

Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy

Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy was launched by the Scottish Government in September 2007. This paper provides a brief outline of the key messages in the strategy and highlights the workforce development implications for voluntary sector social service organisations.

What does the strategy aim to achieve?

The strategy establishes the Scottish Government's priorities for raising skills and qualifications levels within both the existing and future workforce in Scotland. It sets out a vision for the development of a cohesive lifelong learning system encompassing early years provision, schools, further and higher education, work related learning and informal learning and skills development. The system would be supported by improved structures for funding and information provision, while individuals would be encouraged to develop skills to fulfil personal aspirations as well as to meet employer demands both now and in the future.

Key areas of focus...

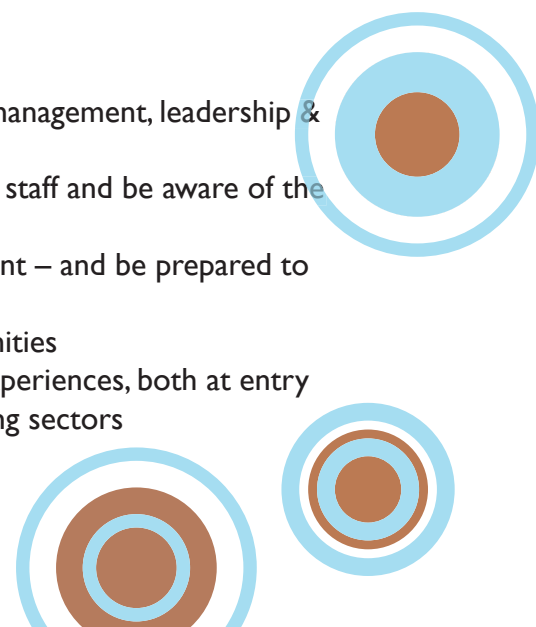
The Strategy highlights the following areas for development:

- **Individual Development**, including balancing needs of employers and individuals, developing a coherent funding support system that encourages participation in learning and work, and promoting equal access to participation in learning
- **Economic Pull**, including understanding current and projected demands for skills, and challenging employers and others to use the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) as a tool to support learning and recognition of prior learning.
- **Cohesive Structures**, including achieving parity of esteem between academic and vocational learning, and encouraging providers to see themselves as part of a continuum of provision which helps individuals to see the relevance of learning and to make full and effective use of the skills they have acquired.

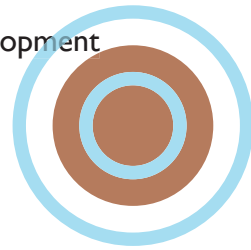
The role of employers...

Employers need to:

- Be ambitious, demanding consumers of skills
- Make best use of the skills of their workers by investing in their management, leadership & HR practices
- Understand how training can benefit their performance and their staff and be aware of the range of training and support that is available to them
- Be prepared to train individuals to develop the employee they want – and be prepared to invest in that training
- Encourage and facilitate staff to access available learning opportunities
- Work with learning providers to offer work opportunities and experiences, both at entry level and as integrated parts of higher-level learning, across learning sectors



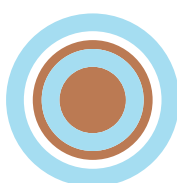
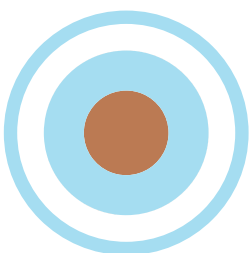
- Create a better business environment by working more closely with communities
- Recognise the importance of their role in engaging with young people, schools, parents and carers
- Establish links with their relevant Sector Skills Council to ensure that their skills needs are addressed and their voice is heard in the development of qualifications
- Work together with trade unions, using local learning agreements to support the development of individuals in the workplace.



Implications for voluntary sector social services organisations

Employers within voluntary sector social services organisations are well aware of the need to use and develop the skills of the workforce to maximum potential. The following areas for development may be of particular interest to employers:

- ***The Scottish Government will deliver its commitment of ensuring that vocational skills and qualifications have parity of esteem with academic skills & qualifications (p17).*** Research will be undertaken on changing attitudes to vocational learning. With vocational qualifications being increasingly important within the social services sector, this research will be of particular relevance to the sector.
- ***The Skills that individuals learn must also be the skills that employers want (p23).*** The Scottish Government believes that education providers must continue to develop links with employers, ensuring that employers are properly engaged in the development and design of learning so that what an individual learns is relevant to the jobs that they will do in the future. The role that Sector Skills Councils play in engaging with employers is likely to become increasingly important in providing a forum for employers to contribute to the design and development of learning at all levels.
- ***The Scottish Government will facilitate local design and delivery of learning for those who are furthest away from the labour market (p24).*** Many voluntary sector organisations are already developing local social enterprises to support service users into employment and training. The Scottish Government believes the voluntary sector has a crucial role to play both as learning providers and as advocates in fostering community engagement and facilitating local service design.
- ***Employers should continue to support schools and teachers in introducing young people to the practices and culture of work...and to raise awareness of job opportunities (p15).*** Voluntary sector social service organisations may wish to include developing better links with schools and colleges in their long term recruitment and workforce plans as a way of increasing awareness and understanding of work and careers within voluntary sector social services.
- ***The Scottish Government will ensure that National Training Programmes meet the needs of individuals and employers (p35).*** The Skillseekers programme will be phased out, while Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) will be expanded to SVQ Level 2 (SCQF level 5). Prior to recent funding cuts, many voluntary sector social service organisations benefited greatly from MA funding. The Skills Strategy highlights the Scottish Government's commitment to look at the structures and funding mechanisms needed to support the MA programme in future.



- *The Scottish Government will encourage learning providers and awarding bodies to develop a system to ensure that they recognise the value of individual's prior learning and wider achievement by building on work already undertaken through the SCQF (p25).* The SSSC has recently published a toolkit for the Recognition of Prior Learning, available to download from www.sssc.uk.com. The SCQF partnership will also be encouraged, through the Skills Strategy, to increase the number of credit rating bodies and facilitate the inclusion of work based learning programmes within the SCQF.
- *The Scottish Government will encourage employer demand for skills (p29)...and will listen to employers (p30).* This will require high quality, robust and accessible labour market and workforce intelligence, again necessitating increasing employer engagement with the sector skills councils. For employers within voluntary sector social services, one of the key challenges may be in further developing their own data collection systems for workforce information (turnover or staff leaving destinations, for example), and in ensuring that workforce information given to regulators such as the Care Commission is as accurate as possible.
- *The Scottish Government will raise the visibility of Scotland's information, advice and guidance services to individuals and to businesses (p40).* This will increase awareness of learning and skills development and promote easier access to opportunities, while structures will be redesigned to form a more cohesive system to support individuals to gain access to learning, training and development. An initial step towards these new structures was taken with the merger of Careers Scotland and LearnDirect Scotland into one body.

Delivering on the strategy

The Strategy outlines the priorities for development. The Scottish Government will now develop a plan for delivering the strategy in conjunction with stakeholders, employers and individuals.

Download a copy of *Skills for Scotland*:

From: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/06091114/0

Printed copies are available from:

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