

Theme 9: Ensuring appropriate leadership and management development exists at all levels throughout the organisation

ISCs have identified that individual staff take on responsibility for leading a team at an early stage in their careers within the specialist sector, and need support to do this. Colleges and governing bodies need to plan effectively for future leadership and management requirements in the ISC sector.

Action: Natspec will

- 16 Share existing resources that support all levels of leadership and management training
- 17 Offer governance training on the key elements of succession planning for ISCs

Theme 10: Ensuring there is a flexible, fair and supportive working environment for the workforce

No additional actions

Priority 4: Ensuring equality and diversity are at the heart of strategy, policy-making, planning and training

Equality and diversity are embedded throughout the above themes

Summary of Actions: Natspec will

- 1 Support other member colleges through the HR forum to submit SIR data, in order to build up more comprehensive information
- 2 Establish benchmark data at the earliest opportunity, to be refined as more data is available.
- 3 Continue to submit change requests to the SIR to ensure it meets the requirements of the variety of staff disciplines in ISCs
- 4 Encourage ISCs to share examples of good recruitment practice, in particular through the HR forum and regional groups
- 5 Continue to display job vacancies in ISCs on the Natspec website
- 6 Compile existing strategies for targeted advertising and share with Natspec members and perhaps through FEBROWSE
- 7 Encourage ISCs to share examples of good practice in recruiting a diverse workforce, in particular through the HR forum and regional groups
- 8 Promote further Equality and Diversity recruitment activities in collaboration with LSIS, linked to the Equalities Manifesto, and with Niace regarding improved employment opportunities for disabled staff.
- 9 Encourage ISCs to feedback issues on IfL via the ISC representative, in particular around categories of membership
- 10 Continue to promote IfL registration
- 11 Continue to offer a wide range of training events to members
- 12 Investigate innovative and flexible approaches to delivering CPD to a wide range of staff, taking account of the recommendations in the 'Enhancement of Learning Support' project
- 13 Continue to work with Lifelong Learning UK and other partners to develop specialist standards and qualifications for LLDD teachers and learning support staff
- 14 Work with Lifelong Learning UK to find a way to share the skills maps, perhaps through FEBROWSE
- 15 Investigate with partners cost effective and innovative training methods to deliver bite sized targeted learning
- 16 Share existing resources that support all levels of leadership and management training
- 17 Offer governance training on the key elements of succession planning for ISCs

Methodology

- The research for this report was conducted through:
 - Attendance at the NW and SE ISC regional groups, who were enthusiastic focus groups. Many thanks to them for their active participation.
 - Telephone and email discussions with representatives of colleges in the SIR pilot
 - Telephone discussion with ISC representative on the IfL Council
 - Telephone discussion with a member of the SIR project team, Lifelong Learning UK
 - Telephone discussion with Chief executive, Natspec
- Desk research, including the following documents:
 - The Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007-2012 (Revised version:2009-2010)
 - Implementing the Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007-2012: A Guide for Learning Providers (Revised version 2009-2010)
 - Further Education Workforce Reforms: Information Pack
 - Managing Data – Building an understanding of the further education sector workforce in England
- Examination of FEBROWSE www.febrowse.org

Ceri Hibbert

Consultant for Natspec
May 2010



Workforce Development: A Strategy for Natspec 2010-13

Introduction

Natspec has been closely involved in the development of the Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England 2007 – 2012 facilitated by Lifelong Learning UK and supports its vision and aims. In addition, Natspec and Lifelong Learning UK have signed a Strategic Partnership agreement, which includes commitments to:

- work together to support Lifelong Learning UK key activity i.e. workforce development, workforce data, sector research and standards development
- work together to build a robust evidence base to inform sector developments
- provide sector expertise and views to shape the outcomes of Lifelong Learning UK work on behalf of the sector

Independent Specialist Colleges (ISCs) have much in common with the rest of the post-16 sector, but the diverse range of professionals working in ISCs, the relatively small size of the colleges and the residential component of many, means that some key elements of the Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector require alternative or additional approaches.

ISC principals demonstrate an enormous commitment to workforce development and to maintaining a diverse and highly skilled workforce. There is great enthusiasm for finding innovative ways to deliver continuing professional development (CPD) and training. Natspec has established a Human Resources (HR) forum to promote and support workforce issues. This document identifies a number of actions that will support Natspec's members to develop the workforce over the next three years, in line with the Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector and in keeping with other Natspec priorities and work strands.

Theme 1: Gathering robust data on the workforce

There is currently no overall analysis of the workforce in ISCs. However, 6 larger colleges have submitted 2,830 Staff Individualised Record (SIR) returns in 2009 as part of a Natspec supported pilot. An analysis of these returns is included in 'An analysis of the SIR data 2008-2009', published by Lifelong Learning UK in May 2010. Colleges found that significant work was required initially to extract and then input the data needed; others required minor amendments to their existing systems and some were prepared to submit a return, but found their systems were incompatible. However, all felt that useful information would be available from this process, and that the data extract would be much more straightforward in subsequent years. The Natspec Board of Directors has agreed to support this initiative and encourage more colleges to submit SIR returns in the future.

Action: Natspec will

- 1 Support other member colleges through the HR forum to submit SIR data, in order to build up more comprehensive information

Theme 2: Using data to understand the workforce and improve future planning

Using the SIR data, Natspec will be in a position to provide national benchmarking data for member colleges. This could include:

- Diversity of the workforce
- Range of staff in ISCs
- Qualifications

Colleges also felt that data about Health and Safety, specifically RIDDOR notifications, sickness levels (overall and by discipline) and staff turnover (overall and by discipline) would be useful.

Actions: Natspec will

- 2 Establish benchmark data at the earliest opportunity, to be refined as more data is available.
- 3 Continue to submit change requests to the SIR to ensure it meets the requirements of the variety of staff disciplines in ISCs.

Theme 3: Using data to understand workforce diversity and target actions

ISCs have specific challenges in managing workforce diversity due to their national student recruitment; the demographics of the student population are often different from that of the local workforce. Having access to local and national benchmark data will provide information on which to base targets and actions.

Priority 2: Attracting and recruiting the best people

Theme 4: Recruiting the people we need

The working environment within ISCs has many rewards, but also certain challenges. One college has implemented a process whereby potential employees have the opportunity to experience life within the college before making a commitment. There are many other examples of good practice in recruitment which it would be helpful to share. The HR forum will facilitate this.

Actions: Natspec will

- 4 Encourage ISCs to share examples of good recruitment practice, in particular through the HR forum and regional groups
- 5 Continue to display job vacancies in ISCs on the Natspec website
- 6 Compile existing strategies for targeted advertising and share with Natspec members and perhaps through FEBROWSE

Theme 5: Increasing the diversity of the workforce at all levels

There is evidence of good practice within ISCs which should be shared; for example, one college appoints advisers to supplement the Governing Body, in order to reflect the demographics of the student population. A recent Natspec Equality and Diversity seminar series in partnership with LSIS has been very successful and will be followed up by further work. Natspec supports the LSIS Equalities Manifesto and has identified action 3, to develop 'a truly representative workforce at all levels' as a priority area for action.

Actions: Natspec will

- 7 Encourage ISCs to share examples of good practice in recruiting a diverse workforce, in particular through the HR forum and regional groups
- 8 Promote further Equality and Diversity recruitment activities in collaboration with LSIS, linked to the Equalities Manifesto, and with Niace regarding improved employment opportunities for disabled staff.

Priority 3: Retaining and developing the modern, professionalised workforce

Theme 6: Improving and promoting the workforce image

Natspec supports the work of the Institute for Learning (IfL) in promoting a professional and well trained workforce. There is an ISC representative on the IfL Council, who is able to pass on the experiences of staff in ISCs.

There has not been a consistent approach to IfL registration amongst ISCs, with each college making a decision based on their circumstances. Some have registered only those with, or working towards, a teaching qualification; others have decided to register all those connected with the delivery of learning - teaching staff and teaching assistants, therapy and residential staff, to promote the message that 'everyone is an educator'. There is however general agreement that raising the profile of CPD for all staff is crucial. One college that chose only to register teaching staff has used the model of Reflect to record the CPD of all staff.

Actions: Natspec will

- 9 Encourage ISCs to feedback issues on IfL via the ISC representative, in particular around categories of membership
- 10 Continue to actively promote IfL registration

Theme 7: Professionalising the workforce through relevant training and continuing professional development

Whilst ISCs have much in common with other FE establishments, the wide range of staff disciplines, including health professionals, therapists and residential support, requires a different response from management, HR and training departments in relation to:

- QA procedures
- Mandatory supervision requirements
- Salary structures
- CPD needs
- Registration with specific professional bodies.

In residential ISCs, staff work many different shift patterns, making the scheduling of training complex. In addition, mandatory training in areas such as safeguarding and first aid leaves less time for developmental training. To ensure that staff can develop the wide-ranging skills required to meet the complex needs of learners, innovative ways of delivering CPD have to be considered. ISCs make good use of partnerships at local or regional level to make training more cost effective, provide peer support and share best practice. E-learning is another effective and flexible approach. The challenge is offer the right training, at the right time, in the right way to enable staff to meet the needs of the learners – a differentiated approach to CPD.

Actions: Natspec will

- 11 Continue to offer a wide range of training events to members
- 12 Investigate innovative and flexible approaches to delivering CPD to a wide range of staff, taking account of the recommendations in the 'Enhancement of Learning Support' project
- 13 Continue to work with Lifelong Learning UK and other partners to develop specialist standards and qualifications for LLDD teachers and learning support staff

There is a vast amount of very specialist knowledge within ISCs; we need to celebrate this and share it with others across the FE sector.

Theme 8: Identifying, planning and delivering the required skills needs of the workforce

Many ISCs have used audits to understand the diverse skills of their workforce. Required skill levels within specific roles are defined, and current skill levels of individual staff are mapped against them. This approach could usefully be shared.

Action: Natspec will

- 14 Work with Lifelong Learning UK to find a way to share the skills maps, perhaps through FEBROWSE

The changing and increasingly complex nature of the student population means that the skills required differ from year to year, and ISCs have to be flexible and responsive.

Action: Natspec will

- 15 Investigate with partners cost effective, timely and innovative training methods to deliver bite sized targeted learning