload; loss of business; delays developing new products or services; and reduced quality of provision.

The National Employer Skills Survey for England in 2007 (Learning and Skills Council 2008) reported that skills shortages exist across the lifelong learning sector in relation to: technical, practical and job-specific skills; problem solving; general and professional IT skills; numeracy; and literacy. These findings were supported by the primary research which found that these skills shortages exist, to some extent, across the whole of the UK. Additional skills shortages found to exist through the primary research relate to: tutors and assessors not having the required qualifications; teaching learners with disabilities; leadership skills; project management; and customer service.

Primary research with CG professionals found that the most severe skills shortages in the occupation are: wider awareness of CG industry developments; creativity and innovation; and up to date knowledge of best practice. Less severe but common skills shortages include: the ability to apply best practice; negotiation skills; and time management skills.

Research evidence suggests that the most common actions taken to overcome skills shortages include: the use of temporary staff, including agency staff, consultants or volunteers; recruiting applicants without the necessary skills on the condition that they undertake training; employing wider recruitment campaigns; recruiting staff from other sectors with transferable skills; and developing and promoting internal staff.

Skills gaps

Skills gaps exist when employers employ staff whom they believe are not fully proficient in their job (LLUK 2008b).

Skills gaps are common across the lifelong learning sector workforce. According to secondary analysis of the employer skills survey in each nation, the percentage of lifelong learning establishments reporting skills gaps included: 28 per cent of employers in Scotland (Future Skills Scotland 2008), 17 per cent in England (Learning and Skills Council 2008) and Wales (Future Skills Wales 2005), and 10 per cent in Northern Ireland (Department for Education and Learning 2008). Overall, from this secondary analysis, the most common skills gaps identified include: technical, practical and job-specific skills; management skills; customer handling skills; general IT user skills; and team working. These results are supported by research with employers, which identified that these skills gaps continue to exist in the lifelong learning sector.

Other skills gaps identified through the primary research that are both UK and sector wide, and can also be related to the skills drivers mentioned above include:

- Skills related to dealing with the impacts of globalisation and ensuring organisations are able to interact with global markets, and particularly in the case of HE, compete on a global scale
- Skills related to responding to consumer demand, including the demands of employers, learners and local communities
- Skills related to developing new products and services to respond to environmental issues and priorities such as the low carbon industry
- Management and leadership skills
- Skills related to collaboration and partnership working within and between organisations and with local groups and communities
- Employer engagement particularly within FE, and to some extent HE, where there is now an increasing need for institutions to develop closer relationships with employers and market their services more effectively

- Skills relating to competency in information and communication technologies/information and learning technologies and exploiting new technologies. It is anticipated that changes in technology will impact across all areas of work – from teaching and learning practices, including greater use of e-learning and virtual learning environments, to the digitisation and preservation techniques of libraries and archives
- Embedding equality and diversity legislation into working practices
- In Wales, a skills gap continues to exist in relation to the ability of employees to provide a service through the medium of Welsh and bilingually.

Skills gaps that are more specific to each area of work are as follows:

Community learning and development

- Several important skills needs specific to the CLD sector were highlighted by research with stakeholders and employers in the sector. These mainly include skills for working with communities, young people, and disadvantaged groups, such as skills to ensure a focussed recognition of learner achievement and assisting people to demonstrate what they have achieved.
- There is also a broader requirement for skills related to committee development, financial planning and planning events.
- Other skills that were cited by interviewees as important, and currently lacking, include the skills needed to: enable adult learners to develop numeracy and literacy skills; engage learners in communication; and enable progression.
- Additional skills requirements within the sector relate to changing policy, legislation and funding areas. With funding sources becoming increasingly scarce, it is important to develop specialist skills in areas such as bid writing and negotiation skills.
- It was also reported that within youth work, because of the professionalisation agenda, there are some gaps in terms of qualifications. A qualified workforce is becoming increasingly emphasised by employers.

Further education

- Skills development related to independent learning time was highlighted as important for lecturers in supporting greater learner autonomy and independence.
- It was reported that within FE, and to a lesser extent HE, there is a need for more effective teaching and learning, including blended learning involving a range of teaching methods and sites, and in particular focusing on more online resources.
- The 14-19 Diplomas mean that young people from the age of 14 are also being taught within FE settings in England. This requires a different set of skills from dealing with older or adult learners, such as providing greater pastoral care and behaviour management.
- Following the 2007 Westminster government reforms to the teaching and development of teachers, tutors and trainers in the FE sector in England, there is now a far greater emphasis on being qualified to teach within the lifelong learning sector.

Higher education

- As in other areas of work, it was reported that in HE skills gaps exist in relation to leadership and management, at all occupational levels from senior strategic managers through to early career lecturers. The specific example was given of young lecturers who have progressed quickly through their undergraduate, MSc and PhD degrees to become lecturers and are

then given programmes or large scale projects to manage without having been exposed to, or gained prior experience of, project management skills.

- It was reported that there is a need within HE to ensure a greater focus on the employer agenda, in particular being more responsive and open to a demand-led employer approach. This may require the development of new skills sets, possibly also for academics who are traditionally required to focus on research and teaching. In the current climate, interviewees iterated that it is important for HE institutions to ensure staff have the appropriate blend of academic experience and technical ability (dual professionalism).
- An important skills need is linked to developing innovation and creativity in HE. It was reported that a wealth of untapped expertise currently exists within the sector, especially amongst academics. However, the challenge is in harnessing these skills and using them to develop new products and enter new markets.
- Engaging with blended learning and new technologies was also cited as an important skills gap within HE.

Libraries, archives and information services

- Skills needs in the LAIS area of work relate to the use of ICT, including Web 2.0 to support learners (including remote learning) and information management.
- Another skills need is based on ensuring libraries can compete with other services through marketing themselves and effectively making library services accessible, by generating an awareness of services, for example – publicising the fact that it is free.
- There is a growing need for managers and service leaders to be able to evaluate and assess the impact of the service and to use evidence to advocate the value of the service in order to procure resources, develop partnerships and position the service within the wider organisation.
- In local government services, the move towards strategic commissioning and the outsourcing of service delivery is generating a new need for skills such as development of service level specifications and contract management.
- Practical skills needs were also highlighted such as stock management, budgeting and customer services.
- Skills gaps were also identified around the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts and the impact this has on releasing information, particularly for public bodies.

Work based learning

- A significant skills gap identified by interviewees within WBL focussed on the complexities of dealing with demand-led funding, including: understanding the demand-led funding formula; data management, in relation to submitting information to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR); and contracting, through developments such as the maximum contract value and its use.
- It was also suggested that the workforce reforms focus too much on teaching and not on other essential skills for delivering learning in the workforce. The specific example was given that WBL trainers have to work side-by-side with learners and their supervisors, often meaning that trainers have to effectively manage the learners' supervisors to continue imparting learning on the job, which is one of the realities of the workplace. A skills gap was reported to exist amongst trainers who have to achieve the continuing commitment of the learner's supervisor to helping the learner with their studies.
- Awareness of risk management and health and safety legislation were identified as skills needs by WBL interviewees because of the rate of change and increasing requirement when seeking contracts to deliver provision.

- As in FE, in England the 14-19 Diplomas and other initiatives mean that young people from the age of 14 are being taught within WBL settings. This requires a different set of skills from dealing with older or adult learners, such as providing greater pastoral care and behaviour management.
- Following the 2007 Westminster government reforms to the teaching and development of teachers, tutors and trainers in the wider FE sector in England, there is now a far greater emphasis on being qualified to teach within the lifelong learning sector.

Career guidance

- Primary research by TBR identified the most severe skills gaps within CG as mirroring those which are identified as severe skills shortages, namely: wider awareness of CG industry developments; up to date knowledge of best practice; and creativity and innovation. Less common skills gaps include: numeracy and literacy, which are critical as a foundation for effective performance in any professional role; and skills in negotiation and partnership working, which are of importance in career guidance activities which require interaction with many other bodies.

Priority sectors

- The Westminster government has introduced six priority sectors for England, namely: digital Britain; the low carbon industry; advanced manufacturing; engineering and construction; professional and financial services; and life sciences and pharmaceuticals. Given that the lifelong learning sector workforce is important for supplying training and skills for the UK workforce in the wider economy, employer interviewees across the UK were asked a series of questions about the readiness of their organisation to support each of these priority sectors. Although limited, it was evident that there are pockets of high quality activity occurring to support each priority sectors. There are sound processes in place which form a good foundation upon which to build and expand.
- The HE employers tended to be at the forefront of each respective industry. In the case of most of the priority sectors, HE employers stated that they had developed various teaching, research or consultancy roles to support priority sectors in terms of expertise. FE and WBL employers focused primarily on their teaching roles, and in some cases links with industry and employers, particularly where they operated a system of apprenticeships. CLD often had limited or no involvement in priority sectors. However where CLD based employers could identify links with priority sectors, their priorities were advancing in relation to the opportunities of learners, rather than supplying training to support industry. These illustrative examples demonstrate that the lifelong learning sector is responsive to the needs of the priority sectors, however they suggest that some skills gaps exist in relation to some sectors in terms of increasing involvement, through teaching, research or consultancy roles.

Skills gaps exist partly as a consequence of the fast paced nature of occupational change. The lifelong learning sector must remain up to speed with developments in its own professional practice and the wider economic and labour market environment. Other reasons for skills gaps include: the pace of developments within technology and ICT; increased diversification of job roles; lack of funding for CPD; higher earning potential within industry or other sectors meaning the lifelong learning sector cannot attract or retain staff with the necessary skills; and reluctance of some staff to recognise their training needs.

The key adverse impacts of skills shortages and gaps include: increased workload for existing staff; delays in developing and enhancing services; reliance on costly contractors and agency staff; potential damage to reputation; backlogs in work; being unable to meet the demands of customers; and being unable to obtain funding if organisations are lacking the necessary bid writing and negotiation skills.

Actions to overcome skills gaps reported by professionals across the lifelong learning sector, included: the identification of training needs amongst staff; provision of staff training; sharing of effective practice within and between organisations; collaboration with other organisations; secondments; and the appointment of new staff.

5. Anticipating what lies ahead

Stakeholder commentary about ‘anticipating what lies ahead’ relates to the readiness or preparedness of the sector to adapt to changes. It is therefore useful to think about the characteristics or ‘critical success factors’ that will be needed to ensure future skills needs are responded to effectively. These include:

- Increased flexibility and the need for the sector to become more responsive to the current and future needs of the economy and employers
- Increased emphasis on individuals becoming managers of their own learning needs and becoming proactive in completing training units to ‘top up’ their existing skills
- Employees to develop more transferable skills - skills that are learned and developed in one context that are useful in another
- More short-term and part-time working, including contract work and job-shares because of the increasing rate of change and employer requirements to respond flexibly.

The specific future skills identified through the primary research are listed below. There is an important distinction however between future skills that are ‘continual needs’ - which broadly mirror current skills needs, suggesting they are perceived as long term issues or those difficult to address - and ‘new needs’ or those that are more responsive to new and emerging demands.

Continual skills needs highlighted by interviewees include:

- Keeping pace with change in information technology and the digital world
- Engaging with communities, especially disadvantaged groups and those who are excluded or marginalised, which will require a specific skills set in terms of accessing and engaging these groups
- Employer engagement especially within HE and FE where organisations are having to become more responsive to the needs and demands of employers
- Leadership and management skills to enable managers to inspire and lead their workforce through periods of change and uncertainty, including for example, changing job roles, changing working patterns, re-organisation and re-structuring
- Basic, key or essential skills – defined as the skills that are commonly needed for success in a range of activities in education, training, work and life in general. Examples include the application of information and communication technology, problem solving, working with others and skills in literacy and numeracy
- Customer service skills, especially when organisations are expected to respond far more to the demands of learners or customers in providing a quality service
- Skills combinations, particularly within FE, HE, and WBL including a combination of industry and subject specific knowledge and experience (dual professionalism).

Future skills needs that are responsive to new and emerging issues include:

- Skills needs relating to policy analysis, especially amongst managers – for example, being able to understand the shifting policy context and anticipate, plan for, and respond to the implications of the policy changes for organisations
- Greater emphasis on bid writing and negotiation skills to enable organisations to compete for diminishing funding sources and negotiate to maintain or extend their current funding streams, especially within the current economic climate
- Skills related to innovation and entrepreneurship to ensure new business development, particularly in global markets
- The continued support within areas of high unemployment for tutors within CLD, FE, LAIS and WBL to support those looking for work to develop employability skills, for example self-management, team working, business and customer awareness, problem solving, communication and literacy, the application of numeracy, and the application of information technology
- The need to address priority issues such as climate change, low carbon industries and sustainability will require the development of skills to enable new research, innovation and product development such as training and awareness raising within these areas
- Increasing demands for skills related to budget planning and financial management to ensure organisations can cope with and adapt to more complex funding procedures and streams
- Increasing demands for problem solving skills and creativity to ensure organisations are able to keep pace with changing skills and policy drivers
- Skills related to the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework (QCF) reforms (England, Northern Ireland and Wales) including understanding the size and level of qualifications; developing more flexible training programmes for learners; and tracking learner achievement through the use of a unique learner number (ULN) and an individual's electronic learner record
- Ensuring that organisations remain competitive, reach wider markets and secure new business through skills development in the areas of marketing, PR and advocacy.

The evidence suggests that skills drivers influence future, as well as current, skills needs, for example, skills needs in relation to policy, economic conditions, technological change and consumer demand are cited as future skills needs. The consideration of future skills needs has important implications for employers in terms of addressing the current skills shortages and gaps within the increasingly pressured circumstances brought about by the recession, whilst retaining a long-term vision and preparing the workforce for the future.

There is an increasing requirement that individual lifelong learning employers work with others across the sector, i.e. through partnerships and collaboration. Employers interviewed from CLD, HE, LAIS and WBL reported that their organisations are already involved in partnership working with other organisations or local providers. A more mixed response was reported by interviewees in the FE sector – although there were examples of partnership working between FE providers within the devolved nations, this remains a more substantial challenge in England.

A positive finding of the primary research is the confidence the interviewees had in the sector's ability to adapt to change. Despite the reference to changing political, economic and cultural contexts, it was reported by interviewees that on the whole their organisations are generally responsive to the need to change and adapt in order to ensure continued survival, although further or continued improvement is needed.

6. Training and workforce development

This section presents key findings based on data relating to training provision by employers in the lifelong learning sector for their staff. Most of the information is from the employer skills survey in each of the four nations and broad comparisons are made across the nations where possible.

Lifelong learning employers in England (72 per cent) (Learning and Skills Council 2008) and Northern Ireland (67 per cent) (Department for Education and Learning 2008) were more likely to provide off the job training than lifelong learning employers in Wales (54 per cent) (Future Skills Wales 2005). Figures are not available for off-the-job training in Scotland, but approximately 80 per cent of lifelong learning employers do provide some training (Future Skills Scotland 2008).

Primary research has found that where barriers to training uptake are encountered, the primary reasons are: lack of funding; lack of time to release staff to attend training; lack of training availability in specific locations; the length of training courses, which can require significant commitment; personal barriers, where for example it is difficult for some people to admit they have training needs; and gaps in training provision related to specific areas of work or skills.

Solutions to overcome these barriers suggested by interviewees include: delivery of in-house training; collaboration with other organisations to share effective practice and experience, share outcomes of training and benefit from economies of scale when sending larger groups for training; and accessing on-line and 'bite-sized' training.

7. Recommendations for the future

It is recommended that action is taken to address the skills needs identified within the lifelong learning sector. However, these recommendations or 'priorities for action' will need to be re-visited and potentially adapted as part of an on-going process to identify, address and overcome skills needs. The findings presented suggest the following priorities:

Key skills priorities

We have identified five groups of skills areas which are a priority for further development across the lifelong learning sector.

- Skills for managing change (including keeping pace with emerging technologies, leadership and management for change, skills to plan for and respond to the implications of policy changes for organisations, problem solving skills and creativity)
- Skills in working with others (including partnership and collaboration engaging with communities, engaging with and understanding the needs and demands of employers, customer service)
- General business skills (including project management, marketing, PR and advocacy, budget planning and financial management, skills relating to innovation and entrepreneurship, bid writing and negotiation skills)
- Specific skills (including key skills, skills combinations, technical, practical and job specific skills)
- Teaching and learning related skills (including skills in blended learning, skills at supporting the employability of others, skills in sustainable development, innovation and education, skills in teaching cluster subjects, technician class skills, and learners with disabilities)

Specific priorities

In certain geographical areas, occupations, types of employer there are specific 'hotspots' of skills need which are noted in the main body of this paper. These are best responded to with focused, time-limited action to address the barriers that are holding back skills development.

Generic Issues

There are a number of generic issues which hold back skills development across the lifelong learning sector. In particular:

- Lack of resources for training including both funding and time
- Need to recognise training needs
- Rapid change and diversification of roles
- Need to prepare for an unknown future
- Some specific gaps in training provision
- Demographic likelihood of many retirements

We recommend that we mitigate the effect of these issues by creating a landscape in which the following approaches to skills development are facilitated, encouraged and valued.

- Increased collaboration and partnership working to share effective practice and take advantage of economies of scale
- Use of secondments
- Further quality improvement in identification of staff training needs
- Increased provision of in house staff training
- Focus on continuing professional development to keep pace with change
- Development of transferable skill sets
- Embed equality and diversity into working policy and practice – A diverse workforce will ensure that the sector takes full advantage of a wide range of skills and abilities
- Support for continuing professional development across roles to respond to increased diversification of roles – combination skills
- Development of short courses, bite sized training and on-line access to learning

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