

SIMPLIFICATION OF SKILLS IN ENGLAND CONSULTATION

Summary of Responses from Employers and Employer Representative Bodies¹

1.1 Targets, Measures and Incentives

There was a general view that the most appropriate targets and measures are those which reflect business needs and which have relevance at local and regional level. Respondents felt that there was a need to tailor national level targets in order to reflect local employment and skills needs. Some respondents felt that there was a role for Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) in carrying out this process at regional and local level.

Current targets based around the ambition set out in the Leitch Review, were felt to have merit in terms of setting out a positive direction of travel around, for example, the expansion of apprenticeships. However there was concern that using qualifications as an absolute proxy for skills meant that current targets were not as relevant as they could have been. Where qualifications targets were set, respondents felt that they should cover all levels to ensure a holistic approach to skills investment which meets the needs of the whole economy.

Respondents suggested that efforts should be made to further develop measures that assess the impact of qualifications on productivity and high performance working. These measures could then be used to promote greater employer investment in workforce development.

A number of respondents suggested that there should be a joint PSA target for employment and skills. Suggestions included a measure of 'sustainable jobs with progression', with progression measured at six and 12 months and a joint target for sustained jobs with skills to encourage integration of services within a commonly defined framework across organisational boundaries. Having shared targets was seen as a positive as it had the ability to promote greater partnership working.

Other suggestions for targets and measures included:

- An increase in number of businesses satisfied with the skills base measured 6 monthly and on a regional basis.
- an (x%) increase in number of businesses able to access skills training (not necessarily qualifications) measured quarterly and regionally.
- the GDP growth in target sections on a regional basis
- employer participation - by size and sector, current and forecast recruitment, reasons for non participation.
- A focus on the uptake in leadership and management courses given that evaluations show that once leaders and managers undertake appropriate training there is a significant pull through on levels of other training within the organisation.

¹ Due to their unique position in the skills system the views of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs) are detailed separately.

- Targets around the average number of training days per employee per year.

There was a widely held view that there should be a reduction in the number of new initiatives announced by government. Employers felt that they needed a system which delivers long-term continuity and certainty rather than a succession of discrete initiatives. What they require is not something different but more and better of what is already there. Employers also felt that they should be given sufficient recognition for their current level of investment in their workforce. New initiatives should aim to increase this employer investment rather than viewing employers as simply recipients of government funding. In this light the role of financial incentives should be reviewed for both employers and individuals.

1.2 Structures

There was a general view that the number of bodies involved in the skills system needed to be streamlined. The creation of the Skills Funding Agency was intended to provide a focused funding body but some representative organisations expressed concern that it may now be developing a wider remit.

Employers stated that the key test for any element of the current system should be whether or not it adds value. An overarching audit of the skills system was felt necessary to address this complexity and review the size, efficiency and remit of the existing publicly-funded organisations involved in the system. One representative body felt, for example, that organisations involved in delivering improvement services should not automatically receive public funding but should only be contracted if a training provider actually requires their services.

Some bodies were also of the view that it was important to avoid further upheaval and confusion for employers and individuals so that any structural change should be carried out with regard to its potential to disrupt delivery.

Most respondents expressed a preference for a single organisation for employment and skills, whilst others believed that the three pivots of any future system should be a central funding, regulatory and promotional body; a series of consistent, employer-led, regional or sub-regional employment and skills delivery bodies; and, public and private training providers. Any organisations that exist outside these three key organisations should either be clustered within the central funding body or abolished.

Supporting this model, one respondent suggested that the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) should no longer be independent organisations but rather should be housed within the SFA. They noted that many businesses work within numerous remits of the SSCs and as a result, find engagement difficult. If they were under one roof, this would not be the case, while it would also ensure a better and more consistent quality of the offer. Sectoral data could be effectively collected by the sub-regional employment and skills bodies and industry groups, and acted upon by the SFA.

There was some enthusiasm for extending the power of Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) and for an increased regional skills role for the RDAs.

Rather than creating new structures, some respondents suggested ways in which existing structures could be focused to improve delivery, these included:

- more consideration should be given to customer journeys and referral across organisational boundaries and an obligation placed on organisations to do this
- continue to promote one place where employers can go to find out who's who (complexity isn't just about the number of agencies - employers pointed out how similar provision or programme names are, and equally how there is no consistency with job titles and roles)
- considerable energy and expertise at a regional level is currently applied to bring coherence to a range of national programmes and initiatives promoted by Government. In particular, LSC and JCP would be assisted by a mechanism which enabled contracts to be awarded, perhaps by a single procurement vehicle, to deliver the welfare to workforce agenda.
- the encouragement of shared approaches across Sector Skills Councils, as evidenced in the UKCES publication Information to Intelligence: a Common LMI Framework for SSCs. This is particularly important in areas such as engineering which takes place across all sectors.
- Retain the current SSC system but create a new Micro and Small Business Sector Skills Council (SSC)

While some respondents felt that the existing business brokerage and emerging Adult Advancement and Careers Service (AACCS) should continue to be supported as they offer a flexible and informative way to promote the acquisition of appropriate skills, others stated that brokers should be unnecessary in a simplified system and that they are effectively a costly sticking plaster because the system is too complex and impossible to navigate.

1.3 Measures to Encourage Demand for Training from Employers and Individuals

The majority of respondents recognised that increasing demand for skills was a significant and important challenge. They suggested a range of measures to try and achieve this objective including:

- Tighten up wording on public sector contracts to ensure that all suppliers introduce and deliver on training and Apprenticeship commitments
- An entitlement to training through a Personal Training Allowance for every employee similar to the personal allowance for tax purposes. This could involve direct funding and/or guaranteed time off for training.
- Tax breaks for businesses in return for demonstrable commitment to development and training of all employees
- Improve Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services to employees and business leaders and managers, one respondent felt that current proposals for the Adult Advancement and Careers Service (ACCA), would not provide the necessary focus and resource to support business productivity.
- Consideration might be given to a training levy. Employers should be made more aware of what money is being spent on their behalf and for them to have a say in approving such expenditure, thus improving value for money.

Respondents made the point that the stated objective of leveraging greater investment from employers and individuals would only be achieved by tackling the underlying complexity in the system, not by making a complex system operate at a lower cost

1.4 Funding Streams

Suggestions as to ways to rationalise funding streams included:

- Split social programmes from economic ones. There are currently too many initiatives offering similar things, if these were consolidated the running costs could be much reduced.
- A regional funding allocation should be made for adult learning and skills not, as now, a series of separate pots
- Funding should be delivered through two simple routes: deliver funding via a funding body/regulator - direct to providers to sustain the infrastructure, while funding for courses should be directly linked to the learner. We would end the current split between learner responsive and employer responsive funding and focus on employability and progression potential for learners and the productivity benefits for employers.
- Give funds to local or sub regional partnerships that have a real insight into local need. For example the RDA in partnership with the Regional Skills Partnership could work with businesses in the region to define the needs to ensure GDP growth and employment growth, annually and sector by sector. Such funding could then be allocated annually with a small allocation of 10% for in year problems and interfaces with the targets specified by BIS.
- Regional employment and skills strategies with traction over the commissioning of employment and skills by LSC, DWP/ JCP - and RDAs - with joint commissioning of employment and skills across organisational boundaries
- Combining the funding mechanisms of the new SFA with HEFCE. This should be combined with a funding system that is flexible and weighted in favour of economically appropriate skills.

A good number of respondents mentioned the need to achieve better alignment of public and private sector funding, both in terms of leveraging greater private investment and in providing a more coherent platform for skills development in the medium and longer-term.

1.5 Measures to Reduce Costs

Respondents stressed that cost savings should not be seen as the only or even the principle objective of reform. Simplification should be pursued because it is good policy, and because it assists employers in obtaining the support they need more efficiently, not just because it saves money. Having said that, respondents were able to identify a number of areas where they felt costs could be significantly reduced:

- Reduce duplication of funding to public bodies e.g. NHS receive funding direct from Government as well as funding through Train to Gain.
- Reduce the number of publicly funded brokerage roles. The brokerage element of Train to Gain could be provided at less cost by training providers working directly

with employers on training needs analysis and developing provision to meet specific demand. Most, if not all, of the current publicly funded providers employ business development managers and brokers- is this an effective use of public money or is there significant duplication?

- Limit the amount any scheme can spend on marketing and administration to a set percentage.

1.6 Qualifications

There were a number of comments about the current qualifications system. Some respondents felt that current qualifications were designed more to meet the demands of regulators rather than the needs of employers. There was general enthusiasm for the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) with employers believing that the availability of shorter units that lead to full qualification will help to lever greater investment from individuals. It was felt to be important to retain a strong national framework to reduce complexity

One employer representative body noted that the current qualifications system relied heavily on SSCs. This organisation had experienced issues with gaining the necessary support for new qualifications from their SSC despite evidence from our employers that they want them for their businesses. They noted that the lack of processes and procedures for appeals against such decisions over the last two years has created a level of bureaucracy that has still not been resolved.

Going forward, respondents suggested that opening up the qualifications market would reduce the need for command and control centralised bodies.

Respondents were of the view that employers will buy qualifications if they make a tangible difference but they must be more streamlined, focused and deliver real business benefits. Many publicly funded qualifications are bought only for that reason i.e. that the employer does not have to pay, so the demand for skills can be said to be reflected in what employers will actually pay for.

1.7 Branding

Respondents felt that there was a need to create a single employer offer and single individual offer, ideally within a common brand, that rewards progress and is attuned to regional priorities. In terms of branding, it was felt to be important to set guidelines and an identity and then stick to them with small updates and improvements to reflect changing times but without constant re-branding which is not only costly in the extreme but also confusing to employers.

Another respondent felt that it was important to create local skills brands, easy to use and understand local marketing that employers want to engage with.

1.8 Ensuring Quality

In general employers felt that the number of audits and inspections that providers are required to undergo should be reduced. One respondent suggested that they should be undertaken through an updated Training Quality Standard rather than Ofsted. They also

believe the inspection regime should become less onerous once training providers are proven to perform to a high level.

Other suggestions for ensuring quality included:

- introduce a quality kitemark for employers and individuals – a start would be an EBay ‘buyer beware’ type model
- Remove the 5 tiers of Certification bodies, Academies, Panels, Regional councils, Approved providers who all get involved and have a say before anything is even agreed. All of these reduce the amount of public training money which the provider can actually spend on direct contact with the learner.

1.9 The Training Market

Finally, a number of respondents had suggestions as to how to ensure that there was a high quality, responsive market for training:

- Further education skills training should be opened up to provide a level playing field and provide all training providers with access to public funding based on performance and merit.
- Put in place an adequate mechanism for individuals to exercise informed choice when considering reskilling or progressing in the labour market. Currently economically inactive individuals face fragmented customer journeys for the economically inactive and long term unemployed who require help from several different organisations to ensure their progression into jobs.
- Employers felt if it was possible that account management and brokerage consolidated across employment, skills and business support would be preferable; and if the market needed to be split to be better managed it should be by sector, then geography and lastly by size of employer
- If you pay organisations based on results then only the best will survive, this is a characteristic of a true market.
- The training market is not responsive to the needs of micro businesses. A designated fund should be allocated out of the skills budget allocation to assist the hardest to reach small businesses. It needs to be a ring-fenced amount available to Micro and Small Enterprises (only) to ensure that there is no deadweight loss

Summary of Responses from Sector Skills Councils and Standard Setting Bodies

2.1 Targets and Measures

Respondents consistently expressed the view that targets should be based primarily around sectoral priorities, believing that this was the best way to ensure that employers were able to play a role in setting objectives and ensuring that these reflected measures which had real meaning for their business. Alongside this there was recognition that increased attention needed to be paid to the interface between the sectoral and spatial dimensions. A minority of respondents suggested that an alternative would be to play greater attention to place, with Employment and Skills Boards as the source of employer buy-in into locally developed targets and measures.

Respondents saw a prominent role for Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in enabling employers to set their own sectoral skills targets which would then form the basis of Sector Skills Agreements.

There was a general consensus that targets and measures needed to go beyond full qualifications and focus on meaningful, value-added outcomes. Suggestions included:

- Utilise measures of increased productivity which focus on skills utilisation.
- Set targets which relate to community outcomes for the vulnerable in society.
- Measure success through sample surveys of learners and employers at a reasonable time period after they have completed their learning programme to understand the benefits that learning has brought.
- The sector specific targets need to be long-term - given that workforce transformation is a long term agenda (one respondent suggested that a period of 15 years would not be unreasonable).
- Conversion Rates into employment should be set for each sector
- Longevity of employment rates and indicators should be set for each sector and improvement targets set in return for increased skills investment
- Measures of progression, including much better data about the destinations of FE and HE leavers.
- Set targets that take account of quality as well as quantity - large scale activity should not be confused with effective engagement and development of economically valuable skills.
- Set sector targets for leadership and management skills.
- Set targets that reflect the fact that the two key objectives of skills development are social equality and increased productivity.
- Measure success on the increase in Gross Value Added, not the number of qualifications achieved, which does not relate to business value;

2.2 Structures

Some respondents stated that there was a need to look at how to better utilise existing bodies, including SSCs, before inventing new ones. They felt that it was important to avoid too much change in order to avoid destabilising the skills system and causing further confusion to employers. In terms of the future role of SSCs, respondents felt that consideration should be given to allowing SSCs to provide funding for training directly to employers and enabling them to play a bigger role in brokering funding and access to provision for their employers.

Other respondents acknowledged the need to rationalise the current number of organisations and initiatives, noting that there were too many organisations at present in the landscape that were not accountable for anything other than giving advice and recommendations. In addition many existing bodies have very similar remits and employers do not recognise many of the bodies operating in the system. Respondents agreed that SSCs should represent the authoritative voice of employers within the skills system.

Accepting that the focus of the skills system should be based around the three points of employer, learner and provider, some respondents suggested that there should be three agencies responsible for routing funds:

- A college funding agency
- A funding agency for learner accounts
- SSCs for funding employers and leveraging co-investment

Respondents believed that such a funding model, overseen by a coordinating body to ensure good governance, equity and continuous improvement, had the potential to generate significant cost savings.

Other respondents noted that creating a single procurement agency- focusing solely on procurement and quality assurance- would reduce bureaucracy and attendant costs, overcoming the fragmentation of funding streams which causes inefficiency and confusion within the current system.

Respondents also noted that the creation of a post-19 skills and higher education funding agency would help in bridging the gap between academic and vocational learning, encouraging partnership working across all learning providers and making for a clearer learning and skills system for providers, individuals and employers.

The establishment of a single one-stop shop advice centre for employers within each sector would be beneficial in terms of simplifying employer engagement. To simplify the interface between the sectoral and spatial dimensions one respondent suggested the creation of a network of RDAs with a remit similar to the Alliance of SSCs to facilitate strategic engagement across all of the English regions

There was a general recognition that the current structure of the skills system means that it is often slow and cumbersome when responding to rapidly changing needs e.g. technological changes within individual industries. The changes suggested above should help to address this so long as those accountable for delivery are doing so against the basis of clear evidence of need and are left alone to get on with the job in hand.

2.3 Measures to Encourage Demand for Training from Employers and Individuals

The most common measures to encourage greater investment in skills development and training suggested by respondents were:

- Tax breaks and related financial incentives for employers who invest in training. Some respondents suggested tax relief for employers who took on the long-term unemployed or who recruited apprentices for the first time.
- Increased efforts to publicise the long-term benefits of investing in training.
- Increased flexibility around the eligibility requirements to access publicly funded training. Relevant costs (including any subsidies) should be sufficiently transparent to allow easy comparison between providers.
- Improve the provision of information, advice and guidance around skills and qualifications. SSBs and SSCs could play a greater role in providing nationally agreed job profiles and related information

- A clear defined brokerage service recognised by the sector that allows for the shortest route between the employer and the service they requires that is based on a clear sectoral understanding of need.

Other suggestions to encourage demand for training included:

- Improve continuity in policies and learning programmes. The constant churn of initiatives is a continuous source of confusion and frequently cited by employers as their reason for not participating in the publicly funded skills system.
- Establish an integrated offer to employers to help meet their recruitment and skills development needs. Appoint employer champions who will help demonstrate good practice in delivering skills and employment outcomes.
- Employment and skills services should focus on removing existing barriers – around finance, lack of information, accessibility, direct or indirect discrimination, or wider social difficulties.
- Reduce the number of steps required to access funding through Train to Gain
- Exploring options to encourage individuals to invest in themselves alongside Government and employers.
- A levy system should be considered in order to reward employers who carry out best practice training in order to develop a pool of skilled staff both for their own business needs and the wider sector.
- Attach funding to units within the QCF and create individual skills fund accounts managed by employers
- Create single company vertical skills agreements with large companies that integrate all the funding available for all types of skills development. Allow SSCs to operate a similar contract for groups of SMEs.
- Create and fund a comprehensive and flexible apprenticeship system that is based on sectoral needs and free of age and other eligibility criteria as the vehicle for skill development.
- Building on the Talentmap service, develop virtual or actual national assessment centres for adults which would help them to better manage 'portfolios' of qualifications (particularly following the introduction of the qualifications and credit framework) skills and experience.
- Introduce national skills accounts and qualifications 'passports' which employers could also use to help determine an individual employee or potential employee's levels of competence and transferable skills. As many employers already undertake their own in-house training which is often unaccredited but appropriate for certain roles, such training could be included in an individual's skills passport. Voluntary experience could also be recorded.
- Systems should be developed that are based around sector job profiles, based on national occupational standards, which enable employers to self assess training gaps. In addition there is a need to identify key providers of learning who have provision specifically aimed at closing those gaps.

2.4 Funding Streams

Respondents agreed that current funding streams needed to be consolidated with simplified rules around access to remove inconsistent eligibility criteria at regional level. Some respondents saw a central role for SSCs in taking this process forward.

A good number of respondents also mentioned the need to address the current differences in funding rules and requirements across the UK. This causes considerable difficulties for those employers who operate across the boundaries of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Respondents also considered that it would be a positive move towards multi-annual contracting in order to provide greater stability for employers and providers. Some suggested that funding could be channelled direct to employers for some forms of training. Others saw a prominent role for SSCs in setting funding priorities for their sectors and playing a role as conduits of public funding.

Other suggestions for developing more effective funding streams included:

- Skills funding should be inclusive of all sectors.
- Funding routes could be simplified by linking funding to the individual irrespective of which pathway they take.
- A move towards a more 'open book' contractual relationship where overall outcomes are agreed at high level with a focus on impacts delivered through dispersment of public funds. This would include virement between different funding streams to achieve efficacy.
- Funding could be simplified through an employer driven "sector fund" which would deliver on employer defined needs for the sector both in terms of new entrants from full time education and workforce development
- Employers find it difficult to change the outputs of publicly funded FE and HE. We would propose that 10% of the total budget spend on FE and HE is determined by SSCs to enable employers to drive change through the system.

2.5 Measures to Reduce Costs

A good number of the suggestions already mentioned by respondents would have the effect of reducing unnecessary cost within the skills system. Further measures suggested by respondents included:

- Create an on-line data collection system for both employers and providers. This would speed up the application and correspondence process around accessing public funding.
- Increased use of technology such as 'electronic signatures' where significant time and cost-savings could be accrued
- Administration costs are increased by i) frequent changes in education and skills policy and therefore learning programmes (see below); ii) the ever increasing number of qualifications generated by the QCF and the partial application of market forces to qualifications development and delivery by Awarding Organisations. If you resolve both of these issues then costs would be reduced.

2.6 Qualifications

Most respondents were very positive about the potential of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to make the qualifications system more employer-responsive. In particular the ability to fund individual units or parts of qualifications, which more accurately reflect the jobs that employees undertake was felt to be an important

development which would help employees to build up their skill levels over a flexible period.

To succeed respondents cautioned that the QCF must be demand-led and contain qualifications which are directly relevant to business needs. Some respondents emphasised that these qualifications should be work-based (or at least work orientated) and competence based, related to the NOS.

Further suggestions around qualifications included:

- All qualifications should be eligible for funding. Let employers decide what is important, not government.
- Comprehensive plans will be needed to market and explain the QCF and how it will benefit individuals and employers, with easy access to identify appropriate qualifications
- There are currently too many awarding bodies who deal with the myriad of qualifications available. The introduction of a service which directed employers to relevant courses to address their skills needs would be of benefit.
- Ofqual, advised by SSBs/SSCs, should be able to control entry of new Awarding Organisations into sectors where several Awarding Organisations already provide choice if their plans do not address gaps in provision.

2.7 Ensuring Quality

Respondents felt that quality assurance processes should be driven by employers and care should be taken so that there was no duplication between bodies such as the LSC/SFA and Ofsted. They also felt that there should be lighter touch audit and inspection regimes for those providers with a track record of delivering high quality training.

Some respondents welcomed the introduction of the Training Quality Standard (TQS) as a means of ensuring the quality of training provision.

Regarding the professionalization of the further education teaching workforce, one respondent suggested that a national framework with a local network of coaching and mentoring support would help employees and employers with identifying transferable skills and qualifications, and support impartial advice on skills utilisation and employability for potential and actual learners and employers.

Summary of Responses from Awarding Bodies

3.1 Targets and Measures

Respondents felt that measures of success needed to focus on outcomes, such as increased productivity, rather than simply qualification numbers. In recognition of the fact that measuring value added is more challenging than qualifications numbers, respondents suggested that efforts should be made to strengthen the evidence base around the value of skills development across the whole economy and that this would have the additional benefit of avoiding a possible distortion of national priorities through the activities of influential sectors acting in self-interest.

Respondents were generally sceptical of attempts to predict future labour need and target specialist training to meet these needs- noting that workplaces and economic circumstances change faster than the system can respond. One respondent noted that “training employees for specific occupational roles at some point in the future, based on such forecasting, is at best hit-and-miss and at worst a waste of time and money”, emphasising that success measures should instead focus on the acquisition of transferable and soft skills which are essential across a range of occupations.

Suggestions for relevant targets and measures included:

- Focus on targets and measures that focus on learner outcomes.
- Measure the proportion of people who take up a learning programme following publicly provided information, advice and guidance and who report that their learning programme was useful.
- Measure the proportion of learners who find and stay in employment following publicly funded training
- Measure the proportion of employers who report business improvements following publicly funded training
- Develop targets that facilitate the enhancement of local, sub—regional and regional labour markets.
- Develop measures of success derived from local skills partnerships’ regular monitoring of local skill shortages, e.g. average length of unfilled vacancies, time taken to achieve effective recruitment or staff turnover.
- Prioritise Basic Skills, Key Skills and Functional Skills. These represent a fundamental level of achievement which should be a universal ambition for the current and future workforce.

3.2 Structures

Some respondents felt that it was important not to introduce change for change’s sake, making the point that introducing, for example, a new qualifications system can take more than a decade to get right and yet can be dismantled in a fraction of that time. We should first seek to make existing structures work better and, where structural change is unavoidable, we should ensure that sufficient time is allowed for to enable employers to become aware of and prepare for change.

Other respondents felt that there were too many intermediaries in the current system and only those organisations that were doing something essential and unique (i.e. that are the only organisation carrying out that function) should be retained. Other organisations are potential luxuries which must rigorously justify their public subsidy. One respondent stated that some of these organisations have come into being because of the inability of employers to express their needs accurately, arguing that SSCs and SSBs could be considered to fall into this category.

Respondents also agreed that there was a need to rationalise the number of schemes and initiatives. In the current system employers face a range of complex grants, none of which may meet their exact needs. One Respondent suggested that this problem could be overcome by channelling all funding into a single pot in each region which would then be administered by the RDA. Another believed that all funding programmes should

be overseen by a single public body which could establish clear guidelines and act to rationalise conflicting, confusing and competing programmes.

Other respondents believed that efforts should be made to make the system more demand-led by introducing the essence of contestability. For example, if providers need upskilling in order to meet the requirements of Ofsted they may purchase support services from a range of recognised agencies via competitive tendering. Respondents stated that this leaner process would organically weed out those organisations whose existence is peripheral to the central skills development market.

3.3 Measures to Encourage Demand for Training from Employers and Individuals

Respondents suggested a range of measures to increase demand including:

- Use existing organisations that employers willing choose to work with to disseminate information and advice about training rather than routing messages through government agencies or SSCs which try to represent employers.
- There should be more long term planning in order to reassure employers that measures are not just being introduced temporarily in order to achieve the latest target.
- Government needs to fully understand what the key issues are and talk to businesses of all sizes not just the intermediaries who have vested interests.
- Give consistent messages to employers and talk their language. Encourage them to be interested in improving skill levels within their business by showing them that development adds value to the bottom line.
- Reduce the amount of paperwork which SMEs need to complete to engage in training schemes, this is a major deterrent.
- Reduce the use of jargon - UKCES itself would do well to take this to heart - and ruthless pruning of complex development, approval and regulation procedures.
- Support individuals as they enter employment - perhaps using a matched funding approach. With the advent of the ULN within the QCF, would we not be able to adapt such a 'lifelong' approach to an individual's development through their employment life?
- We do not need a system of financial incentives to lever greater investment by employers and individuals if the correct measures are in place to demonstrate and communicate the success of training.
- Tax incentives may further be offered to employers who use publicly funded employment and skills services, with the opportunity to contribute to local skills partnerships via Chambers of Commerce.

3.4 Funding Streams

Respondents agreed that there was a need for funding streams to be rationalised and adhere to the same processes in order to reduce administration costs and meet employer needs.

A number of respondents suggested that, in order to create a truly demand-led system, employers and learners should receive funding directly and then be able to choose their own training provider. Voucher schemes may provide a means of achieving this aim for learner. If the supply of learning programmes offered by providers had to directly reflect

this demand then this is a more effective means of meeting needs than central or local level planning. Where government funding is provided direct to employers encouragement should be given to ensure that employers set their own objectives for this funding.

Respondents also stated that there needs to be greater alignment between the skills and qualifications that employers need and what the Government supports, noting that universities and colleges are still generally supply driven not employer led.

Respondents also believed that government funding should focus on market failure and only be available in those areas where employers are not able to fully fund themselves, an example of this would be support for SMEs.

3.5 Measures to Reduce Costs

Three specific suggestions to reduce costs were:

- Focus expenditure on directly learner and employer facing activities, not burdensome and costly commissioning and management processes including high-risk IM systems.
- Experts in skills training and funding should be employed to administer the system and ensure that it provides maximum value for money.
- Constrained budgets should not be spent on existing and often vocationally narrow programmes but on those programmes which develop an individual's transferable skills. In the medium and longer term, these are likely to be of more value to the employer than specific skills training in response to an immediate short-term demand.

3.6 Qualifications

As would be expected, respondents had a number of comments to make about ways in which the qualifications system could be improved, these included:

- End bureaucratic government involvement in qualifications development, a task for which it is ill-equipped and insufficiently responsive to meet actual demand.
- It is critical that the right qualifications are available to meet employer and learner needs. This must not be seen primarily in terms of 'minimising re-proliferation'. Having the right qualification does not necessarily mean having fewer qualifications, indeed some sectors currently do not have sufficient choice of qualifications to meet identified need.
- Qualifications need to provide a range of progression routes attractive to learners with a variety of starting points and circumstances if sufficient flows of skilled individuals are to be sustained.
- There have been many instances to date in which SSCs have added to the bureaucracy of qualifications development and delayed the availability of qualifications with clear employer support. The development of effective early dialogue, a streamlined approach to qualifications approval and effective working relationships between awarding bodies and SSCs is critical to the aspiration to have timely development of appropriate qualifications.

- We agree that further work is required by VQRP partners to ensure that we have funding arrangements that clearly support the delivery of unitised qualifications.
- Assessment must be fit for purpose in relation to what it purports to assess, not devised to meet some external objective. This is a crucial principle of qualifications.
- We are opposed to league tables which distort learner choices.

3.7 Ensuring Quality

Respondents believed that the notion of 'proportionality' should be applied to quality assurance for qualifications and training. That entails the regulatory and funding system taking a view on the level of risk and applying monitoring and approval processes applicable to the level of risk. Currently there is inefficiency as the heavy hand of a standard system is often applied at disproportionate cost to relatively localised, low-scale and/or low-risk developments.

Summary of Responses from Providers and Provider Representative Bodies

4.1 Targets and Measures

Respondents emphasised the need to develop a shared target around sustainable employment, supported by a funding regime which supports positive employment outcomes. Some respondents expressed the view that we needed to move beyond broad volume targets for qualifications as a proxy for skills development, with the exception of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy where volume targets were considered appropriate. There was general agreement that targets and measures needed to be based around outcomes, and that these outcomes, particularly around sustainable employment, could not be achieved immediately.

Other suggestions around targets and measures included:

- Pay more attention to measuring learner destinations,
- Focus on measuring the impact of training on the employer (productivity and growth) and the learner (progression in employment, additional earnings).
- Don't pay too much attention to targets but focus instead on the effectiveness of incentives and the quality of support for employers.
- Measure the extent to which we are able to leverage increased employer and individual investment in education and training
- Any target should be set in consultation with the sector skills councils and measured through employer feedback.
- Focus on targets that recognise the importance of ensuring that all individuals are able to get a first step on the ladder and the importance of interventions which address the needs of those sectors which will be lynchpins of the UK's future economy.
- shift the emphasis from the prescription of targets to actually making sense of the benefits realised by employers as a direct result of using public training funds.
- The Train to Gain brokerage service needs to include targets, measures and incentives across all levels (whether they are fully, partially or indeed not funded

by the public purse), and not just the traditional 'funded' offer of levels 2 and 3. This should include recognition of higher level skills.

- Clarify the remit of employment and skills services and base the targets and measures on users' satisfaction. For example, Measure the levels of business satisfaction with publicly funded training and the levels of repeat business from employers.
- Dismantle complex schemes and measurement systems designed to achieve social re-engineering.
- Artificial incentives can skew the integrity of a service if, for example, some clients are given a less good service because there is a premium on helping too narrowly defined groups of clients.
- Any prescription or targets are likely to be ineffective due to the uncertainty of the skills and training needs within each sector.

In addition, respondents noted that there were numerous examples of short-term programmes that worked and delivered successful outcomes which were then withdrawn. Targets and measures should seek to expand and embed successful programmes and ensure that lessons are learnt. Alongside this some respondents also felt that it was important to have a joint vision for services which are servicing different elements of an individual's journey from worklessness to sustainable employment.

4.2 Structures

Respondents suggested that it was necessary to have a complete review of the current system, to rationalise the number of publicly funded bodies, paying particular regard to structures around the commissioning and funding of employment and skills services. One suggestion here was to create a single funding agency for employment and skills with the capacity to procure nationally and to commission widespread integrated employment and skills programmes.

A significant number of respondents noted that the constant change of names of agencies and departments, coupled with the steady churn of new initiatives, cost considerable amounts of money and confused employers. They recommended that it was essential to rigorously evaluate what is currently working well and why before establishing new structures and designing new initiatives- especially if these are short-term measures which are expected to resolve deep seated problems within unrealistic time-scales.

Other suggestions around structures included:

- There are differing regional pictures and structures. These structures have evolved across regions and localities, to respond to the particular skills and employment requirements of either that sector or geographical location and as such often differ for good reason. This needs to be taken account of when designing national initiatives.
- Government should serve as the facilitators rather than being the delivery agent.
- Make greater use of third sector providers in any delivery system.
- Design structures to facilitate a whole system approach of supporting pupils through school and into FE/HE/apprenticeships, and beyond into work.

- Eliminate the Business Link skills broker service and empower National Skills Academies to perform this brokerage function.
- Avoid the situation, as has happened recently in response to the recession, where central and regional bodies have created new infrastructure which duplicates existing points of contact for learners.
- Trust the instincts of the managers and staff providing frontline delivery. They probably have very good ideas about what would simplify the system and be more effective than current arrangements. This will also help them to have ownership of the new arrangements.
- The HE system has worked well for many years, but there is growing confusion about the role of and interaction with the LSC at level 4 and beyond. Furthermore there is also increased concern within the HE community about the impact of reductions in central funding - the business community is not in a position to make up any shortfall and the government needs to recognise the existing commitment to training in both the public and private sector through specialist resource provision, salary payments during training, expenses etc.
- Reduce the SSC network to a much more employer driven and financially self supporting network of 6 or 7. Remove the politics of the network that is currently driven by other organisations that have their own agenda thereby restricting and discouraging employers in engaging in SSC activities.
- Introduce a single, integrated IT based system, which manages information relating to training and funding.

4.3 Measures to Encourage Demand for Training from Employers and Individuals

Respondents suggested a wide range of measures to encourage demand for training, the most common of which was to develop measures to improve the communication of key, evidence-based messages to employers on the business benefits of investing in training:

- Provide incentives such as tax breaks to employers to provide vocational training.
- Encourage large employers to set up training and skills development provision which unemployed individuals can access in order to increase their chances of gaining employment.
- Introduce a training levy on employers that would be matched by public funding and available as an individual entitlement to learners on industry relevant and approved programmes at all levels.
- On-the-job training is key to increasing employer engagement.
- Another way to get the industry to put even more money into skills development is to insist on certain levels of achievement for front-line staff.
- Qualifications – or often just units of qualifications – can be a significant motivator for individuals to increase their skills and hence their employment prospects.
- Abolish Employer NI contributions for small businesses to encourage them to take on inexperienced graduates with a precondition that they will invest in their training and development.
- Develop a sliding scale of expected employer contributions based on turnover and cost of course, which would allow smaller businesses and social enterprises

to access substantial discounts, which reduce as the business matures and or grows.

- Improve advice and guidance services, providing a comprehensive service that is accessible to all.
- Introduce a requirement for matched funding to ensure that public investment is being directed towards areas of real need in which employers are willing to invest.
- Align support with willingness to pay for certain services.
- Introduce legislation that would stipulates that companies have to spend a certain percentage of their wage bill on training, such as 1.5% as is the case with France.
- Companies and individuals alike should take responsibility of their own training whereas the government's role should be to provide the necessary support, whether through training grants or tax relief for companies actively engaged in training.
- In Wales the Assembly Learning Grant helped many over 19s to enter in education and retrain, on means tested benefit of up to £1500.
- Fund the SSCs to engage employers and get them to employers on results achieved.
- Incentivise technology-based innovation.
- Reduce bureaucracy and address the current complexity which mitigates against effective employer engagement.
- Introduce greater freedom for employers to choose the most appropriate training for their workforce.
- Ensure that providers focus on attracting learners, rather than learners on finding places on existing provision, is key to the success of an integrated employment and skills system.
- If it is difficult to make the system genuinely simple, we might at least try to make it transparent. We need advisors who are not only trained but accredited as independent, so they can be trusted.

4.4 Funding Streams

Respondents were all in agreement that there needed to be a rationalisation of the current funding system which involved too many ring-fenced initiatives. One respondent believed that Train to Gain provided the basis for bringing about this rationalisation. Respondents were in agreement that preferred suppliers should be given longer contracts and more flexibility. Some respondents noted that demand led funding should lead to a broader range of training being delivered, in a more flexible way, but that, within this, there is a need to monitor the participation of disadvantaged groups, such as lone parents, on training courses to ensure that they are not being excluded from provision.

Those respondents with direct experience of the Higher Education funding system supported the current system, noting that it is not overly complex, while recognising that the broader adult skills delivery system was very complicated and in need of rationalisation.

Other suggestions for improving funded streams included:

- analyse which sectors really need public funding and support for skills development and then channel accordingly, linking funding to areas of skill shortages.
- Channel funding through delivery bodies such as further and higher education institutions and leave them to develop a targeted and customer-focused provision based upon an in-depth understanding of the needs of local business.
- Local integration of funding streams, e.g. via RDAs and Employment and Skills Boards, can make a real difference in tackling social mobility when providers can collectively tackle client barriers to sustainable employment such as joblessness, skills, personal debt, housing and health issues, and the need for legal advice.
- overall and timely success rates should be a key feature of any funding methodology

4.5 Measures to Reduce Costs

All respondents were in favour of a system which emphasised the principle of cost sharing between employer, individual and government, noting that the state should only provide funding either where it has been decided that it is in the interest of the economy as a whole, or to support those individuals that would otherwise be disadvantaged through, for example, a lack of basic skills. Further measures to reduce costs included:

- Make the learner responsible for all main record keeping and perhaps provide simple guidance as to how this could be done digitally. A learner may very well not stay with an employer and an employer does not want to be obliged to keep records (Data Protection, server space problems etc).
- The main way to reduce administrative costs is to minimise bureaucracy. Study every step in a process of applying for and reporting on expenditure of public funds by employers to see if it is strictly necessary and strip out unnecessary stages. Currently a lot of money is spent in simply administering delivery that could be spent on delivering outcomes.
- A cut in administrative costs may be achieved through having only one body that is responsible for the allocation of all public funding and perhaps it could devolve the responsibility of managing the allocated funding to various employer and professional bodies or even trade unions.
- Converting the majority of administrative processes from paper to electronic transmission would do much to reduce the administrative burden, as would collecting data once and using it many times.
- If the system is able to align what it funds against willingness to pay, this will increase the reach of funding.
- Provide assistance to service providers by providing standardised electronic MI systems.

4.6 Qualifications

Respondents were enthusiastic about the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) noting that it provided is a window of opportunity to break the historical link between funding and entire qualifications through the funding of smaller 'units'.

Respondents also noted that it was necessary to simplify the qualifications structure and the organisation of awarding bodies so that they can become more responsive to

employer needs. They also recommended making the comparability of qualifications easier to access and understand for employers, noting that the QCF could play a positive role here.

4.7 Ensuring Quality

Respondents considered that it was important to build up a trust culture between providers and funding bodies to enable more funding to be used at the front end of delivery. Some respondents considered that the current absence of trust had led to a situation where the system is overpopulated with contracts, targets, competing agencies, control systems, brands and labels.

Respondents also suggested the creation of one recognised quality system and suggested that Ofsted could oversee this. Another respondent suggested the creation of a single quality standard to encompass the best of IIP, MATRIX, ISO, CIF etc.

4.8 The Training Market

Some respondents felt that there was a need to reduce the number of providers and that allowing increased competition would achieve this. They noted that more provider competition in an open employment and skills market would lead to the survival of those providers who were most effective in responding to employer and learner needs. Providers argued that there can be no room for protection of individual groups of providers, or a skewing of the system in favour of individual groups of providers.

Another respondent noted that in the pressure to provide 'choice' a multiplicity of delivery agents have been encouraged. This often leads to 'wasteful' rather than 'healthy' competition and overlaps which, in turn, reduce cost effectiveness. The focus should be on a high quality provider in every neighbourhood/business and not on choice for choice's sake.

Finally, respondents were supportive of market regulation which ensures there is a level playing field amongst providers. Currently employers often shop around to see who can offer training free (because they have ESF money or JCP money or Pilot funds) and avoid paying wherever possible, this fact should be recognised.

Summary of Responses from Government Departments, Non-Departmental Public Bodies, Regional Development Agencies and Local Authorities

5.1 Targets and Measures

Respondents stated that targets should be based on broad policy objectives and performance measures that are well understood, endorsed and co-owned by partners and employers. These should focus on outcomes and go beyond volume measures of qualification levels. Respondents made the point that we should be aiming to measure the impact on businesses and learners, through increased productivity and progression. Respondents noted that it was important to align targets with Regional Strategies, so that each region can play to its strengths and deliver relevant outcomes. Targets,

measures and incentives also need to reflect local policies identified through process such as the Local Area Agreements and Multi-Area Agreements (LAAs & MAAs).

One respondent noted that a demand-led system must include two elements: predictions of the future need in the job market and opportunities to meet the aspirations of individuals. This should be supported through increased investment in getting the delivery infrastructure right and focus on delivering outcomes rather than spending too much resource tracking progress against targets.

5.2 Structures

Respondents felt that there needed to be greater integration of policy and strategy at national level and that this should be accompanied with increased capacity for responsive and innovative action at a local level. They believed that this would allow for more community-based solutions.

Generally respondents felt that there were currently too many schemes and that these needed rationalisation, suggesting that there should be the introduction of a Single Procurement Vehicle for employment and skills (at all levels including FE and HE). It was felt that this would introduce cohesion and continuity across the system.

Other respondents felt that there was a need for stability and continuity. They recommended sticking to existing funding rules and delivery mechanisms.

Other comments and suggestions included:

- Integrate the National Apprenticeship Service and National Employer Service brokerage function into the Integrated Brokerage Service.
- Business Link as the single access to publicly funded skills support.
- From the perspective of the individual, we support the view that the forthcoming Adult Advancement and Careers Service (AACS) has a vital role in reducing the complexity of the system for them, and for them to get on in work and life. The Government must ensure that the new service is sufficiently resourced, that it addresses the lessons learnt from the National Prototypes and that it can operate effectively to ensure that it removes barriers to advancement.
- The increased accountability and challenge brought about by Employment and Skills Boards should help foster a higher degree of co-ordination and co-operation, help remove duplication and focus more on outcomes.

5.3 Measures to Encourage Demand for Training from Employers and Individuals

Suggestions to increase demand included:

- Establish an integrated offer to employers to help meet their recruitment and skills development needs. In exchange employers could make commitments to recruit local people to develop their workforce. Appoint employer champions.

- Whilst large employers can and do promote staff within the workforce, smaller employers need financial incentives to ensure that increasing responsibility is accompanied by training and qualifications.
- Utilise supply chains and SME clusters to increase demand for and investment in training.
- Extend the concept of licence to practice based on a drastically simplified set of qualifications.
- Give incentives to employers and individuals as progression through the levels is achieved (reward skills escalator model).
- Additional UCAS points for individuals taking maths and science at A level and progressing into HE in these and related areas.
- financial incentive (tax breaks or other) for businesses that invest in their human capital.
- Vouchers towards the cost of further learning for those who achieve priority learning qualifications and skills.
- Have a sliding scale of support for companies with a smaller percentage of subsidy the larger the company.

5.4 Funding Streams

Respondents felt that the current system is not 'demand led' because although the rules have been liberalised, providers argue that as it can only be drawn down for prescribed categories of demand, this does not necessarily match the range actually needed by individuals or businesses. They also made the point that demand currently outstrips the availability of resources.

All respondents felt that there was a need to rationalise funding streams and reduce the layers of bureaucracy and complexity around their administration. This would involve removing the current differences in eligibility, payment processes and audit requirements. They felt that all employment and skills focussed provision that is publicly funded should therefore have a standard set of defined outputs and outcomes that can be common across all funding streams, with additional flexibilities built-in to meet local circumstances.

One respondent suggested that the current divide between HEFCE and LSC funded training and education highlighted the 'second class' nature of vocational learning. They went on to state that, if funding were positioned in such a way as to allow WBL training providers to provide level 4 skills training more easily across all sectors, then this would aid progression.

Another respondent suggested the introduction of a national funding formula that is weighted towards priority sectors and occupational learning.

5.5 Measures to Reduce Costs

Suggestions as to ways to reduce costs included:

- Develop a Single Procurement Vehicle for employment and skills, this would free up the considerable energy and expertise which is currently applied at a regional level to bring coherence to a range of national programmes and initiatives

promoted by Government. In particular, LSC and JCP would be assisted by a mechanism which enabled contracts to be awarded to deliver the welfare to workforce agenda.

- Don't use the public sector skills purse to fund public sector skills development.
- Employment and Skills Boards (sub regional governance structures) working together with SSCs and the SFA would maximise investment through a targeted approach to meeting local needs and attracting local funding, creating alignment and eradicating duplication.
- The development of single regional strategies provides a real opportunity to maximise the effectiveness of public investment in skills.

5.6 Qualifications

Respondents stated that the role of SSCs and SSBs in approving publicly-funded qualifications should be strengthened to avoid incoherence and proliferation. They also supported the adoption of a unit-based rather than qualification-based approach to funding. They felt that encouraging partnerships between training providers and employers would be beneficial so that providers could tailor provision to employers' needs, such as offering assessment only packages so that employers can use their own in-house training.

Some respondents also believed that there should be a national system of transferable credits for all university, FE and work place training.

5.7 Ensuring Quality

Respondents felt that the Framework for Excellence provided a good starting point for quality assurance and recommended using a single quality and performance framework based on Framework for Excellence. Respondents also suggested utilising the OFSTED inspection process to lever culture change within delivery.

Summary of Responses from Learners and Learner Representative Bodies

6.1 Targets and Measures

There was a general concern that achieving numerical targets does not lead to the realisation of the policy aspiration that lies behind them. It was suggested that targets should focus on the desired outcomes for individuals and businesses (sustainable employment, increased employability of individuals, employee engagement, increased innovation and increased productivity) rather than the number of qualifications achieved or started. It was also suggested that targets could be explicitly linked to workforce development. Other suggestions for targets were around employee participation and new learners.

One response supported the idea of setting targets in tension with each other to avoid them creating potentially undesirable results. For example it was suggested that a target for participation at Level 2 could be balanced by one concerning widening participation.

There was some scepticism expressed as to the overall value of targets. One response suggested that while they had a value in steering the system they should become measures over time, so that policy can be modified in the light of experience. It was also noted that there needs to be a clear understanding of phrases such as 'sustainable employment' amongst all groups working in the system to ensure that targets are aligned and everyone is working towards the same goal.

6.2 Structures

It was widely suggested that there are too many players in the system. The majority of responses called for fewer organisations, initiatives and changes to the system. However concerns were also expressed about job losses and a loss of expertise. It was also suggested that the systems that do work should be better promoted to employers.

There was a general wish to see more alignment and cooperation between the various groups involved in the system. One response suggested better integration of the Further and Higher Education systems, while it was also suggested that the systems across the UK could be better coordinated to help businesses operating nationally. It was also suggested that there should be improved links between support services and local labour market information.

Over-centralised planning was identified as a concern and it was felt to be a time consuming process that produced solutions 'fit for yesterday's problems'. It was suggested that the role of Regional Development Agencies could be expanded so that national policy can be implemented locally in a way that responds to local need.

The role of SSCs was also raised and while it was felt that they were useful in promoting a sectoral approach and could have a role to play in the assurance process, their performance so far has not been satisfactory. Indeed one response suggested that they should be required to develop and introduce collective measures for workforce development within the next two years.

One respondent expressed fears that the introduction of the SFA will further complicate the system, however they also suggested that there could be a role for the SFA in managing a single skills portal.

Concerns were also expressed about how the system supports those traditionally excluded from training and whether more can be done on a practical level to allow them to access the system, for example through increased childcare provision.

6.3 Measures to Encourage Demand for Training from Employers and Individuals

Responses to this section generally related to motivating the individual rather than the employer. For those currently not in work, it was suggested that the payment of out of work benefits could be linked to undertaking training, thereby giving people an incentive to train and improving their employability.

One respondent suggested giving out free equipment or software as an incentive to undertake IT training and offering learning vouchers to adults who complete Level 2 qualifications.

It was suggested that an employer matched grant could be developed solely for SMEs giving them a financial advantage when it comes to purchasing training.

6.4 Funding Streams

Most respondents were in favour of changing how funding for skills initiatives is administered and there were a number of suggestions proposed as to how the system could be made more simple. It was generally agreed that there should be a single, long term, consistent funding model for all training.

It was felt that funding would be used more efficiently if it were given directly to the employer or the learner. In order to facilitate SMEs' use of the system, it was suggested that they could receive money directly and then choose their training provider from a pre-approved list. There was general support for Individual Learning Accounts and one response suggested offering interest free loans to individuals, along a similar model to student loans, to allow them to undertake the training they wanted.

Employers were seen to have a central role in paying for funding. It was also suggested that public funds should only be used for training that employers would not otherwise pay for. Meanwhile, one response said that rather than fund skills training, public money should be used to strengthen organisations such as Business Link and encourage employers to develop their workforce.

6.5 Measures to Reduce Costs

The main suggestion in terms of cost reduction was to reduce the number of organisations and initiatives involved in the system, and to spend less on bureaucracy and administration. Savings could also be made by sharing data between organisations such as skills bodies and Jobcentre Plus.

One respondent suggested adding a training levy to Employer NI contributions to reduce costs by increasing the amount employers contribute to the system.

A further suggestion focussed on the lack of trust in the system and it was suggested that by trusting local providers to make intelligent decisions as to priorities for skills funding in their areas money could be diverted away from 'policing the system' and back to the front line.

6.6 Qualifications

Qualifications were seen as an important way to measure success, however it was generally felt that there is an over-reliance on qualifications and that the focus of the system should be on the skills that lie behind them.

There was broad support for the development of bitesized, flexible qualifications and one respondent suggested that a qualifications framework covering smaller generic or

cross-sectoral qualifications could be introduced. The need for more flexibility when designing qualifications specifically with employers was also noted. One suggestion for increasing flexibility and maximising the benefit to the individual was to develop a coherent credit accumulation and transfer system, including but not limited to the National Qualifications Framework and Higher Education credits. This would enable employees to gain recognition for individual units of training and also enable employers to gain a greater insight into the skills held by employees or potential employees.

Some dissatisfaction was expressed with Train to Gain brokerage and with the standards of NVQs. It was suggested that locally negotiated programmes involving employers, colleges and independent learning providers would be the most appropriate way to meet the needs of local enterprises and communities and also that VRQs are a more useful qualification than NVQs as one teaches skills whereas NVQs are felt to highlight the skills that the individual already holds.

6.7 Branding

Little was said on branding by learners and the bodies representing them, however it was generally noted that there are too many initiatives in the system and that public money would be better spent promoting those that have already been found to work rather than establishing new ones.

6.8 Ensuring Quality

The approach to ensuring quality seemed to be generally quite relaxed amongst this group. One respondent suggested that satisfaction surveys should focus on the impact of the training on businesses and individuals as it could be taken as read that the training provision would be of a high standard. Another response suggested that there should be fewer bodies involved in auditing and scrutinising the system.

It was suggested that a useful way of understanding the value of training would be to publish information about the destinations of individuals who have undertaken certain training courses and what the impact has been on their careers.