

# Leading wholesale curriculum redesign

**LSIS** LEARNING AND SKILLS IMPROVEMENT SERVICE



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## Leading wholesale curriculum redesign



This guide explores some of the drivers that are encouraging providers within the further education (FE) and skills sector to review and redesign the curriculum they offer. Although the guide is primarily aimed at senior leaders and managers with strategic responsibility for curriculum design, it will also be of interest to middle managers and practitioners.

The guide is intended to encourage readers to reflect on their organisation's current curriculum offer and identify areas where change is desirable (or where improvements can be made) and develop programmes of learning that are responsive to the needs of the learners and the communities and employers they serve.

The emphasis on wholesale curriculum redesign and leadership is deliberate. Strong leadership is needed to address major concerns identified by Ofsted with the quality of provision in the post-16 FE and skills sector and how providers prepare young people for the world of work<sup>1</sup>.

### The guide provides:

- an analysis of economic and policy factors influencing change;
- challenging questions to stimulate reflection on your own curriculum provision;

- guidance on developing an audit tool to review and inform curriculum redesign;
- detailed case studies that provide practical examples and an insight into the different approaches providers are taking in leading curriculum redesign.

## Defining 'curriculum'

People have differing views as to what the term 'curriculum' means. For some it is the syllabus being studied. For others it has a much broader meaning, encompassing all aspects of the learning experience, formal and informal learning, learning that takes place outside traditional settings and additional activities such as work placements, employability, pastoral support and social development. For the purposes of this guide, the term 'curriculum' should be interpreted in the broadest sense. Providers will need to ensure that everyone contributing to a vision for curriculum design shares a common understanding of what this means relative to their context. Any curriculum redesign will take into consideration all the stages of a learning journey from the learner's first enquiry to successful completion and opportunities for progression.

<sup>1</sup> The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills: Learning and skills (2011/12) (Ofsted, 2012): <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-learning-and-skill>



## Changing times for further education

Current government policy for the FE and skills sector is that of decentralisation, reduced bureaucracy and increased freedom and flexibility to enable providers to develop responsive provision that meet the needs of individuals, businesses and local communities<sup>2</sup>. In return for these freedoms, providers must offer increased transparency about their delivery and performance and publish information on their plans, achievements and progression data.

While there is a move away from centrally-imposed initiatives and the support programmes that have traditionally accompanied these, the government is, at the same time, implementing a range of reforms that will require providers to review, and almost certainly revise, the curriculum they offer. Significant drivers for change include:

- an increased emphasis on effective teaching, learning, assessment and a learner-centred curriculum, including learning that takes place outside traditional classroom settings;
- the removal of funding for some qualifications – a clear signal that providers are expected to develop meaningful programmes of learning that include realistic and relevant work experience and that lead to employment or

progression to further study rather than focusing on a collection of individual qualifications;

- less reliance on public funding and an emphasis on co-funding by employers;
- an expansion of adult Apprenticeship programmes;
- the potential for colleges to recruit 14-16 year olds directly, with effect from September 2013;
- raising the participation age to 19, with effect from 2015;
- reform of minimum levels of performance for adult provision and the introduction of minimum standards;
- the impact of the planned introduction of government-backed FE loans and the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan<sup>3</sup> scheme; and
- government initiatives to empower learners to make informed choices by providing better access to information about quality

Providers will need to consider the impact of all the initiatives, policies and changes to funding criteria as well as organisational and local issues

The freedom to take a more self-determining approach places a responsibility on providers to keep their curriculum under continuous review as well as to implement, monitor and evaluate their own curriculum change projects rapidly and effectively so that they remain agile and responsive to changing stakeholder demands

## The role of leaders in managing curriculum change

In the revised Common Inspection Framework (CIF)<sup>4</sup>, September 2012, Ofsted provides clear guidance on their expectations of leaders, managers and, where appropriate, governors and trustees, in relation to curriculum planning and implementation. Ofsted lists six criteria by which they will judge the effectiveness of leadership and management, including the extent to which leaders, managers and, where applicable governors and trustees, **‘successfully plan, establish and manage the curriculum and learning programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local and national community’**.

*(Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills, Ofsted, 2012: page 53<sup>5</sup>)*

Further guidance about curriculum design provides a comprehensive overview of the aspects inspectors will take into consideration. This clearly signifies the centrality of the curriculum to all other aspects of organisational activity. Two key criteria are:

- “whether learning programmes are accessible in terms of timing, location, mode of

delivery and duration, and are structured to provide a coherent and substantive course of study at different levels with a variety of interesting and useful activities to meet learners’ individual needs, including for those under-represented in learning and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and

- “the effectiveness of curriculum management in ensuring that the range, content and flexibility of the learning offer provides all learners with choice and opportunities for progression to higher levels of study and employment.”

*(Source: Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills, Ofsted, 2012: page 56, para 178)*

The importance of teaching, learning and assessment is further emphasised in the CIF by the requirement for providers to be rated as ‘outstanding’ for teaching, learning and assessment in order to be rated as ‘outstanding’ overall.

Successful leaders will demonstrate vision, commitment, an understanding of change management strategies, sensitivity, persistence and determination to meet these criteria and implement the policy and funding reforms.

<sup>2</sup> Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS, 2010): [www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2010/Nov/skills-for-sustainable-growth](http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2010/Nov/skills-for-sustainable-growth)

<sup>3</sup> 24+ Advanced Learning Loans: <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/programmes/24AdvancedLearningLoans/>

<sup>4</sup> Common inspection framework for further education and skills (Ofsted, 2012): <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/common-inspection-framework-for-further-education-and-skills-2012>

<sup>5</sup> Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills (Ofsted, 2012): <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

## How colleges improve

In their review of effective practice, what makes an impact and why<sup>6</sup>, Ofsted has published the results of research that examines the effective practice of successful colleges. The research was commissioned by LSIS and conducted by Ofsted inspectors. While it focuses on colleges, the key findings are relevant to all providers in the FE and skills sector. A clear message that runs through the report is that the importance and impact of leadership and management cannot be underestimated. A summary of the key findings showed that successful and improving colleges in the survey shared some of the following characteristics:

- Senior management teams had a clear vision and direction for the college, and a genuinely collaborative approach. They knew the needs of their local area well and had already taken positive action to develop further links with employers and providers of apprenticeships.
- Governance and accountability were strong. Governors were skilled in asking discerning questions and calling for the right information to assess performance.
- Leaders and managers were decisive, prompt and effective in acting to remedy areas of concern, particularly those identified through inspection.
- Self-assessment was integral to the work of the college rather than a 'bolt-on'. It included all key processes and areas of work, for example, work subcontracted to other providers. Self-assessment was accurate,

evidence-based, involved all staff and brought about improvements.

- The links between self-assessment and management information were well established. Questions were not asked about access to or the quality of data, but what the data signified. The evaluation of performance by curriculum teams was informed strongly by a good understanding of management information and data.
- There was a strong focus on getting the curriculum right and ensuring that support for teaching and learning improved outcomes for learners at all levels.
- Classroom teachers, both part- and full-time, as well as support staff, understood the value of assessing their own performance objectively.
- Where restructuring had taken place, all the staff involved were committed to it. Good communication and professional development underpinned this. Genuine engagement with staff led to changes that were sustainable rather than being short term, 'quick fix' solutions.
- Good continuing professional development (CPD) had been linked to effective performance management and an 'open classroom' culture. Sharing good practice across departments and areas was expected.
- The views of learners and employers were used effectively to improve teaching and learning and not simply to improve support or general facilities.

## Changing the culture

### Establishing the vision

The diversity of the FE and skills sector and the government emphasis on developing creative and innovative responses to meet local needs mean that the vision and rationale for curriculum redesign is likely to vary from provider to provider. Providers are analysing local employment data and published research to inform their curriculum vision as well as seeking active engagement from external and internal stakeholders to develop, test and refine the vision to ensure that it is:

- relevant to local needs;
- sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of different groups within the community; and
- responsive to changing circumstances.

Stakeholders are likely to include local businesses, voluntary and community groups, Community Learning Trusts and Local Enterprise Partnerships, learners and staff.

Providing and sustaining a high quality of teaching and learning, a rewarding learning experience and programmes of study that meet career and employment goals are likely to be common aspirations cited in a vision or mission statement. There may be other, more pragmatic considerations that inform your curriculum vision that are less explicit but highly important. These include drivers such as cost and efficiency gains or reviewing the core mission and ethos to differentiate your offer from other providers in the locality.

Vision statements should anticipate the future needs of local and global industries, consider the way people choose to learn, the changing values of society and the behaviours and modes of learning that will make learning most accessible to differing audiences. All of these voices and elements should be represented in the process of defining a positive and forward-looking vision that communicates clearly the culture and values of an organisation and the learning experience it intends to provide.

### Engaging stakeholders

Determining the vision is a useful start to the process of curriculum redesign. Implementing it and bringing it to life is likely to be more challenging. This will require detailed planning if the vision is to be achieved, implemented, embedded and sustained.

Having engaged stakeholders during the process of reviewing and developing the vision, it is vital to maintain their engagement and participation throughout the change process. Using active and participative strategies is essential. Examples to consider may include:

- cross-organisation strategy teams or working groups with well-defined tasks;
- open invitations to contribute;
- multiple communication channels; and
- ensuring feedback is analysed, acknowledged and addressed.

Innovative providers also empower learners to play a more active role in decision making and bringing about change<sup>7</sup>.

Coherent and comprehensive communication and engagement strategies will enable you to harness the energy of innovators and early adopters and to create momentum and a sense of ownership of the planned changes. It is also important to accept that not everyone will be comfortable with change, and to have strategies in place to support those resistant to change. You will also need processes to manage those who decide the planned vision is not for them. Some providers have established 'champions' or other specialist staff to help drive forward and support the change process.

<sup>6</sup> How colleges improve (Ofsted, 2012): [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-colleges-improve](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-colleges-improve)

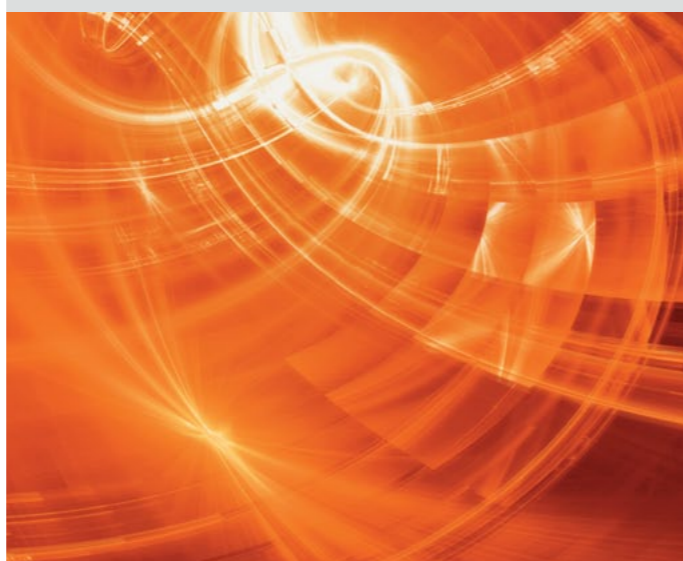
<sup>7</sup> See LSIS menu page on Learner Voice: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/2860> and also Learner Voice: a handbook from Futurelab, 2006: [http://archive.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/handbooks/learner\\_voice.pdf](http://archive.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/handbooks/learner_voice.pdf)

## Sustaining and embedding change

Wholesale change is unlikely to succeed without careful consideration of the needs of all staff involved in the change and an analysis of the skills and competencies needed to deliver the change, those skills and competencies already available and a plan for addressing any missing elements. Staff (including those leading the change) are likely to need support, training and encouragement to help them contribute and adapt to the planned changes, particularly where this involves a change in emphasis, culture and values.



Curriculum change can easily be undermined if it is not co-ordinated with the organisation's business support functions and organisational structure. Where learning is the primary purpose of an organisation learners and the curriculum offered to them should inform (and lead) the nature and working mechanisms of the support services and systems. The curriculum does not exist in isolation and any significant change in curriculum design and delivery is likely to impact on the whole organisation. This will need to be addressed holistically if the curriculum vision is to be realised.



Planning for the sustainability of curriculum change is vital from the outset if it is to be embedded across an organisation. You will need to consider how the project will be managed and monitored and to ensure that the intended benefits of change are concisely defined and clearly articulated to support communication and the momentum of change. Establishing how the benefits will be measured and monitored at the outset of the change process will help to maintain momentum and ensure the intended vision is realised.



The importance of visible, collaborative and committed leadership throughout the change process cannot be overstated.



## Successful culture change requires ...

- strategies for engaging all stakeholders in the design and implementation of the change;
- a robust communication strategy that builds and maintains trust through honesty and integrity; and
- holistic planning and a review of organisational business processes to ensure they support the planned changes.

## Case Studies

See the case studies relevant to this section at the end of this document.

### Case study A: Responding to the community

Aspire Sussex Ltd describes how this newly-formed staff-run social enterprise has developed a community-responsive curriculum, with support from stakeholders including the local community, employers, staff, voluntary and community groups.

### Case study B: Developing a new vision for learning

Leeds City College describes how this college, formed following the merger of several colleges over the last 3 years, has worked on developing a unified vision of learning and put in place a number of initiatives to achieve this.

# Enterprise and employability

## Developing the skills that employers need

Employers have repeatedly stated that what they value in employees is much more than a qualification. They value the interpersonal and team working skills, the confidence to lead, the capacity and determination to solve problems, to be resilient, innovative and take calculated risks

There have been many initiatives to encourage the teaching of 'soft', personal and employability skills and to align vocational and technical qualifications more closely with the needs of industry. However, concern still lingers that too many young people leave education without the skills that allow them to progress to employment or higher-level education or training (The Wolf Report, 2011).<sup>8</sup> Constant change and evolution in terms of the types of industries and services society needs and values, the skills and aptitudes needed to service these, the way people work and balance this around other responsibilities, suggest that it may be just as important to develop entrepreneurial and employability skills. These may be equally as important as technical and vocational expertise.

In times of global economic adversity there are many challenges for further education providers. Conversely, the scale of these challenges may perhaps provide the impetus for more innovative and far-reaching changes in curriculum design than may otherwise have been considered. Colleges and providers are reconceptualising the relationship between education and work and are designing new and innovative programmes of learning to develop more agile provision, thus aiming to create learners who are also agile and able to meet the challenges of working life flexibly.<sup>9</sup>

## Authentic experiences

To provide genuine learning experiences requires a close partnership between education and employers. Exposure to realistic multi-disciplinary

tasks with real deadlines, access to industry-standard resources and observance of work disciplines are also fundamental requirements. Moving away from traditional practice in FE learning to a more experiential and entrepreneurial curriculum will facilitate a broader understanding of the realities of working life, where workers may be required to contribute their expertise to multi-disciplinary teams. This creates opportunities to acquire and demonstrate skills of real value to the labour markets learners seek to enter and may highlight career pathways which have not previously been considered.

Developing strong relationships with employers and community organisations is a fundamental element of the Government's policy on responding to local needs. It can also be mutually beneficial to providers and the communities they serve. An entrepreneurial approach can attract new business and possibly new sources of income by selling the goods and services that the learners and providers can offer.

## Creating a vital sense of purpose

Experiential and active learning approaches are acknowledged to be more engaging for learners than some traditional approaches. Learners who are engaged in entrepreneurial learning are reporting a greater sense of ownership of their learning. They find the tasks motivating and feel they are contributing to their career or study goals; they can see the purpose and relevance to their personal goals and are therefore more likely to commit additional time and energy to the tasks. There is potential to extend the learning for those able to meet higher challenges and opportunities to harness peer support through team work.

In addition to building aptitude and capability, multi-disciplinary approaches can also strengthen the college community as learners work and interact with a broader range of people than may otherwise be the case. Promoting a positive, inclusive and vibrant community may engender learner loyalty in

terms of an increased likelihood of learners returning to the same organisation for future study. It can also increase learners' sense of belonging to the wider college community rather than an affiliation to a single course and therefore make a positive difference to the community served.



## Entrepreneurial providers ...

- apply entrepreneurial approaches and do not merely promote them;
- are likely to reconfigure other services to support an entrepreneurial curriculum – ensuring the learning design informs the services rather than the services inform the curriculum;
- plan holistically to ensure that maximum efficiencies and realistic outputs are achieved from each initiative; and
- provide continuous professional development opportunities for staff to develop confidence in new approaches.

## Case Studies

See the case studies relevant to this section at the end of this document.

### Case study C: Professional Futures

Abingdon and Witney College describes how their approach to supporting learners for employment resulted in radical changes, such as all learners spending one day a week on project-based learning, with an emphasis on preparation for future employment.

### Case study D: Developing the entrepreneurs of tomorrow

Oxford and Cherwell Valley College works with local entrepreneurs and businesses to develop a curriculum that encourages learners to design and execute business ideas using a range of innovative approaches, such as a 'business incubation hub'.

<sup>8</sup> Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report (Department for Education, 2011): <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011>

<sup>9</sup> Enterprising Futures: The changing landscape and new possibilities for further education (Gazelle Global, 2012) <http://www.thegazellegroup.com/downloads/Gazelle-Enterprising-Futures.pdf>

## Improving quality and efficiency

In a climate of economic adversity, providers are looking for ways to do more for less without compromising quality. Reductions in funding levels and finite resources are encouraging providers to explore different delivery models. They are also ensuring their support services, performance management, financial and administrative systems are efficient and contribute to the greater efficiency of the whole organisation.

### Streamlined systems and data management

Taking a whole organisation approach to curriculum redesign necessitates looking at the services and systems that support learning. It can present opportunities to establish consistency, to tackle variations in performance across the organisation and to improve accountability. It is vital that the quality systems and processes serve the curriculum and providers should not be afraid to challenge resistance to change where it could be beneficial to learners and the learning experience. Providers that include quality teams in curriculum redesign will be better informed and are more likely to be successful in terms of impact and in sustaining and embedding improvements.

Inevitably, providers are looking to technology to deliver some of these efficiencies. Using open systems and architectures rather than commercial products enables providers to design bespoke solutions. Free-to-use VLEs, e-portfolios and software that enable practitioners to create accessible, interactive, online learning resources or combine features of one technology with another, do not incur licence fees. However, there is still a cost involved in terms of the time taken to design, monitor and maintain these services that must be factored in to any plans. Conversely, not investing in research and development in this area may put the

organisation at a disadvantage. Support is available through open-source development forums, regional and national networks, out-sourcing options and agencies such as the Jisc Regional Support Centres<sup>10</sup> who establish and support communities, analyse and synthesise research and share good practice. This can be an effective way of mitigating the costs and risks associated with bespoke development.

Many providers still have tracking, recording and business systems that are not fully integrated or interoperable.<sup>11</sup> This can impact considerably on an organisation's capacity to use the data and intelligence it collects in order to inform the bigger picture as well as provide accurate and timely data which will in turn lead to prompt and decisive decision making and the increased effectiveness of supportive or remedial interventions.<sup>12</sup>

More innovative providers are using 'dashboard systems' that draw together information from multiple learner data and progress monitoring systems to keep staff informed of their learners' progress collectively as a group as well as for individuals. This use of data can alert providers to any problems. This same data can be cascaded to inform action, decision making and target setting at course, programme, departmental and whole organisation levels. In some cases, this approach has been extended to provide learner 'dashboards' to empower learners to monitor and better manage their own learning.

### New delivery models

Providers are exploring the benefits of using technology to develop different delivery models to reach larger audiences whilst still maintaining or enhancing personal support. They are looking at ways of using resources differently and in some cases, redesigning support systems by creating high-tech study facilities that make more effective use of learning support staff, specialised coaches or mentors. They are also identifying areas of study common to more than one subject, such as health and safety or customer care, to rationalise staff

resources, while broadening the learner experience by creating collaborative and engaging multi-disciplinary learning opportunities.

When planning any efficiency or quality improvement initiative it is vital that the core issue and the purpose of the planned intervention is the primary consideration so that any technological aspects serve the purpose rather than lead the way.



## Providers who focus on quality and efficiency ...

- put learning and learners first – the purpose of the intervention and the impact on learners must remain the primary focus. Consider how actions, decisions and behaviour of all interventions and support services impact on learners<sup>13</sup>;
- ensure quality aspects are an integral aspect of curriculum redesign; and
- ensure that business systems and processes, financial and estates issues do not divert attention away from the core business of learning.

<sup>13</sup> How colleges improve (Ofsted, 2012): [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-colleges-improve](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-colleges-improve)

## Case Studies

See the case studies relevant to this section at the end of this document.

### Case study E: Personally accountable learning packs

Worcester College of Technology has invested in the development of Personally Accountable Learning packs, a range of curriculum support resources for learners, supporting learners in their studies in all subject areas.

### Case study F: A new approach to curriculum planning

Chesterfield College describes how it reviewed its previous curriculum using an innovative data-led approach, based on a college-designed planning spreadsheet which allowed staff to understand the impact of changes.

<sup>10</sup> Jisc Advance Regional Support Centres: [www.jiscrc.ac.uk](http://www.jiscrc.ac.uk)

<sup>11</sup> Association of Colleges (AoC) Learning Technology Survey Report (AoC, 2012): <http://bit.ly/PXObHE>

<sup>12</sup> Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills (Ofsted, 2012): [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012)



## Widening participation

The FE and skills sector has a long tradition of tackling social and economic exclusion by supporting different groups of learners, ensuring equality of access to appropriate learning as well as re-engaging young people and adults with few or no qualifications who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

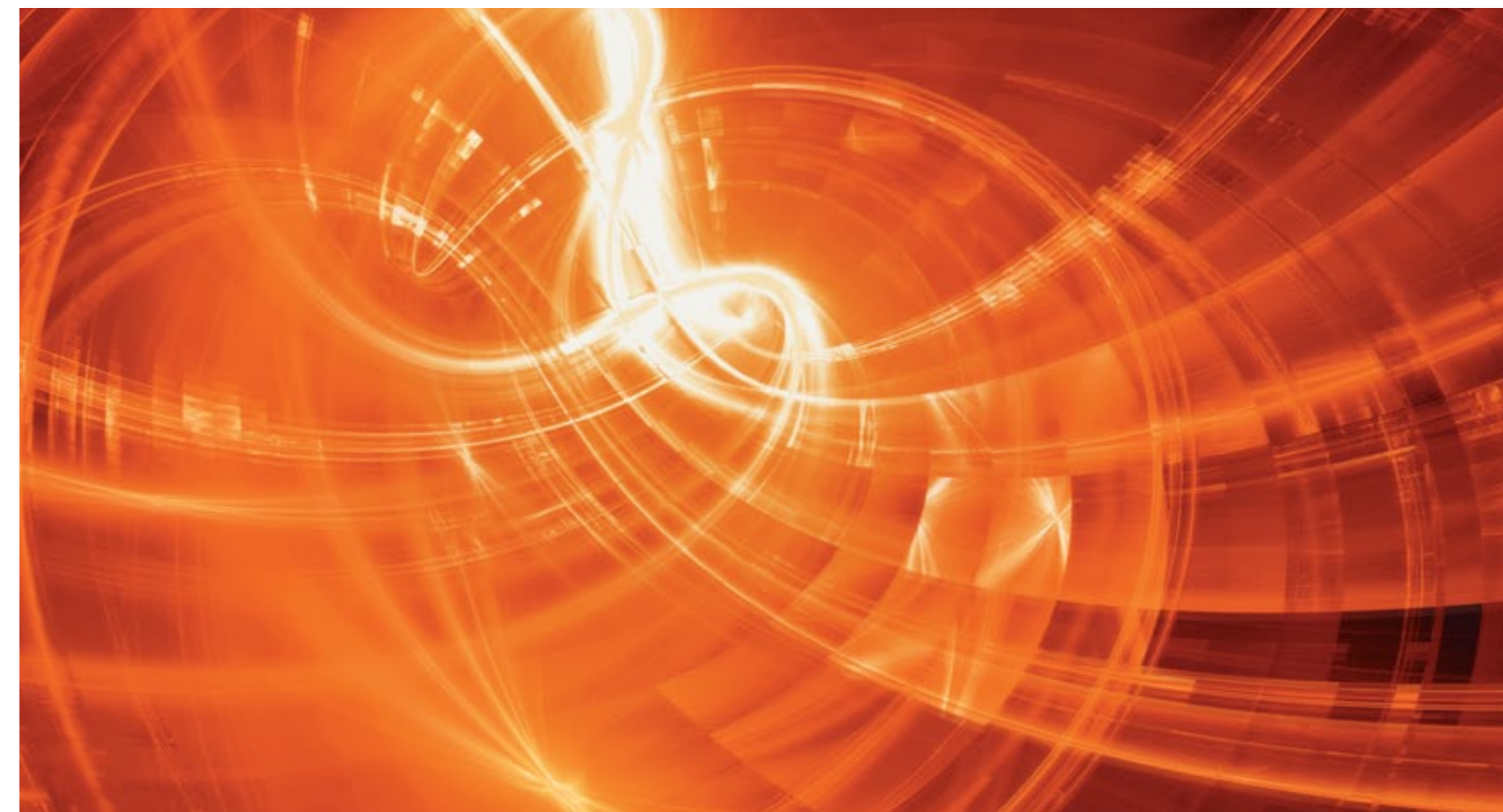
Guidance in the Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills, (Ofsted, 2012)<sup>14</sup> specifically references the requirement to provide a curriculum that addresses the needs of “those under-represented in learning and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities”. Factors that

may influence an individual’s ability or willingness to participate in learning programmes include the timing, location, mode and duration of delivery as well as the perceived value of the offer and how engaging it is. Any curriculum designed for hard-to-reach learners must bear these considerations in mind.

The New Challenges, New chances<sup>15</sup> reform programme requires providers to develop provision based on an analysis of local needs and opportunities. To inform the development of new curricula, providers should use local employment data as well as work with and involve other agencies with overlapping remits and with learners, employers and community groups to better understand local needs.

<sup>14</sup> Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2012 (Ofsted, 2012): <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

<sup>15</sup> New Challenges, New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011): [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/31429/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31429/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan.pdf)



## Providers working to widen participation ...

- work with communities and think outside of their organisation<sup>16</sup>;
- align with other local initiatives, for example health or housing, and consider what support they can contribute;
- actively listen to learners, community groups and employers and involve them in the design of programmes of learning; and
- demonstrate their value and commitment to widening participation and address exclusion in all aspects of their provision.

<sup>16</sup> Thinking outside the College (AoC, 2012): [www.aoc.co.uk/en/college\\_governors/thinking-outside-the-college](http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/college_governors/thinking-outside-the-college)

## Case Studies

See the case studies relevant to this section at the end of this document.

### Case study G: Creative approaches for hard-to-reach learners

Accrington and Rossendale College describes its work with NEETs (people not in education, training or employment) and how curriculum changes were planned in partnership with many other community organisations working with this hard-to-reach group of learners.

# Tools for change

There are many tools that support organisational change. Those selected here are some that participants in other LSIS programmes have found to be particularly helpful.

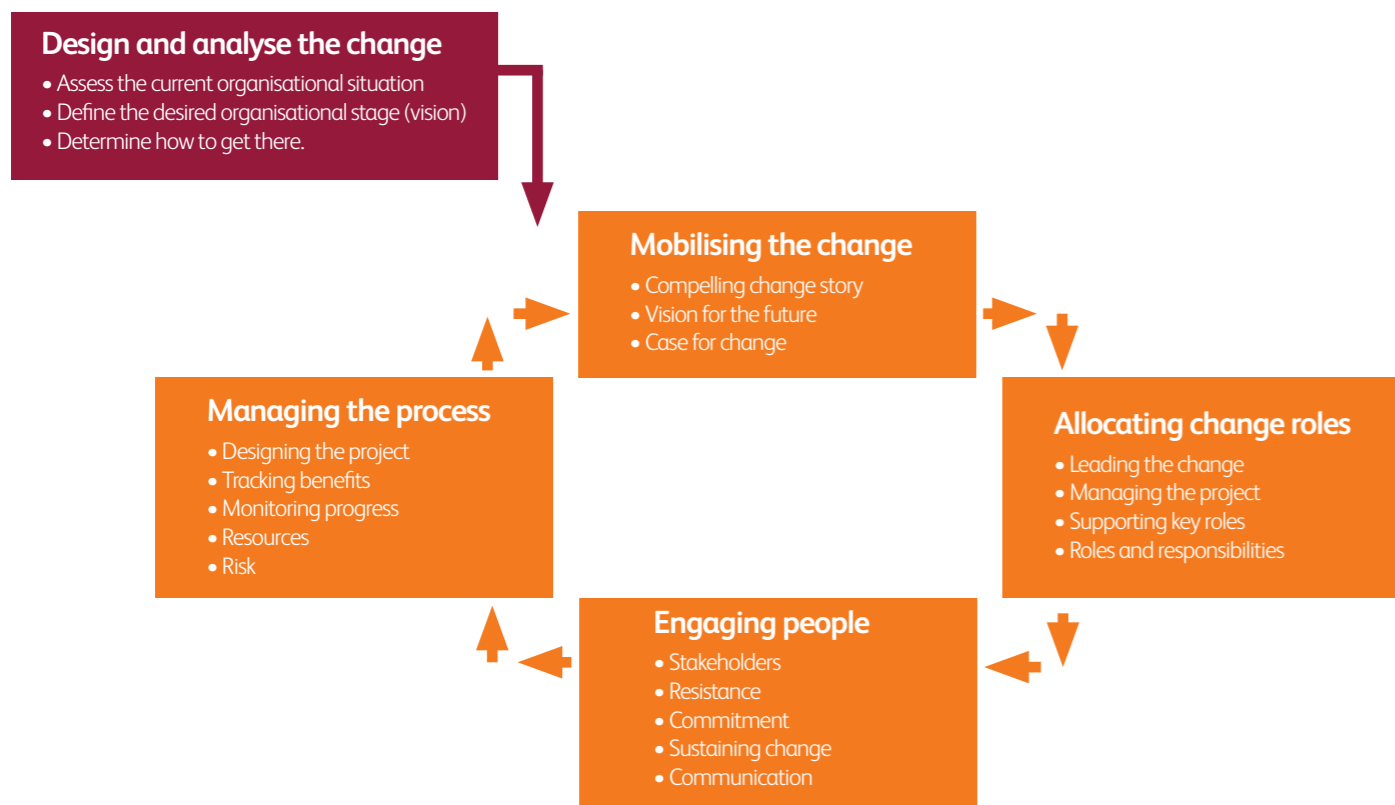
## Change framework

Preparation is crucial for the successful implementation of any change. The **change framework** (see diagram below), developed by the LSIS World Class Skills programme, is a useful tool in the planning and assessment of the requirements for change. The framework shows the different stages involved in change management – from ‘Mobilising the change’ to ‘Managing the process’ – and is a good way to assess whether your change management design has covered all the key components.



## The change framework

Source: LSIS World Class Skills – The management agenda: How to implement change projects (page 21)<sup>17</sup>



## Change roles

Fundamental to the success of any initiative is to identify who will lead, manage and implement the planned change and to ensure they have the right characteristics, capabilities and authority to fulfil the key functions required of that role. Change roles typically include: An authorising sponsor, reinforcing sponsors, change agents, influencers and change targets.

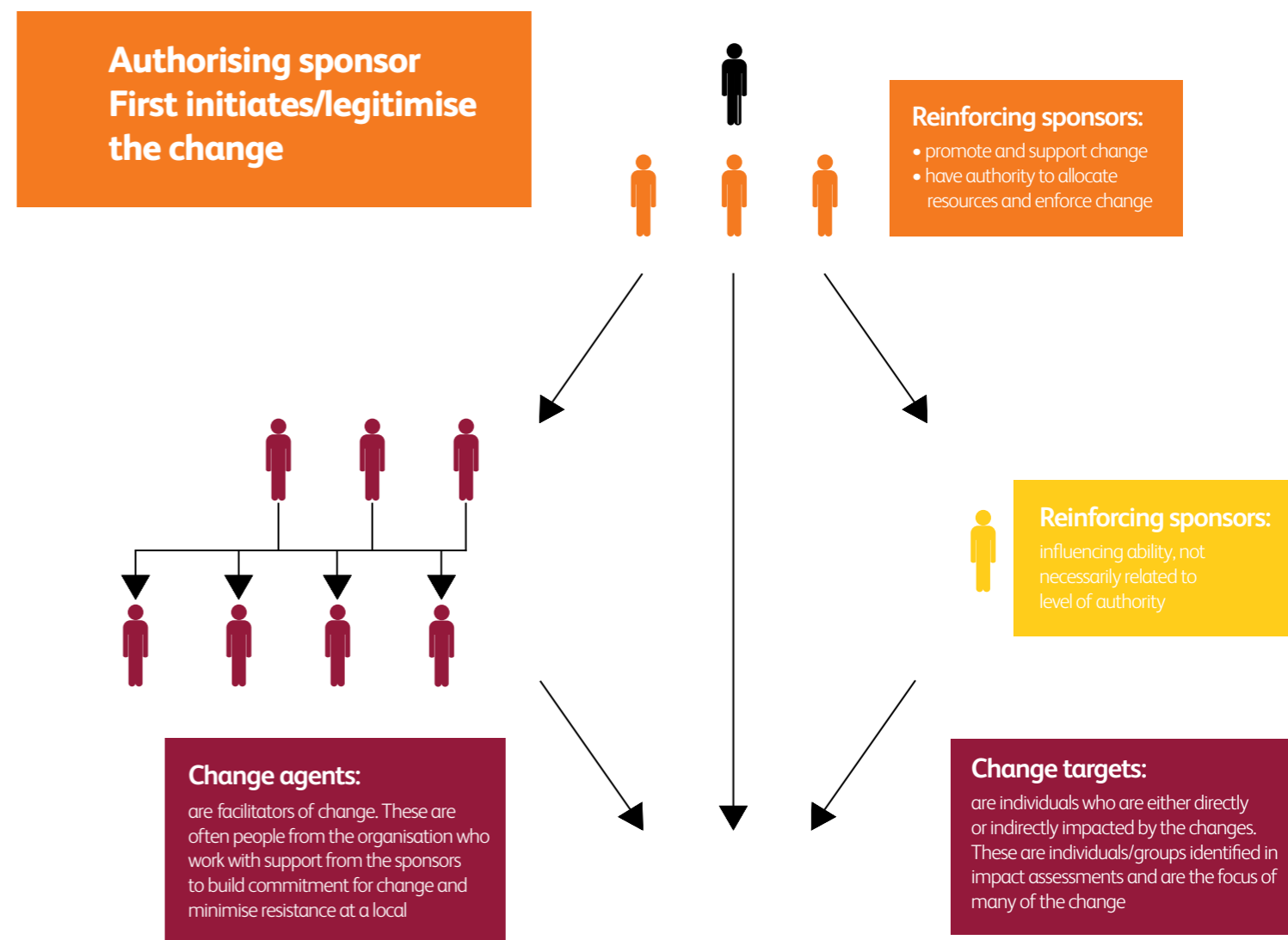
The change roles work together to form the **change network** – see diagram below:

## The change network

Source: LSIS World Class Skills – The management agenda: being a successful change leader (page 16)<sup>18</sup>

Those leading change will analyse the key activities and characteristics required of each change role and match it against those of the people selected to take on each role. They will identify and address any gaps or areas where the necessary ability, authority or credibility are missing.

Further information on change roles, the key activities, characteristics, interpersonal skills and technical skills required of each role and potential risks can be found in the LSIS World Class Skills publication – The management agenda: being a successful change leader.



<sup>17</sup> LSIS World Class Skills – The management agenda: how to implement change projects (LSIS, 2009): <http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/import-pdf:2586/datastreams/PDF/content>

<sup>18</sup> LSIS World Class Skills publication – The management agenda: being a successful change leader (LSIS, 2009): <http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/import-pdf:2587/datastreams/PDF/content>



### Kotter's 8-step process for leading change

In *Leading Change* (Kotter, 1996)<sup>19</sup>, John Kotter developed an 8-step model that is designed to support the creation of, rather than the management of, change. Significant change such as wholesale curriculum redesign requires a multi-step approach driven by high quality leadership

#### Kotter's 8-step process:

**Step 1:** Establishing a sense of urgency

**Step 2:** Creating the guiding coalition

**Step 3:** Developing a change vision

**Step 4:** Communicating the vision for buy-in

**Step 5:** Empowering broad-based action

**Step 6:** Generating short-term wins

**Step 7:** Never letting up

**Step 8:** Incorporating changes into the culture

*Source: Kotter International<sup>20</sup>*

As well as steps to address, Kotter also identifies pitfalls to avoid and highlights several reasons why change programmes may fail. These include inwardly facing cultures, paralysing bureaucracy, parochial politics, a low level of trust, lack of teamwork, lack of leadership in middle management, and the general human fear of the unknown.

Other tools that you may find useful include a **stakeholder power interest matrix** to identify who your stakeholders are, the power, impact and influence they have in relation to redesigning your curriculum and a **business growth matrix** to identify potential areas for growth.

To access further information on these and other LSIS resources to support curriculum change visit: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/curriculum-design>.

<sup>19</sup> Kotter, J (1996). *Leading change*. Harvard Business School Press: Cambridge MA:

<sup>20</sup> [www.kotterinternational.com](http://www.kotterinternational.com)



# The role of technology in supporting curriculum change

Technology pervades almost all areas of life today and has become increasingly intuitive. Learners have ready access to information and content presented to them in a variety of interactive ways – video, podcasts, websites, e-books, interactive games and increasingly more sophisticated and integrated technologies that are touch and movement sensitive or use camera functions. The growing availability of touch-screen technology and applications (apps) means that young people are experimenting and becoming adept at using sophisticated technologies, often through games and social interaction. They understandably expect the benefits of using technology to feature in their learning experiences.

The growth of personal ownership of technologies like smart phones and tablets has changed the way we communicate and means that we live and work in a globally connected world where geographical barriers are no longer an issue. Businesses often use complex cutting-edge technologies to improve efficiency, to do things more quickly, more accurately, more reliably and sometimes more cost-effectively. If the aim of education is to support social and economic well-being and equip people with the skills they need for employment or to take part in the community, then technology has to be an integral part of curriculum design.

Use of technology should be purposeful, it should not drive the curriculum but should be considered as a resource along with more traditional materials. New technologies allow educators and learners to design, create, record and share information and knowledge in different ways. The on-going evolution of technology means that providers need to continually reassess how technology can best enhance learning. Technology has perhaps helped to democratise learning, shifting the balance in relationship between educators and learners so that teachers are taking on the role of facilitator of more autonomous learning.

While many learners personally own powerful and mobile technologies, there are still those who have little or limited access and care must be taken to ensure that all learners can participate fully and have access to appropriate technology.

## Access and flexibility

Technology enables us to develop different delivery models that can widen participation in learning, whether learning is delivered face-to-face, at a distance, in the work-place, in the field or as a blend. Presenting different delivery models affords learners a choice and enables them to fit study around work and personal commitments. Many providers have virtual learning environments that give learners remote access to course content, to collaboration with peers, to support and the option to submit work for assessment. Work-based learners can access their learning systems without leaving the workplace and use web-conferencing software to work with peers who may be based with other employers, or for tutorials. Learners with caring commitments need not entirely miss out if they cannot attend every session. Internet radio programmes, such as those delivered by Aspire Sussex Ltd (see case study A), can break down barriers to participation for those who are housebound and digital portfolios allow learners to store and present their achievements to prospective employers and admission teams.

Assistive technologies, such as screen readers and voice recognition software, make learning accessible to a wide audience and, once digitised, enable content to be presented in many ways. This is beneficial for all, providing choice, facilitating learner preference and contributing towards meeting providers' legal responsibilities.

## Enhancing learning

The great variety of media available allows us to create interactive, engaging and motivating learning experiences that can be tailored to the needs of different audiences, different age groups and different abilities. Differentiation can be supported by designing learning experiences that, for example, include:

- automated reinforcement activities such as those used in formative assessment exercises that recognise when a learner has not fully grasped a topic and directs them to appropriate additional learning materials and activities;
- additional information for those who perhaps need more support;
- extension activities for those ready for bigger challenges;
- use of technologies such as hand-held voting devices to check understanding at key intervals;
- gaming technologies to aid reasoning and problem solving;
- quick response (QR) codes that provide easy access to web-based resources via mobile devices. QR codes can be used for activities such as creating interactive tours, familiarising learners with campus facilities and supporting learners with disabilities to gain more independence by providing direct access to travel timetables;
- questions texted to learners' mobile phones between sessions to reinforce learning and keep them motivated; and
- videos or photographs of achievements that can be stored and organised electronically.

Learners can create and share their learning in innovative and engaging ways that reflect their use of technology in their lives outside study. Examples used in industry might include: scientists and farmers using geo-systems to record the location of samples and crop yields; retailers using online databases; medical professionals using smart phones to access pharmaceutical listings; mail and delivery services recording digital signatures for secure mail; and traffic wardens using digital cameras to record parking offences

Technology is empowering. It can facilitate greater learner autonomy, provide realistic experiences, open up access to information and to communities of practice that share common interests. The internet is available 24:7 and therefore can be used whenever a learner chooses to study. Formative and summative assessment can be delivered online and provide instant feedback and guidance on further recommended study.

## Supporting the business of learning

There is a difference between the comparative ease with which educators can be innovative with discrete technologies in the learning environment and the management of systems, resources and support processes that underpin the curriculum and learning activities. Many providers use multiple systems to support learning and security, legal, data protection and safeguarding issues require expertise to manage. These systems are not always integrated, leaving staff trying to manage incomplete or fragmented data that may not be readily available. Technology is used to record and monitor learner progress, attendance and achievement; to support administrative, marketing, communication and financial aspects.

It is often the 'hygiene' aspects, relatively easy to solve, that can have the biggest impact on learners' perceptions of how technology is used to support their study goals. Increasingly, learners expect to be able to use their own devices on site and to access wireless broadband. This has implications for both the technical support and estate services. Other examples of learners' expectations include:

- quick access to their timetable and information on their next lesson or next assignment;
- progression and performance monitoring data to inform their next steps;
- the ability to access information quickly;
- online assignment submission and receipt; and
- access to software and resources without over-heavy security restrictions.

These are just a few small examples of things that matter to learners. Addressing these and providing a consistent experience across different elements of a programme of study can influence learner satisfaction with the way technology is used to support the overall learning experience.

The AoC Technology Survey Report (2012)<sup>21</sup> implies that effective use of technology is less about specific technologies and more about co-ordinated and well-informed planning and deployment of resources.

### Taking advantage of technology...

- The combined importance of technology to all aspects of a learning provider's activities and learners' expectations means that the learning technology strategy should be embedded in curriculum development and review processes.
- Ensuring systems work together to provide access to accurate, up-to-date information on all aspects of learner performance is essential to financial well-being and efficient use of resources.
- Use of shared services, open architectures and cloud computing can be efficient and cost effective in providing tailored solutions.
- Learners may be proficient at using technology for social purposes but require support to use it effectively for learning. Some providers are working in partnership with learners to support their peers and staff.<sup>22</sup>

### Find out more ...

The examples cited here are not exhaustive and provide just a small insight into the ways that technology can support curriculum design. There are many detailed case studies and examples available on the Excellence Gateway and from other sector bodies.

The FE and skills sector is supported to use technology to enhance learning by the Jisc, the Jisc Advance Regional Support Centres (RSCs) and Jisc TechDis for support and guidance on effective use of assistive technology.

Additional resources from LSIS can be found on the Excellence Gateway:  
<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/curriculum-design>

Jisc: [www.jisc.ac.uk](http://www.jisc.ac.uk) and specifically JISC Design Studio:  
<http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com>

Jisc Advance RSCs:  
[www.jiscrsc.ac.uk](http://www.jiscrsc.ac.uk)

Jisc TechDis:  
[www.jisctechdis.ac.uk](http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk)

JISC Enhancing practice: exploring innovation with technology in further education:  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/swaniltig/enhancingpractice](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/swaniltig/enhancingpractice)

## Redesigning your curriculum

While providers will have common areas to address in reviewing and redesigning their curriculum, the diversity of the FE and skills sector and the unique communities each provider serves make it unlikely that any one audit tool will reflect the needs of all providers. Instead, it may be more appropriate to make developing your own checklist part of the redesign process and involve contributions from representatives from stakeholder groups. Actively involving stakeholders in this way is part of the listening process and, if engagement is maintained throughout the redesign process, is likely to secure higher levels of understanding and buy-in to any changes. This will enhance the likelihood of change initiatives succeeding, being embedded and sustained.

### Designing your own audit tool

Your audit tool is likely to:

- focus strongly on teaching, learning and assessment;
- use challenging questions designed to identify exactly what you want to achieve or highlight issues that need to be addressed;
- contain examples of effective practice that describe the desired outcome;
- include a measure of effective practice (often a rating scale);
- set improvement targets – measures of how you would like effective practice to be rated in 6 months' time, a year's time and 3 years' time; and
- include your first thoughts on how you might achieve your improvement target.

This will form the basis for more detailed planning, setting out what and how you will change, who is responsible for each action, timescales and how changes will be resourced.

Here are some examples of potential questions and considerations you could use to inform the development of your own curriculum redesign audit tool.

### 1. What is driving your need or desire to redesign your curriculum?

Consider:

- the extent to which your curriculum meets the requirements of central or regional government policy (current and planned);
- the extent to which your curriculum meets local needs including those of other agencies (e.g. health);
- what data you will use to inform your vision and planning;
- labour market trends and business needs (local and national);
- what you want your organisation to be known for doing well;
- the intended benefits of the proposed changes and how will these be monitored and measured; and
- the impact any changes in funding will have on your current curriculum offer.

### 2. How extensive is your current curriculum provision?

Consider:

- mapping your current provision (full-time, part time, work-based, distance and online learning) at all levels against the identified needs of your learners, employers, communities and other stakeholder groups to identify:
- whether there is any duplication of provision either within your organisation or from other local providers;
- whether there are any gaps in terms of meeting identified needs;
- whether your programmes are substantive, coherent and relevant;
- whether you are offering sufficient variety and choice to all learners;
- whether you have identified progression routes to higher levels of study and employment for learners at each stage; and
- how accessible your curriculum is in terms of location, timing, mode of delivery, duration

<sup>21</sup> Association of Colleges (AoC) Learning Technology Survey Report (AoC, 2012): <http://bit.ly/PXObHE>

<sup>22</sup> 157 / LSIS e-Ambassador Project: [www.e-ambassador.co.uk](http://www.e-ambassador.co.uk)



- whether the learning programmes that you offer provide authentic learning experiences that develop skills appropriate to future employment opportunities;
- how you will meet the requirement to offer relevant work placements;
- the need to support learners to continue to develop their English and mathematics skills; and
- whether there are any opportunities to develop collaborative provision with other providers, employers or community interest groups.

### 3. Have you put learners first?

#### Consider:

- how central your strategy for learning, teaching and assessment is to all other organisational strategies; and
- opportunities to use technology to enhance learning both in terms of subject relevance and in developing employability skills.

### 4. How will you engage stakeholder groups in the redesign of the curriculum?

#### Consider:

- who your stakeholder groups are;
- whether there are any under-represented groups that you need to engage;
- the role and contribution that could be made by community or voluntary groups;
- whether there are any potential partners who could help you to develop your curriculum vision and offer;
- how you will engage and empower representatives from these groups to contribute to the redesign process;
- how you will maintain engagement throughout the change process;
- how any changes in culture and values will be facilitated;
- the strategies you will use to support stakeholders throughout the change process including any continuous professional development needs for staff;
- how you will manage resistance to change; and
- how you will communicate your plans to a wider audience beyond stakeholder groups.

### 5. Have you modelled the anticipated funding for your new curriculum model?

#### Consider:

- how you will gauge the viability and cost-effectiveness of any planned programmes of learning;
- the impact on staffing and staffing models; and
- any resourcing requirements.

### 6. Who will lead and support the change initiative?

#### Consider:

- the role of governors or trustees in shaping the curriculum;
- who will lead and sponsor the change;
- who will support those leading the change;
- whether the designated leader possesses all the key characteristics, attributes and has the authority and resources to lead the change, including how any missing elements can be addressed;
- whether there are any members of staff who formally or informally influence others in the organisation that you could engage;
- the availability of change agents who formally facilitate change within the organisation and how they can best serve the change initiative;
- whether there are any new roles needed to implement the changed curriculum;
- how you are involving your management information systems, examination, estate and finance teams; and
- the planning and implementation of any staff development needed to support the change;

### 7. How do your quality and business processes support the planned curriculum change?

#### Consider:

- whether you need to develop new processes and, if so, what they need to include;
- how risk will be managed;
- how frequently you will review the curriculum offer;

- how you will build in mechanisms that enable you to respond rapidly to change; and
- how you will test new curriculum concepts for viability prior to implementation.

## Support for managing curriculum change

### Suite of LSIS training modules for curriculum leaders and managers

Designed to develop capacity and to focus strategically on what you want your curriculum to look like in the future, these LSIS training modules help curriculum leaders and managers to identify what needs to change. The modules suggest strategies for turning the vision into operational plans in the current context of less centralised government control, reductions in budgets and changes in funding.

The modules encourage a holistic view towards the development of personalised, programmes of learning that are responsive to the needs of employers, the local community, and both current and prospective learners. The modules span six inter-linked themes which are available separately or can be combined to provide a more comprehensive programme. The themes are:

- Developing an Inclusive Curriculum
- Managing Curriculum Change
- Developing HE in FE: Developing your HE Strategy and Curriculum
- Developing HE in FE: Students at the Centre of HE in FE Quality
- Planning for Learner Progression
- Planning QCF Unit Delivery.

The modules address both strategic and operational aspects of curriculum design. The online resources are freely available to providers via the LSIS Learning Environment ([www.leadershiplearning.org.uk](http://www.leadershiplearning.org.uk)) and LSIS can arrange face-to-face training, collaborative support sessions and follow-up activities on request.

An example of a blank checklist template to aid curriculum planning is shown as Appendix 1 at the end of this guide.

The Excellence Gateway is home to a large collection of resources to inform and support curriculum design: [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/curriculum-design](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/curriculum-design)

### Leadership and governance

LSIS has provided support for a variety of roles involved in leadership and governance:

- Governance: support to develop effective governance includes online resources, training, diagnostic and evaluation tools.
- Leadership and management for executives, senior leaders, aspiring and middle leaders: differentiated options for this audience include training resources, peer review and coaching tools and resources to support and develop entrepreneurial, innovative and successful leaders.
- Leading learning and technology: to build capacity in colleges and providers to use technology to lead, plan and develop their curriculum to be more responsive to the needs of their community, learners and employers.
- Leading staff and learners: support includes events, resources and coaching programmes to develop capacity in a broad range of topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion to safeguarding and offender learning.
- Leading the business: support comprises a series of events, residential training, toolkits and resources addressing issues on organisational effectiveness, sustainable development, leading in the community, using data effectively and sales and marketing.

[www.lsis.org.uk/Services/leadership-management-governance](http://www.lsis.org.uk/Services/leadership-management-governance)



## Learner voice

LSIS has a range of resources to support providers to develop effective approaches to engage and work with learners as stakeholders in their own learning.

Learner voice: [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/2860](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/2860)

## Events

Visit [www.lsis.org.uk/events](http://www.lsis.org.uk/events) for details on events, seminars and workshops run by LSIS up to the end of March 2013.

## Working with partners

LSIS is working with a number of sector partners (157 Group, NIACE and Hoxex) to support research and development on various aspects of curriculum development.

### The 157 Group

Eight member colleges are redesigning aspects of their curriculum to develop more responsive provision. The projects include the development of:

- a -teaching and learning strategy informed by learning that focuses on the development of a professional workforce and broader skills;
- an entrepreneurial curriculum designed to meet regional needs;
- a new curriculum strategy for the in-house delivery of engineering;
- a partnership approach to developing a digital media curriculum for adult learners, with pathways to apprenticeships and professional training;

- a revised Foundation Learning curriculum with an emphasis on effective Initial Advice and Guidance to facilitate progression to higher-level learning and employment;
- a robust management and teacher CPD programme designed to move the organisation from 'good' to 'great';
- a well-resourced and cost-effective 'rapid response' service to respond swiftly to local training needs; and
- new models for the delivery of commercial activity on a national basis with consideration of the benefits of different models of delivery, staff employment and development and potential business structures.

The project outcomes will be available in Spring 2013. <http://www.157group.co.uk/>

### The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and HOLEX

A series of co-ordinated workshops, seminars and events have been held to facilitate 'strategic dialogue' and consideration of LSIS work with the RSA 2020 Public Services Hub<sup>23</sup>. As a result, LSIS is working with NIACE and HOLEX to support six action research projects to design 'A New Curriculum For Difficult Times'. With an emphasis on locally-driven provision, the projects will explore themes including new approaches to curriculum design, social value, and localism. The projects will be mentored through the action research process by NIACE and HOLEX and supported by a steering group containing individuals with a record in service design from outside the sector.

The project outcomes will be available in Spring 2013.

<sup>23</sup> The further education and skills sector in 2020: a social productivity approach (LSIS, 2011): <http://2020psh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/The-Further-Education-and-Skills-Sector-in-2020.pdf>

### Case study A: Responding to the community

#### Aspire Sussex Ltd

##### Vision

Aspire Sussex Ltd is a staff-run social enterprise that was formed in September 2012 to lead the planning, promotion and delivery of adult education for people in West Sussex. The vision is that the charitable status of the new organisation and its independence from the local authority will enable Aspire to work more closely with the community they serve, to benefit from greater freedoms and flexibility, and to attract new sources of funding.

The move to independence began five years ago when concern over the impact of the economic downturn and impending recession meant that future funding was under threat. Working closely with the local authority, the community, staff, learners and other stakeholders, a new vision for a vibrant and responsive adult education service was developed.

#### Redesigning the learning experience

##### Creating the organisation

A major organisational change of this nature is complex and the relationships between the culture of the organisation, the business processes and systems that support learning, and the curriculum offered are inextricably intertwined, with many inter-dependencies. Creating an entirely new organisation was clearly a priority but the vision for a responsive curriculum that serves the many different needs within the community was central to decisions taken about the structure and governance of Aspire. Care was taken to analyse the skills required of senior managers and trustees to run an enterprise of this nature, and the Board of Trustees was recruited with these skills in mind. The ongoing development strategy involves meticulous planning to form a sustainable and

forward-looking business plan that is regularly scrutinised and tested by the Board of Trustees with a view to ensuring the organisation doesn't just survive, but thrives.

The organisational structure is flatter than many other traditional models, with transparent lines of accountability, visible board members and active staff involvement in all aspects of the organisation's business. This presents some logistical difficulties as the service employs nearly 500 staff and operates from six main centres across the region as well as a number of community venues, schools, libraries and leisure facilities. However the organisational structure is an essential and integral design feature for a staff-run social enterprise. Faculty managers are part of the executive team facilitating a broad understanding and shared ownership of the organisational goals.

Aspire is the lead member of Liberate, a Community Learning Trust pilot with 26 members including: Chichester College; Northbrook College; Central Sussex College; the Workers' Education Association (WEA); Angel Radio; Ford and Lewes Prisons; Action in Rural Sussex; and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

#### Winning hearts and minds

A concerted communication campaign was developed to promote the initiative and engage all stakeholders in developing the organisation. Council members and staff with responsibility for making decisions on the future of the service were taken to visit the centres. They were able to see first-hand the role and importance of the service to the community and to understand the work of the organisation; this helped them to identify the options available to secure these valuable services. Local businesses, voluntary and community groups, learners and staff were widely consulted and involved in planning and development.

Staff engagement in the initiative was crucial. An 'open forum' approach was adopted and all staff were invited to participate in a planning task group which drew 40 staff representing a broad range of roles from across the organisation. Communication with a geographically dispersed staff has been sustained using a dedicated email account, a regularly updated blog, newsletter, surgeries and meetings. A staff representative group (SRG) was established with group members elected from all staff areas of the organisation, including teachers, volunteers, front-line administrative staff and management. These staff representatives were involved in shortlisting and interviewing the Board of Trustees, thus addressing nervousness around governance. The SRG was also responsible for the development and successful implementation of the 'Aspiring Leading Lights', a staff recognition scheme that acknowledges excellent performance.

A member of the SRG attends every Board meeting and is responsible for feeding back any information to the workforce.

*"I took part in the interview process for the Board of Trustees. It gave me a real sense of ownership and influence."* Staff representative group member

All staff are supported in their continuous professional development (CPD) and offered appropriate training. In-house training for teaching practitioners focuses on continuous quality improvement and pedagogic aspects such as constructivist learning and teaching and questioning techniques. Videos and supportive materials for these and other topics have been placed on Aspire's virtual learning environment (VLE). The aim has been to cover a range of teaching methodologies, which form a cocktail of approaches aimed at achieving outstanding teaching and learning. Learner-centred approaches are at the heart of the training. Operational and managerial teams receive training appropriate to their roles and personal development goals, for example on customer service, finance,

leadership in a social enterprise environment and marketing. Volunteers also receive training.

These initiatives have helped to build capacity and trust and to allay fears. Trust can take a long time to build and may waver and fluctuate in times of change, therefore it was a deliberate policy to create an open and transparent approach to change and ensure that the cultural values promoted by the organisation were embodied in the approach to staff CPD.

#### A curriculum tailored to the needs of the local community

Aspire serves a diverse community in West Sussex and includes three distinct types of community: rural, urban and coastal. Aspire aims to develop provision that is responsive to the needs of local communities and where there is demand or need, to develop new provision promptly. Local employment data and research on social and health issues are used to inform curriculum planning, thus ensuring a strategic alignment with other local priorities.

Working with partners, Aspire is developing new services for the community such as:

- Support for English language skills has been established, working with supermarkets and using their café areas so this can be accomplished in a social environment.
- Adult males have been attracted into new types of community learning by establishing a partnership with a championship football club.
- Digital radio has been used to deliver the Pass it-on programme that reaches over 44,000 older people in West Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with an additional annual internet audience of 3.2 million. This focuses on improving well-being and providing social interaction for those who may be housebound.

- Active family learning has been promoted by working with a local author to produce books on CD with activities to engage children, parents, grandparents and carers. The CDs are sold and profits reinvested to support future initiatives.
- The employability skills of unemployed adults and adults with learning difficulties/ disabilities have been developed through an enterprise initiative that supports learners to design, print, market and sell T-shirts, bags, banners, mugs and other items. This involves learning the cost of production, calculating return on investment and developing marketing strategies as well as promoting independence.
- Vulnerable and disadvantaged adults have cultivated a disused garden and have been learning how to grow plants, herbs, fruit and vegetables for sale and to cook their own meals using the produce they have grown.
- Research showed that a coastal community where participation in adult education was declining was well served by community groups and active small businesses but needed support to become self-sustaining. The Aspire team worked with special interest groups to develop the skills required to facilitate learning and support the community's goals.

Any surpluses from the various enterprises are reinvested in further learning.

### Looking to the future

Aspire is now looking ahead to the next five years and plans to consolidate success so far in year one; conduct further research in year two to inform and further develop the curriculum offer; build capacity; and prepare to get investment ready for years three to five. By working with partners and responding to community needs, Aspire have targets to attract new sources of funding and not to rely on any one funding source for more than 25 per cent of their funding.

Aspire is also leading a South East regional initiative taking responsibility for developing principles of best practice for adult education.

Staff at Aspire have already noticed a change in the way the organisation is perceived by the community, with partner organisations responding positively to the quick turn-around the service is able to provide, and local businesses being willing to offer discounts to learners for materials. The organisation has also been able to secure charitable advertising rates.

## Points to note

- A robust communication plan helped to develop the initiative, to establish the ethos, to ensure staff understood the reasons behind the change, to ensure staff were aware of the potential benefits of the new organisation, and to engage partners and stakeholders.
- Empowering staff to make decisions and respond quickly to the needs of the community and partners is winning hearts and mind and helping the service to grow.
- Aligning the curriculum offer to other local priorities, such as the public health agenda, employment and economic well-being, secures partnership engagement and may attract new funding streams.
- Testing new ideas using small-scale pilots is critical.
- The vision for curriculum change has to be matched with business acumen and informed by research and data.



# Case study B: Developing a new vision for learning

## Leeds City College

### Vision

Leeds City College was formed in 2009 following the merger of three of the city's colleges: Leeds College of Technology; Leeds Thomas Danby; and Park Lane College Leeds and Keighley. In 2011, the college again merged with Joseph Priestley College and formed a strategic alliance with Leeds College of Music, creating England's third largest FE establishment, operating from six main campuses and many more community sites spread across the region.

The new college's mission is "to be recognised as an exceptional College providing life changing skills and experiences for individuals, businesses and communities". The organisation has faced many challenges in bringing together cultures, developing staffing structures, and putting in place the infrastructure, systems and processes necessary to support this mission.

With work on unification now well underway, this is an opportune moment to refocus on developing a unified **vision for learning**. This is one of a number of long-term strategies that form a whole organisation approach to curriculum redesign that aims to redefine the relationship between learners and their learning.

### Redesigning the learning experience

The vision for curriculum change is being led and championed by the college's Principal and the Head of Learning Innovation and Student Progress. The vision recognises the changing relationships in learning:

- the need to allow learners to access their learning using methodologies of their choice, rather than in ways that may be convenient from an organisational and delivery perspective;
- the way learners use technology to communicate and collaborate with their peers; and

- the need for learning to co-exist alongside work, social and care commitments. This is particularly pertinent given the end of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and the economic recession.

The aim is to ensure the learning experience lives up to the college's stated values of excellence, integrity, commitment, respect, being supportive, effectiveness, enterprise and responsiveness.

It is comparatively easy to introduce change on a small scale and for a short period of time but it can be difficult to implement, sustain and embed change across a large, geographically dispersed organisation. The college is at the beginning of developing its vision for learning and expects this to be a three-year strategy that focuses on learning as opposed to teaching, makes learning active and engaging, and focuses on assessment for learning. The strategy should also establish a partnership where staff and learners work together to co-create an inspirational learning community.

To achieve this, the college is involved in a number of initiatives:

- The vision for learning builds on work already under way following the college mergers and will focus on creating a learning culture that is agile, responsive and forward-looking. The college has employed a consultant to aid the rethinking process, to challenge staff constructively, to maintain momentum and to act as a critical friend to those leading and implementing the vision. **Established change management principles**, such as Kotter's 8-step process for leading change<sup>24</sup>, are familiar to college staff. This is a model that is widely used in business and in several LSIS leadership programmes as well as national initiatives such as the Subject Learning Coaches programme.
- A cross-college strategy development team has been formed to develop the vision, with involvement from stakeholders including staff, learners and employers. The current teaching, learning and assessment strategy

is quite traditional in approach and doesn't necessarily reflect availability of current tools for learning or recognise how learners work, play and learn today. Developing new ways to engage learners in the development of the vision and strategy over and above traditional methods of focus groups and learner representatives will ensure all voices and views are represented.

- Having aligned the infrastructure and network systems, work is now under way to **reconfigure the campus sites** with the ambition of providing learning facilities that are among the best in the country. Plans to build a new college as part of the merger were adversely affected by the economic downturn although a new campus in Keighley that was already under construction was opened in September 2010. The senior management team has developed a property strategy spanning ten years, with plans to refurbish and renovate the existing estate and to relocate some subject areas. The new high-quality learning environments will be modern, fit for purpose and match the high standards of facilities available in industry, as part of the drive to generate exciting learning opportunities for learners. This includes amending policies to enable learners to **Bring their own devices (BYOD)** and explore leasing options. Allowing learners to use the devices they choose to buy to support their own learning presents different challenges for those responsible for the performance, reliability, safety and security of the technical infrastructure. However, it encourages enterprise, ownership of their own learning and potentially frees up resources to support learners who do not have good access to personal technology. **Active learning zones** are being established that allow new curriculum models to be developed, bringing different groups working on common units together, with potential cost-efficiency savings.
- A new system for **observing teaching and learning** is being implemented, using a range of methods to evaluate the quality of

teaching and learning rather than the traditional 'snapshot' approach. For example, **learning walks**<sup>25</sup> form part of the observation process: members of the college leadership team, along with the relevant curriculum manager, drop into classes and workshops to talk to learners and staff and gain first-hand experience of what it means to be a learner at Leeds City College. Other data used to support the teaching and learning observation process include learner success rates, progression, feedback and attendance data.

- A cross-college group which includes staff leading the college Certificate of Education programme, staff developers and practitioners is **reviewing the current professional standards for teachers in further education** with a view to developing a new set of standards that supports the college vision for learning. When drafted, the ideas will be presented to stakeholders and experts for discussion and further development.
- With an estimated 90 per cent of new jobs requiring digital skills by 2015<sup>26</sup>, developing digital literacy skills is essential. The vision for learning will recognise the importance of embedding opportunities to develop these skills into the curriculum and will include a **Digital leaders** programme to help learners gain the skills and confidence they need to support employment and learning and to showcase their achievements. In addition, **learning innovation mentors** are being assigned to each faculty to support staff with the specific needs of each subject. Learning innovation mentors are centrally co-ordinated to facilitate the sharing of effective practice across the organisation.
- **Progress coaches** are assigned to each faculty to support learners. Progress coaches are managers and senior teachers who use coaching skills to support learners with academic and social welfare issues. The coaches use a rating system to flag up and prioritise learners most in need of support.

<sup>24</sup> Kotter, J (1996). The 8-step Process for Leading Change <http://www.kotterinternational.com/our-principles/changesteps/changesteps>

<sup>25</sup> Learning walks are based on a concept developed by Sussex Downs College, referenced in 157 Group publication Leading Learning (May 2011): <http://www.cfbt.com/evidenceforeducation/pdf/2157G-082-LeadingLearning.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Go-on UK: <http://www.go-on.co.uk/>

- To improve employer links and support apprentices to secure appropriate employment, Leeds City College has developed **The Big Match** in partnership with the local authority. Big Match acts in a similar way to an employment agency, bringing a new level of coherence to matching apprentices with the vacancies offered by local employers. Plans are also under way for the **apprenticeship training academy** to employ learners and provide valued work experience with appropriate remuneration.
- Communicating the vision to all stakeholders is an essential aspect of any change management programme and at Leeds City College they have developed a learner focused mobile application called **Leeds App** as part of the way they communicate with learners. The Leeds App will provide customised timetable information, attendance data, news and events.
- Traditional approaches to continuous professional development (CPD) understandably focus on new legislation and new policies but do not always concentrate as much the core business of learning. To address this potential imbalance and maintain a focus on outstanding learning and teaching, the college has introduced an **annual Festival of Learning** for all staff and is redesigning the way CPD is delivered and supported. Previous initiatives to create staff learning innovation centres and provide cross college training had some impact, but not

as much as perhaps had been expected. More targeted provision supported by **specialist staff based in each faculty** is proving more effective. Each faculty has to conduct and respond to their own **training needs analysis and agree training priorities**.

- The development of the new vision for learning will be informed by both **qualitative and quantitative** data including success rates, retention statistics, better collection of learner views and access to richer data through increased learner, employer and community engagement in curriculum design. Plans are also being developed to improve the collection, analysis and use of destination data.

### Looking to the future

Co-ordinating the range of activities being undertaken and developing a cohesive and holistic approach to curriculum change for such a large organisation are major undertakings. The work described here is very much 'work in progress' that will undoubtedly evolve over time.

Early indications are positive, with a successful Ofsted inspection in 2012, but the college leaders are striving for excellence and for the college to be recognised as 'exceptional'. There are still challenges ahead, including further changes to the funding system, the requirements of the new Ofsted Common Inspection Framework and the requirement to develop systems to capture destination data more accurately.

## Points to note

- Any change to curriculum design can impact on inter-dependent systems, services and processes. These systems, services and processes must serve the curriculum ambition rather than making the curriculum adapt to work alongside established support mechanisms. Such an ambitious vision, to fundamentally redesign the principles affecting the curriculum across an organisation, requires leadership at the highest level and a robust approach to change management if it is to succeed.
- Project management techniques that identify interim success measures and break large tasks into smaller milestones can be helpful in communicating the vision, creating momentum and securing quick wins.
- Active engagement from stakeholders is crucial to success – for example, strategies such as engaging staff in the discussion and development of professional standards create a deeper understanding of the issues and a greater commitment to change.
- Leeds City College have found targeted CPD and support to be more effective in supporting organisational change.



# Case study C: Professional Futures

## Abingdon and Witney College

### Vision

In response to The Wolf Report (2011) and feedback from local employers, Abingdon and Witney College revised their curriculum offer to ensure that young people attending the college are able to develop the skills they need to build successful **Professional Futures**. A new approach for learners on vocational courses at Level 3, Professional Futures, is designed to motivate and incentivise learners, and to ensure they have realistic learning experiences and the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for higher study or employment. Although simple in concept the curriculum redesign has led to some radical changes.

In addition to their chosen vocational course, learners spend one day a week engaged in project-based learning, working with peers from other subject areas on multi-disciplinary projects. This encourages enterprise and self-directed learning and helps to provide a more holistic, enriched and enjoyable college experience with a strong career-focused emphasis.

### Redesigning the learning experience

The ideas behind the curriculum redesign came from teaching and support staff who were invited to join working groups and engage in some 'blue sky' thinking around what the curriculum might look like if they didn't have to worry about funding or qualifications. They also worked to identify potential barriers and solutions that could hinder or facilitate curriculum change. At the same time a learner focus group comprising 35 learners was asked what they wanted to learn and how they liked to learn. Interestingly, the feedback from both staff and learners was not dissimilar. An extensive workshop for curriculum managers, heads of faculty, quality managers, e-learning staff and other cross-college roles helped develop the ideas brought forward by staff and learners.

Recognising the impact on the withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) on

learners, and the economic need and value of learners maintaining part-time work alongside their studies, the college day was adjusted to reflect the normal working day of 9am – 5pm. The learner week was also restructured so that each learner would have a core timetable comprising three full days of study, allowing one day for voluntary or paid work and one for independent study.

One day a week is spent on project work based on the principles of problem based learning. The projects span more than one curriculum area so, for example, art and design learners work with engineering learners, or health and social care learners work with learners studying sport. The project briefs are developed collaboratively by teaching staff from the different vocational curriculum areas with extensive mapping to ensure that a single brief encompasses qualification criteria appropriate to each subject. The mapping helps to prevent over-assessment, an obvious benefit to both learners and staff. Employers and other professionals within the college provide valuable feedback at project presentation events.

Problem based learning was identified as an effective strategy because it facilitates collaboration, communication and peer learning, can incorporate a variety of different skills and when well-designed, requires learners to demonstrate subject knowledge as well as other aptitudes. Early project briefs were designed to build confidence but as learners became more familiar with the approaches the level of challenge was increased.

Each Professional Futures learner is assigned a performance manager – a new role introduced to support the curriculum change. Performance managers monitor all aspects of an individual's learning performance and provide pastoral support. They have access to key college data and learners' online development plans, enabling them to monitor achievement and respond swiftly to issues such as absenteeism. The dedicated service is already having a positive impact on attendance, providing a more disciplined and consistent approach across the college. Pastoral elements are strengthened by teachers and performance

managers working together. Performance managers are also able invest time in helping learners to find relevant work experience tailored to their specific interests and providesupport in seeking employment.

The learning experience is now quite different and better prepares learners for future employment. Learners benefit from realistic learning experiences, more varied assessment methods and an enriched college experience. Subject silos are broken down with greater exchange of ideas and social exchange. Learners have a greater understanding of how things work in real life; for example art and design learners working with engineering learners mean that both learn more about the processes between design and production. Learners studying subjects that traditionally attract greater numbers of one gender than another learn to work together, providing a better social mix and helping to develop confidence.

The curriculum change is supported by the college's newly-formed Teaching Skills Academy, a developmental service that is able to provide tailored training and support for staff. As well as bespoke training, the Teaching Skills

Academy provides 1:1 support, workshops, drop-in and twilight sessions. Every teacher has an improvement plan and is able to access the Teaching Skills Academy for personalised support. Teaching Skills Advisers are allocated to each of the college's five faculties making the service accessible to all staff.

### Looking to the future

The Professional Futures initiative was initially piloted with Level 3 learners on the Abingdon campus and is now being taken forward with vocational learners across the whole college. Similar approaches are being developed for Level 1 learners (Future Pathways), Level 2 learners (Creative Futures) and Level 4 learners (Higher Futures).

In addition, all Level 3 learners on year 2 will be offered a work placement appropriate to their planned career.

Each year, vocational learners participate in a learner conference. In the future, it is expected that learners will continue to develop their role in designing and delivering the conference.

## Points to note

- Piloting the curriculum change has enabled the college to test the concept, iron out potential problems and develop appropriate staff training options
- It is important to create a challenge and the momentum for change by avoiding 'safe' subject pairings and pairing subject areas that may not have much in common, for example, engineering and art and design.
- It is important not to be over-ambitious in terms of project design. As learners get used to the approaches and build skills and confidence, the level of challenge that the projects demand can be subtly increased.
- Not all groups will find it easy to work across subjects, and with learners from different vocational areas – it is important to consider the needs of vulnerable learners.
- It may be necessary to negotiate with Awarding Organisations to ensure project briefs can effectively accommodate unit mapping across different subjects. For example, that a single project brief for a pairing of the health and social care and sport vocational subjects provides meaningful opportunities for learners to demonstrate competence and meet individual assessment criteria.

# Case study D: Developing the entrepreneurs of tomorrow

## Oxford and Cherwell Valley College

### Vision

Oxford and Cherwell Valley College are working with local entrepreneurs and businesses to transform the way learning and teaching is designed and delivered to encourage learners to think in an entrepreneurial way. They hope to increase learner engagement, ignite a passion for learning and to develop the behaviours, attitudes and confidence that learners need to succeed in a fast-changing and uncertain employment market. The transformation is a major cultural shift that changes the way the community, learners, staff and local employers engage with the college and how they perceive its role in developing the business leaders of the future. It signifies a shift from teaching to learning.

Oxford and Cherwell Valley College is a member of the Gazelle Colleges Group<sup>27</sup>, an alliance which was founded by five college principals in 2011 to transform the curriculum and foster a new generation of social and business entrepreneurs.

*“The Gazelle Colleges Group is committed to transforming curricula to encourage an entrepreneurial mindset in their students; a mindset that will serve employers well and increase opportunities for all.”*

(Enterprising Futures: The changing landscape and new possibilities for further education, Gazelle, 2012)

To fulfil this vision, the college is engaged in a number of initiatives including: redesigning the vocational curriculum delivery model; and developing a Community Interest Company (CIC) that will support new businesses and provide employment, create curriculum learning zones staffed by learning coaches and run a series of learner-led conferences for 1700 learners.

## Redesigning the learning experience

### 4one1 curriculum model

A new curriculum model has been developed to act as a vehicle for promoting enterprise and employability. The aim is to develop a positive ‘can do’, problem-solving culture that is necessary if enterprise is to thrive in a society where the technical skills and social structures are constantly changing and evolving. The model was designed to reinvigorate teaching and learning, to improve learner satisfaction and achievement and to maintain a high level of learner-contact hours (including time with learning coaches), despite funding cut-backs.

The 4one1 curriculum model is a six-week cycle that comprises

- (4) four weeks of intensive skills development through teaching, learning and assessment;
- (one) one week of review, catch-up, one-to-one personal support and activities designed to stretch and challenge learners; and
- (1) one week of enterprise and employability where learners apply their learning through real-life, inter-disciplinary assessment activities.

The six-week cycle is repeated six times throughout the year.

The model was first piloted in two areas to refine the concept and help mitigate risk. A steering group was established to review the pilot work and drive planning and implementation across a larger number of areas. The steering group used project management techniques to oversee curriculum development, staff training, the establishment of the learning zones, recruitment of learning coaches and the organisation of business support workflow requirements around the 4one1 six-week cycle such as staffing, timetabling, resource requirements, progress tracking, assessment and data recording. At the end of the first cross-college

implementation of the 4one1 cycle learners developed and ran their own learning conference which was attended by 1700 learners.

The inter-disciplinary activities promote skills highly valued by employers such as leadership, team work and communication. The 4one1 model has been introduced for vocational courses in health and social care; engineering; business and information technology; creative arts; hair and beauty; furniture; hospitality; leisure and tourism; and public services.

In the pilot studies of 4one1, learner attendance, retention and satisfaction were all higher than previously recorded.

### Curriculum learning zones

To reinforce this shift in emphasis from teaching to learning, the college has also developed eleven Curriculum Learning Zones at the Oxford, Banbury and Bicester campuses. These Learning Zones are equipped with the latest technology and staffed by a team of dedicated learning coaches. The zones are configured differently from traditional classrooms and can accommodate individual and group work. Each zone includes industry-standard technology such as mobile devices, laptops, tablets, internet, wireless headphones, airplay printers and keyboards and video conferencing facilities. Learners have timetabled slots when they can access the zones and be assured of support and can also use the facilities outside these times, subject to availability. In addition to focused study support, the zones allow learners access to up-to-date technology and to develop high levels of digital literacy designed to improve their employability prospects. The zones and the support from learning coaches are highly valued by the learners.

*“It has changed the way I study. I now come here to complete my assignments rather than doing it at home, it is so much better and I get more done.”*

(OCVC Public Services Learner)

### SweetFE

SweetFE<sup>28</sup> is a Community Interest Company (CIC) created by a group of senior staff from Oxford and Cherwell Valley College and supported by staff and learners who are passionate about enterprise and innovation. The idea behind the CIC came from two senior staff who were looking for creative ways to support college learners and to use the talents and resources that exist within the college. Examples of some of the current SweetFE initiatives include:

- A business incubation hub – a programme available to current learners as well as those who have recently completed a period of study at the college. The aim is to sustain three new two-person businesses each year selected through a competitive bid process. Successful business owners will have access to desk space, fast broadband, meeting rooms and support from internal practitioners in finance, marketing, IT and human resources. A small financial start-up package will allow businesses to access support from internal college services such as hospitality or reprographics. BookFlow is one such business developed by former A-level learners at the college which involves purchasing and reselling text books to fellow learners.
- Car parking, stewarding and security – learners on public services’ courses are putting their qualifications to good use and developing experience in car parking at the city centre campus and through tailored security and stewarding solutions. All personnel involved are offered the opportunity to achieve a qualification in first aid.
- Peter Jones Enterprise Academy – learners working towards a pioneering qualification in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship at the Academy can apply for start-up business funding and get the opportunity to present

<sup>27</sup> Gazelle: <http://www.thegazellegroup.com/>; and Enterprising Futures: The changing landscape and new possibilities for further education, Gazelle, 2012: <http://www.thegazellegroup.com/downloads/Gazelle-Enterprising-Futures.pdf>

their ideas to a panel of business people and senior college staff. 27 new start-up businesses are being funded in this way.

- **STUDIOX1** – this is an internal media production company which provides practical industry experience for learners studying creative media courses at the college. STUDIOX1 is now able to promote these services more widely to the community and employs a paid intern who is a former student of the college.
- **Rycotewood Furniture** – the college is able to offer a high-quality ‘design and build’ office furniture service.
- **Talent Team** – the college employs and pays learners to support its commercial and business activities and to provide relevant work experience. Employment opportunities include events assistance (administration and stewarding), marketing and promotional campaigns (recording radio advertisements, photo shoots, film-making, writing articles for the college news), estates and facilities duties and customer service duties. All learners are encouraged to apply to be on the Talent Team. Applicants go through a formal application process and, if successful, a three-stage induction process at which 100 per cent attendance is required. Continuous college attendance above 90 per cent is a deliberate eligibility criterion. Successful recruits to the Talent Team receive a learner contract of employment and are paid through the college payroll system. They also receive guidance on banking and taxation.

Community involvement in SweetFE is encouraged in a number of ways:

- **3&Easy** – the opportunity for friends and supporters of the college to donate £3 per month via direct debit (with the option of gift aid) to support projects or individual learners where it can be seen to assist or develop teaching and learning, to widen participation

or perhaps to support learners suffering financial hardship.

- **Add5** – learners enrolling for college courses are encouraged to add £5 to their fees as a voluntary contribution towards the Student Fund.
- **Ambassadors and mentors** – ambassadors may contribute an annual contribution to SweetFE or perhaps time, goods or services to the value of £1,000 per annum. Mentors may provide support on an ad hoc basis, perhaps mentoring a learner business owner or providing a talk.
- **Membership** – other colleges are being encouraged to join SweetFE for an annual fee and in return will benefit from this pioneering work, and will have templates and processes made available to them to expedite implementation.

SweetFE is a not-for-profit organisation where profits made on activities will be gifted back to the college community. SweetFE’s directors and supporting staff give their time, energy and enthusiasm to the project free of charge.

These are just some of the enterprise and entrepreneurial activities that SweetFE is engaged in. Each of these initiatives is interlinked to ensure maximum benefit and reach and to provide a holistic approach to developing and embedding a culture of enterprise within Oxford and Cherwell Valley College.

#### Looking to the future

The college has appointed a full-time Business Manager to manage the day-to-day activities and take the initiative forward.

A staggering 90 per cent of local businesses in the Oxford and Cherwell Valley region are micro-businesses –learners currently studying at the college could well become the businesses and employers of tomorrow.

## Points to note

- Further information on Oxford and Cherwell Valley College’s strategic approach to engaging learners and staff within a cohesive enterprise framework is available from the college on request.
- The model depends on excellent relationships between the college and local businesses; an in-depth understanding of the skills needs of the local economy and a commitment to develop mutually beneficial relationships. For example, a local entrepreneur and restaurant owner used SweetFE’s services and the City Campus car parking scheme to distribute discount vouchers to shoppers and also offers work in the restaurant to catering learners at the college.
- Engaging staff and learners through the community interest company, together with a revitalised curriculum, are proving highly motivating, building confidence and providing valuable experience and job references that assist learners to move on to the next stage of their careers.

# Case study E: Personally accountable learning packs

## Worcester College of Technology

### Vision

The current economic climate and a corresponding reduction in the overall level of funding has encouraged senior managers at Worcester College of Technology to explore alternative delivery models for learners on full-time Level 2 and Level 3 vocational courses. Increasing financial pressures mean that the traditional model of delivery is not sustainable and a more cost-efficient approach is needed if the breadth and variety of provision traditionally offered by the college is to be maintained.

At the same time, the college wanted to:

- encourage learners to take greater ownership of their learning and to develop independent learning skills that will support future learning and employability;
- ensure all learners have access to the use of technology to enhance their learning;
- develop the digital literacy skills of learners and staff;
- use technology to improve differentiation and personalisation; and
- improve the quality and consistency of the learning experience across the college.

Each course has been required to develop **Personally Accountable Learning (PAL) packs**, available through the college Moodle™ site, that represent a saving of between 15 to 20 per cent in teaching hours. Learners use the PAL packs in staffed study centres, sometimes timetabled by course teams, or may elect to study independently.

### Redesigning the learning experience

The magnitude of the scale and potential impact of the change has necessitated strong leadership, clear communication and implementation support. The vision and rationale for change was presented to all staff by the Principal; the engagement of the senior leadership team in setting and monitoring targets helped to maintain impetus, demonstrate

commitment to the initiative and reinforce the need to change.

Each team was given a target for a percentage reduction in teaching hours and, although reducing the teaching hours was mandatory requirement, teams were given freedom to determine how the changes were to be implemented. Some teams elected to cut hours across all modules while others identified modules that they felt were particularly suited to a blended learning delivery model.

Course teams planned, designed and wrote the PAL packs with training and support provided by the Information and Learning Technology (ILT) and Study Centre teams. Support ranged from general awareness of potential learning and assessment activities and strategies; technical and pedagogical training; general cross-college training; online training resources; team development sessions; support for small groups; and one-to-one support. The ILT and Study Centre teams worked with individual course teams to help identify suitable content and resources for PAL packs and to highlight strategies that can reduce the workload involved, for example how to use repositories of open educational resources and interactive media such as YouTube™ clips, and how to develop strategies that make blended learning engaging, active and collaborative.

The involvement of the college quality team helped to reassure staff that the quality of the learning experience was to be at least protected, and hopefully improved. The ILT, Study Centre and quality teams worked together to ensure clear guidance was provided, emphasising the need to include differentiated content to support learners who may struggle; to extend learning for those ready for higher challenges; to address different learning preferences by including a variety of types of content (from text-based to media-rich); and to include assessment to measure performance.

A considerable amount of time has been invested in developing appropriate quality systems and processes to support the curriculum change. PAL packs are reviewed annually by the course teams and a sample is reviewed by the quality team.

An audit tool has been developed that looks at the structure, instructions, content, activities and assessment provided by a PAL pack with criterion statements that articulate what needs to be demonstrated for the resource to be rated as either 'satisfactory', 'good' or 'outstanding'. Feedback is then provided to teams. Where improvements are needed, an action plan and programme of support is put in place and PAL packs that are graded as 'outstanding' are used as exemplars and shared with other teams.

On some courses, learners create and share their own resources, working collaboratively to develop a broader collective knowledge. This generates ownership and ensures the Moodle™ becomes "a place where learners **do** stuff **not** where they get stuff" (Peter Kilcoyne, ILT Director, Worcester College of Technology). For example, learners studying sport and leisure have compiled a glossary which forms a virtual first aid kit. Each learner is required to submit at least one item to the kit and describe what injuries it should be used to treat and how it should be used. As each learner contributes, so the resource develops and the learning of each individual is shared among the group. Strategies like this also encourage peer learning through discussion; incorrect entries can be challenged and corrected.

### Looking to the future

The PAL packs were introduced in September 2011 and have now been in place for a complete academic year. There has been a small but significant increase in success rates and overall retention since the PAL packs were introduced. The majority of learners appreciate the flexibility offered by the packs and where the packs are well-designed, interactive and engaging, responses have been positive. The focus now is in sharing effective practice, improving quality and consistency in PAL packs across the college and increasing stakeholder involvement in the design and quality improvement processes.

While the curriculum change was born out of necessity, the introduction of PAL packs has proved to be a viable and effective means of improving quality. It has also helped to develop new ways of teaching – moving away from a traditional content-distribution model and bringing in more collaborative and interactive approaches to learning and the assessment of learning.

Worcester College of Technology is interested in working with others who may be taking a similar approach, to share and expand development of approaches to change management, implementation and staff development; to develop partnerships between curriculum teams; and to share content and documentation.

## Points to note

- Reducing teaching hours is potentially a controversial move that requires a whole organisation approach with a visible and sustained commitment to change from senior leaders and well-developed change management strategies for all affected by the change.
- Providing flexible, responsive, multi-disciplinary training involving curriculum teams, quality teams and support teams (ILT and Study Centre), was essential to the success of the introduction of PAL packs.
- Not all learners take to this approach – a blended approach that integrates PAL pack and face-to-face learning is likely to be more successful and aid monitoring of individual learners.
- It is essential to develop appropriate quality processes to provide evidence of success and to inform further quality improvements.
- Making the change involves significant initial staff resource but the expectation is that this will diminish over time.

# Case study F: A new approach to curriculum planning

## Chesterfield College

### Vision

Chesterfield College serves further and higher education learners from north and south Derbyshire, Buxton, Derby, South Yorkshire and Sheffield.

Although the college achieves high levels of learner success and excellent pass rates, evidence from a comprehensive curriculum review revealed that the course portfolio was not sufficiently innovative and did not fully integrate with labour market intelligence.

The college has developed a new model for curriculum planning which has increased success levels, enhanced quality, addressed inefficiencies and generated estimated savings of £2 million against a £37 million budget for the 2012/13 planning cycle – an important consideration given the economic downturn and Government funding constraints.

## Redesigning the learning experience

### Analysing the problem

The curriculum review (using 2009/10 data) identified several areas of concern:

- Remission allocations were escalating – where staff were granted remission from contracted teaching hours for additional duties or projects this was not always revised or removed once the additional duties were complete. The review revealed that some temporary staffing arrangements had become permanent and that staff time was not being optimised.
- Some courses were being over-taught – the teaching hours allocated to a course were not systematically reviewed once courses were established and had not been adjusted to reflect new and more efficient curriculum delivery methods such as the use of a VLE.
- Staff utilisation and room utilisation rates were below par – the review highlighted the need to ensure that staff time and expertise were used effectively and efficiently to optimise learning with a minimal resource overhead,

for example, ensuring the best staff were available to teach a given course and that the most appropriate rooms were allocated for the planned learning and the size of the group.

- There was a strong emphasis on quality but less priority was being paid to costing, efficiency and staffing.
- Much of the curriculum was based on replicas of previous years, as opposed to the development of a curriculum that reflected future needs.

In addition, an internal financial analysis of profit and loss statements against each curriculum area showed that some were in a deficit position in terms of their overall contributions to the college. Senior managers at the college recognised that urgent changes were required before the situation became more acute.

### A holistic approach

Traditionally curriculum and quality teams had priority, and led curriculum planning. The new approach made use of the extensive expertise of staff from the Management Information Systems (MIS) and finance teams, ensuring that a comprehensive, broad skill set contributed to the task and that all aspects of curriculum design and delivery were considered.

The MIS Manager, Joe Fojut, developed a detailed spreadsheet to provide a robust data model for curriculum planning. The spreadsheet is based on:

- a data extract of the current year's provision from the college MIS;
- a link to a Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA) spreadsheet which is regularly updated via an automated extract;
- the ability to identify fundability and availability of proposed aims for 16-18 and 19+ learners;
- a calculation of efficiency of delivery (based on planned delivery hours versus funded hours);
- a calculation of assumed tuition fee for funded provision; and
- a comparison to the previous year's data at the same point in the recruitment cycle.

Target learner recruitment data is then input by the curriculum manager and team. This is processed by the spreadsheet to show the viability and planned outcomes of the proposed course. The spreadsheet also provides some 'what-if' scenarios to aid decision making.

The new curriculum evaluation and planning model was launched at a staff development day for curriculum managers in 2012.

Each of the 34 curriculum areas in the college was given a copy of the spreadsheet sections relevant to their area to plan their proposals for the 2012/13 curriculum cycle. Broad targets were set at 10 per cent for efficiency, maximised standard learner numbers (SLN) and a minimum 40 per cent contribution to the college's running costs.

### 'Pitching' to a panel

Having used the spreadsheet to model plans for provision, curriculum managers were required to 'pitch' their proposals to a panel comprising the senior management team and representatives from the finance and MIS teams.

The panel evaluated the presentations before making decisions as to whether to 'purchase' each of the proposed curriculum plans, ask for further information or decline each proposal. Evaluations were supportive yet tough, particularly where it was felt that insufficient income was being generated.

The process provided an opportunity for the senior management team to review the curriculum offer and the efficiency of individual elements and to 'purchase' only what was in the best interests of the learners and the college's strategic priorities.

Some curriculum managers were initially sceptical of the new curriculum planning model but were won over by the information the spreadsheet provided and the enhanced freedom this gave them in planning their curriculum:

*"We had a new, and what appeared to be complicated, process dropped on us at short notice to 'help make the curriculum more efficient and its planning more*

*effective'. As you can gather from my opening statement I was not looking forward to this process!*

*"My initial, sceptical opinion was soon quashed as I began to explore the spreadsheet tool and found out just how powerful it was. With all of my curriculum in one place, all the associated information with it: dates, numbers of learners, qualification aims, funding, material costs and a wealth of information to assist me in consolidating the curriculum. Most importantly, we can actually see how our courses perform financially and ensure that our area offers viable provision.*

*"Humble pie tastes quite good when it is as simple to swallow as this was!"*

Nick Rudkin, Carpentry and Joinery Curriculum Manager, Chesterfield College

*"The holistic process of the new curriculum planning and purchasing process has not only underlined our existing contribution but has allowed me to make an informed decision to make efficiency savings without affecting quality.*

*"The opportunity to share best practice not only within directorates, but college-wide provided a fantastic opportunity to share and embed other approaches to curriculum planning.*

*"This has enabled me to consider many variables and future-proof my provision in an informed way."*

Steve Everton, Brickwork Curriculum Manager, Chesterfield College

### Changing the culture

Curriculum planning at Chesterfield College has changed from a 'top-down' to a 'feed-up' approach. The curriculum managers have enhanced information to inform their planning processes, which gives them freedom and flexibility. They also have a strong sense of ownership over what is being delivered, as well as with increased accountability.

As part of the curriculum planning, remission hours were examined in detail. These had been steadily

climbing in previous years but where no evidence of impact was available, remission hours were stopped. The effective management of this aspect alone has reduced the number of remission hours from 11,000 to 3,500.

The impact on the budget planning process and staffing analysis was also significant. The new curriculum planning process has facilitated more detailed and timely financial profiling and staff management.

*“We were aiming to get curriculum managers to think beyond what they had always done. The aim was to make the process business-focused but not business-driven.”*

*“Learners are at the heart of everything we do and our offer needs to serve them. Our job is to provide a curriculum that is outstanding in terms of learner experience and employer engagement, and that delivers high success. We believe we have done this. We are not the same college as we were twelve months ago!”*

Debra Gray, Assistant Principal – Curriculum Development and Delivery, Chesterfield College

There is a more effective relationship between different departments and a mutual appreciation of the role of staff from different directorates and service teams. Key individuals were identified who could act as ‘bridges’ between the curriculum and business support functions and provide a rounded perspective. This, along with targeted staff development, ensured that curriculum managers were supported throughout the change process, particularly in relation

to the financial and MIS aspects. Jisc RSC East Midlands worked with the college throughout the initiative.

*“The technology side of what Chesterfield College has achieved is relatively simple, using Excel spreadsheets integrated with MIS databases, but it is extremely detailed. The far bigger achievement has been in the change of culture.”*

Stuart Jones, Jisc RSC East Midlands Adviser

### Looking to the future

The remodelling of curriculum planning processes at Chesterfield College has been recognised by the Association of Colleges who has awarded them the 2013 Beacon Award for Innovation in Education.

The timing for the introduction of the model to support the 2012/13 curriculum planning process was extremely tight and the college plans to revise this for future implementation cycles and incorporate better profiling for employer responsiveness.

### Additional resources

Chesterfield College and Jisc RSC East Midlands are willing to share the following two downloadable resources:

- Making your course provision viable: a workshop presentation [http://www.slideshare.net/JISC\\_RSC\\_East\\_Midlands/how-viable-is-your-course-provision](http://www.slideshare.net/JISC_RSC_East_Midlands/how-viable-is-your-course-provision)
- Chesterfield College: Brief overview of the curriculum planning process: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/21449>

## Points to note

- The backing and engagement of the senior management team in the pitching panels was crucial to the process; it provided a focus on quality and cost efficiency and provided an invaluable opportunity for curriculum and senior managers to work together.
- Effective staff development and support throughout the process, with clear communication as to the purpose and rationale for the change, helped to overcome staff scepticism and resistance.
- Involving MIS and finance staff in the curriculum planning processes provided a more rounded perspective and ensured curriculum managers were business-focused and able to use the MIS and financial data to best effect.
- Identifying key personnel who could act as bridges between curriculum and business support functions proved to be a useful and supportive strategy.



# Case study G: Creative approaches for hard-to-reach learners

## Accrington and Rossendale College

### Vision

Accrington and Rossendale College is located in an area where the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is higher than the Lancashire average, varying from 6 to 8.1 per cent in some of the communities the college serves, whilst some areas have a history of under-achievement linked to poverty and disadvantage. By providing training and support for young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET the college hopes to reduce the number of those who are not in work, education, employment or training and to make a significant contribution to the regeneration of the local economy.

Those classified as NEET are often hard to reach and engage and some may find the formal college environment intimidating. Accrington and Rossendale College is therefore looking for new ways of meeting, supporting and encouraging young people to develop life and employability skills and is working in partnership with local charities, local authorities, housing associations and community groups to develop new types of provision tailored to their needs.

## Redesigning the learning experience

### Innovative partnerships

The college has a history of working in partnership with others to develop innovative training programmes such as the Passport to Housing project which brings together a local authority, registered social landlords and supported accommodation organisations to develop and deliver a qualification that helps people to gain, manage and retain tenancy accommodation. The programme is particularly geared towards those moving into new tenancies, those in supported accommodation, vulnerable adults and young people. Participants learn how to become responsible tenants, how to find accommodation,

to understand and sustain a tenancy, money management, how they can contribute to the community and how they can progress further through training and work. The training is accredited at Level 1 and is delivered in the community.

Some of those who have successfully completed the programme are now getting involved in supporting new participants. The college is building capacity for the programme to be delivered to a wider audience through the development of a tailor-made Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) course delivered to colleagues in the partner organisations.

The success of this model lies in identifying the learning and other needs of a particular target group and in working with carefully chosen partners who are directly engaged with those who need the support to provide a highly tailored and relevant curriculum. There are benefits too for the partners, with an enhanced understanding among tenants of their responsibilities and improved personal and financial management.

### Supporting the process of change

The college has other innovative programmes and was keen to develop and sustain more initiatives of this kind and to use the flexibility of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) more fully. The Director of Curriculum applied to be part of a pilot group of providers to test and refine a new suite of training modules designed by LSIS to support staff in their continuing professional development, with a focus on developing innovation in curriculum design. Senior and curriculum managers at the college piloted four of the six modules:

- Planning for QCF unit delivery;
- Managing curriculum change;
- Developing an inclusive curriculum; and
- Planning for progression.

The training was delivered to coincide with the business and curriculum planning cycle for the

college and has encouraged managers to develop new provision and to be mindful of change management approaches and strategies that are likely to help new initiatives succeed.

### New approaches

One new initiative now under way is the development of a NEET 'army' of volunteers. Working with Community Solutions Lancashire, a local community-based social enterprise, the college is hoping to engage and train an army of 50 volunteers active within the community to reach out to young people who are either NEET or at risk of becoming NEET and to develop tailored training programmes that are delivered in the community. Volunteers and community workers will form a Youth Neighbourhood Operation Team. It is hoped that the volunteers will be able to overcome some of the barriers the college faces in directly contacting those most in need of support and that this will enable new relationships and new models of delivery to emerge. Volunteers will be trained and will be able to work towards a qualification in youth work, mentoring and volunteering.

### Employment Academy

In August 2012 the college opened its Employment Academy in partnership with the Jobcentre Plus to provide a range of flexible learning opportunities and support

to help unemployed adults gain the skills and qualifications they need to successfully return to employment.

Collectively, and by co-ordinating support through a range of initiatives and partnership relationships, Accrington and Rossendale College is working alongside the communities it serves to develop a new community-led curriculum that meets local needs.

### Looking to the future

After a successful pilot, Passport to Housing is now being taken up by other organisations in the East Lancashire area and there are plans to develop a Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) as progression for those who have already achieved the PTLLS qualification.

As a result of engagement in the LSIS continuing professional development module trials, Accrington and Rossendale College are piloting the new approaches to delivering their curriculum based on the principles of 'flipped learning', where the traditional pattern of learners being given resources or materials in a lesson and encouraged to do further research afterwards is reversed. Instead, learners are given materials to explore outside the classroom and encouraged to develop that further through application and problem solving during the lesson time, with facilitation from the teacher. If successful, the pilot will be rolled out more widely during 2013.

## Points to note

- Non-traditional models are sometimes needed to get to hard-to-reach audiences like those who are classified as NEET.
- Identifying and working with organisations that have overlapping objectives can build community capacity and lead to sustainable solutions.
- The QCF allows much greater freedom in developing a flexible and tailored curriculum.
- Organisations like Accrington and Rossendale College who took part in piloting the LSIS continuing professional development modules appreciated time for senior and curriculum managers to work together and valued external facilitation

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**New Challenges, New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011)**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/31429/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31429/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan.pdf)

## LSIS

**LSIS menu page on Learner Voice**

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/2860>

*and also*

**The further education and skills sector in 2020: a social productivity approach (LSIS, Public Services Hub, 2011)**

<http://2020psh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/The-Further-Education-and-Skills-Sector-in-2020.pdf>

**LSIS World Class Skills – The management agenda: how to implement change projects (LSIS, 2009)**

<http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/import-pdf:2586/datastreams/PDF/content>

**LSIS World Class Skills publication – The management agenda: being a successful change leader (LSIS, 2009)**

<http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/import-pdf:2587/datastreams/PDF/content>

**157/LSIS e-Ambassador Project**

[www.e-ambassador.co.uk](http://www.e-ambassador.co.uk)

## Other

**Learner Voice: a handbook (Futurelab, 2006)**

[http://archive.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/handbooks/learner\\_voice.pdf](http://archive.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/handbooks/learner_voice.pdf)

**Kotter, J (1996). The 8-step Process for Leading Change**

<http://www.kotterinternational.com/our-principles/changesteps/changesteps>

**Learning walks – based on a concept developed by Sussex Downs College, referenced in 157 Group publication Leading Learning (May 2011)**

<http://www.cfbt.com/evidenceforeducation/pdf/2157G-082-LeadingLearning.pdf>

**Go-on UK**

<http://www.go-on.co.uk>

**Enterprising Futures: The changing landscape and new possibilities for further education (Gazelle Global, 2012)**

<http://www.thegazellegroup.com/downloads/Gazelle-Enterprising-Futures.pdf>

**Gazelle**

<http://www.thegazellegroup.com/>

**Enterprising Futures: The changing landscape and new possibilities for further education (Gazelle, 2012)**

<http://www.thegazellegroup.com/downloads/Gazelle-Enterprising-Futures.pdf>

**SweetFE – further information**

[www.sweetfe.co.uk](http://www.sweetfe.co.uk)

**Jisc Advance Regional Study Centres**

[www.jiscrsc.ac.uk](http://www.jiscrsc.ac.uk)

**Association of Colleges (AoC) Learning Technology Survey Report (AoC, 2012)**

<http://bit.ly/PXObHE>

**Thinking outside the College (AoC, 2012)**

[www.aoc.co.uk/en/college\\_governors/thinking-outside-the-college](http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/college_governors/thinking-outside-the-college)

**Kotter, J (1996). Leading change. Harvard Business School Press: Cambridge MA**

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## Ofsted

**The report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills: Learning and skills (2011/12) (Ofsted, 2012)**

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-learning-and-skill>

**Common inspection framework for further education and skills (Ofsted, 2012)**

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/common-inspection-framework-for-further-education-and-skills-2012>

**Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills (Ofsted, 2012)**

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

**How colleges improve (Ofsted, 2012)**

[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-colleges-improve](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/how-colleges-improve)

## BIS / DfE

**Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS, 2010)**

[www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2010/Nov/skills-for-sustainable-growth](http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2010/Nov/skills-for-sustainable-growth)

**24+ Advanced Learning Loans (Skills Funding Agency)**

<http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/programmes/24AdvancedLearningLoans/>

**Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report (Department for Education, 2011)**

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011>



## Appendix 1: Sample audit tool

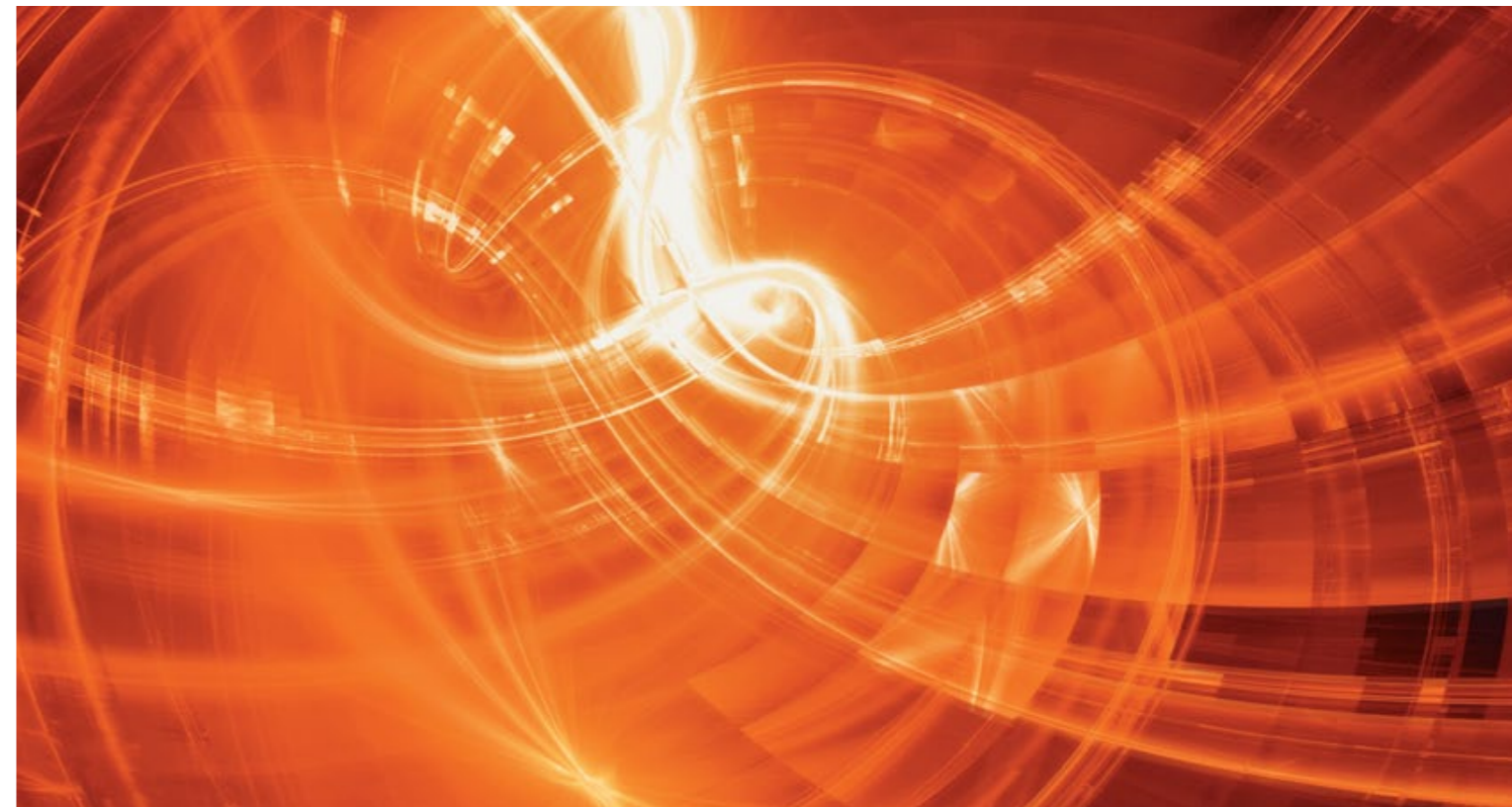
This sample audit tool uses questions to help identify what you want to achieve, effective practice statements to describe the desired outcomes and measures to ascertain where you are now and where you want to be in six months, one year and three years' time. It also includes space for you to set down your first thoughts on how the improvement target could be achieved.

The rating scale used in this example goes from one (a low level of effectiveness) to five (a high level of effectiveness). The same scale can be used to indicate how important making progress in relation to each curriculum redesign question is to your organisation and to establish which improvements need to be prioritised. For example,

providing a variety of courses that support all learners at different levels and offering variety in mode of delivery is currently rated as 2 below which is a fairly low rating. The improvement targets indicate that over the next six months the ambition is that the situation has changed modestly and on review, would then be rated as 3, rising to 4 after a year and 5 after 3 years.

The audit will form the basis for more detailed planning, setting out what and how you will change, who is responsible for each action, timescales and how changes will be resourced.

Once the curriculum has been redesigned, it is essential to review it at regular intervals to ensure desired outcomes are being delivered and that it is flexible enough to meet the needs of learners and employers.



# Sample audit tool

Curriculum redesign audit question	Effective practice statement that describes the desired state	Current Effectiveness					Improvement Target <i>[see rating scale notes above]</i> Where would you like to be in:			How target can be achieved
		Low		High						
<p><b>Example:</b></p> <p><i>How extensive is the current curriculum provision?</i></p>	<p><i>A variety of courses are available that support all learners, at different levels and offering variety in mode of delivery</i></p>	2					3	4	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Map existing provision including progression routes</i></li> <li>• <i>Research and analyse local and stakeholder needs</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify duplication</i></li> <li>• <i>Gap analysis</i></li> </ul>

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