

How will a 'provider' organisation know how well it's doing in implementing the Skills for Life strategy?

By now most of the toolkits and approaches associated with the role of major providers in implementing Skills for Life strategy are well known and in use. The shift over the past five years has been enormous when one looks back.

One way of judging how well an organisation is doing in delivering this modernised public service is to rely on occasional inspection visits – or at least to pay real attention to the outcomes of self assessment processes.

A support to this (which by no means replaces the formal annual self assessment) is to use quick checklists to cross reference views on 'how are we doing' and to highlight areas that need a bit more exploration.

A lot of emphasis is now put on an organisation's ability to move beyond the technical changes (use of core curriculum; use of appropriate assessment tools; entries for appropriate accreditations; skilled/qualified staff etc) and to ensure that the whole organisation has an improved approach to Skills for Life developments; that the organisation acts 'intelligently' in its decision-making re Skills for Life activity etc.

The A4 sheet below has gathered together a range of elements that have been associated with 'whole organisational approach'; 'intelligent organisations'; high quality leadership and management; adequate delivery etc.

The sheet has proved useful in some organisations:

- as a discussion sheet on staff development days (across the organisation)
- as a tick box check list (using traffic-light coding or a simple ✓, ?, X system) to highlight those aspects substantially in place; those being worked on; with more still to do; and those that need concerted effort.

- ❑ Selectively operates in productive relationships with other agencies, in ways that do not detract from core business of teaching and learning
- ❑ Knows priorities of LSC/ Probation Service/ Jobcentre Plus etc and other appropriate agencies
- ❑ Knows the SfL needs in the target communities/ sectors

Capable, intelligent, holistic organisation re planning, provision and improvement of SfL outcomes for individuals, communities and employers

- ❑ There are clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for SfL activities across the organisation
- ❑ Leaders and managers see SfL planning as more than plans; and are able to locate SfL in wider agendas
- ❑ Able to plan for SfL change rather than 'describe what we do'
- ❑ Senior managers understand SfL's potential as an underpinning of many other desired outcomes
- ❑ Knowledgeable and skilled middle managers are familiar with national, regional and localised strategies

- Identified needs, and decisions about appropriate responses, form the thought-out curriculum offer – in context of 3 year development planning
- 'SfL' heading used to bring together distinctly focused work on SfL Qual language/numeracy); SfL work linked to other outcomes; key skills (Core number); GCSE (English/Maths); additional learning support – all in a friendly entry to Level 2- across all curriculum areas – sharing of resources and teams
- There is a clear organisational approach to embedding SfL in a range of programmes
- Uses reliable, up to date data as a basis for creating knowledge that can aid decision-making; MIS data used to review progress and highlight action. Monitoring reports are regularly reflected on by managers at an appropriate level
- Capable of robust self-assessment, of SfL across various parts of the organisation (including SfL within vocational areas), in a way that highlights next steps. Appropriate staff are involved in self-assessments. Self assessment feeds into planning
- A SfL 'network' across the organisation seeks out information from various sources, selectively updates re SfL issues and trends via newsletters, meetings, and ensures that information is shared across the organisation. Disseminates effective approaches to effective teaching and learning.
- Sets realistic 'aspirational' and 'guaranteed minimum' SfL targets for different areas (in relation to relevant benchmarks). Performance targets in place for direct provision, achievement, attendance (and progression) for direct provision.
- Fosters a culture of learner success and achievement (in appropriate work areas). Teaching, learning and guidance (re literacy, language, progression within and across curriculum areas)
- Elements of screening/assessment/formative accreditation/planning lead appropriately to context and to learners
- SfL teaching and learning situations are seen, by learners and staff, as creative etc
- SfL materials are relevant, of high quality and are used appropriately across curriculum areas
- Learners have easy access to regular, relevant assessment of SfL outcomes across curriculum areas
- Learners have access to ICT support for their learning; access to learning support beyond the teaching time; access to wider sources of information for rehearsal
- Lesson observations (and other aspects of quality assurance) report on processes, across curriculum all areas
- All staff across the organisation recognise the contribution they can make to SfL
- Staff delivering SfL learner support, curriculum support and direct teaching are qualified and have access to cpd (that is linked to organisational/SfL the planned ways. Continuing professional development is seen as more than training sessions. Staff have access to robust information, advice and their own professional development.
- Staff are addressing their own skills for life needs, as appropriate, with the organisation
- Predictions of staffing needs are linked to current offer and to planned future provision (relation to subjects; contexts; levels etc)
- Organisation is selective re its involvement in developments to improve quality, resist taking up all that comes along and uses menus of support to foster responsibility for its own quality improvement in planned ways
- Uses inspections, reports and reviews as sources of knowledge to support improvement