

## **LLUK Draft Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007-2012**

### **UCU Response**

UCU represents 41,000 academic staff working in the Further Education (FE) sector in colleges, adult and prison education services. Clearly this workforce development strategy will and should impact greatly on UCU members and how they deliver high quality learning programmes to young people and adults. As the representative organisation for academic staff, UCU intends to be closely involved in the wider conversations and debates referred to in the foreword to the Strategy, and in its development and implementation. Staff support and ownership of the strategy are essential to its success.

UCU endorses the recognition in the draft Strategy that the FE workforce is central to FE's reputation. We have been involved in the discussions and debates around workforce development for some time and are also members of the DIUS Workforce Development Strategy Group. We welcome the opportunity to comment on this strategy in this consultation.

Before answering the various questions posed UCU wishes to make a number of general points. We will return to some of these in our more detailed answers to the questions.

### **General points**

- Whilst recognising the diversity and complexity of the FE system, the document is overlong and repetitive. The final strategy document should be shorter and clearer, especially in those sections referring to implementation and where responsibility for progressing certain actions should lie.
- UCU considers that it is unfortunate that there are various references to the Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) Sector Skills Agreement (SSA), yet progress to the SSA is not complete. Whilst recognising that this Strategy and the SSA will be complementary and mutually supportive it is confusing to see references to a document which is still, as far as we are aware, not yet finished
- On page 6 of the Strategy it states that "FE must be professional, flexible and responsive". It is the very firm opinion of UCU that FE and its staff have been professional, flexible and responsive for a long time. FE has responded professionally and flexibly to every twist and turn of governments' policies maintaining and improving the quality of the delivery of learning so that only 2% of colleges are now considered to

be unsatisfactory. UCU and its predecessor organisation, NATFHE, have over a long period, been prepared to negotiate on national and local variations of contracts and conditions of service so that colleges can respond and work in partnership with other organisations, without exploiting their staff or putting them under undue stress.

- The Strategy rightly makes much comment on how FE must work in partnership with a wide variety of other organisations, agencies, sectors and employers to deliver learning and meet the challenges set by government. Amongst the possible tensions that may surface are the quite wide differences of pay and conditions of service and opportunities for workforce development such differences often showing FE staff to be the poor relations.
- UCU considers that implementation of the Leitch Report, and some other government policies may undermine this strategy. We believe that the Government's definition of 'demand-led' is narrow, and its adherence to seeing a market driven sector could lead to retrograde developments in the FE workforce which will militate against quality provision and professionalism. UCU is pleased to see the re-emergence of social mobility and community cohesion as policy goals for the sector, however, after an unhelpful focus mainly on economic rationales.
- UCU recognises that the delivery of learning is not static. As society and technology develop, so too do teaching and learning. UCU and its members are prepared to contemplate and discuss new roles in the sector in line with education and technological developments as long as the introduction of these new roles is not used to dilute quality and professionalism. A criticism of this Strategy is the absence of any real discussion of salary levels and conditions of service. Whilst these are ultimately a matter for individual organisations that make up the sector issues of remuneration and working conditions go to the heart of many of the topics discussed in the Strategy and it is abrogation of responsibility to confine these matters to a few lines. UCU would expect at least some discussion of the resource implications and some sense of a sector-wide approach. UCU operates mainly in FE colleges and adult and community learning services of course. However FE colleges are the largest part of the FE system/sector and the market leader in terms of pay and conditions setting bench marks for the whole. The FE sector is diverse and fragmented. The changes to the machinery of government made over the summer and the creation of two new departments covering education could cause confusion and enhance fragmentation.. FE is stretched out between the two departments. It is clearly within the remit of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). Yet 14-19 work in which FE is a major and key partner falls within the remit of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). This will not facilitate clear workforce development strategy for the FE sector. This Strategy has to involve both the departments. FE is central to the government's 14 to 19 policies. The DCSF may make decisions concerning 14-19 policy, that have enormous implications for FE, perhaps without full consideration and understanding of the sector and its workforce.
- The sector is moving towards self-regulation. A self-regulation implementation group chaired by Sir George Sweeney is progressing plans and is in the process of making

proposals to the government. Given the number of non-departmental government agencies and other organisations involved with promoting quality and leadership and the ways that these will impact on workforce development, this document needs to spell out more clearly how the Strategy will work in a self-regulating sector - the checks and balances, the benchmarks for quality in workforce development and the sanctions for failure to implement this or any workforce development strategy.

- The FE sector is notable for the number of part-time workers - more than in the catering industry. Whilst this may be defended on grounds of flexibility many of these part-time workers are exploited, and in places take far more responsibility than is desirable and undertake duties for which they are not properly rewarded. The use of part-time workers throws up many challenges for a workforce development strategy. We do not consider that the Strategy as presented in this document sufficiently addresses these issues.
- The Leitch Report on the nation's skills and the government's response published in the Leitch implementation plan (July 2007) give prominence to the Skills Pledge. This is a voluntary pledge by employers to help their employees gain basic skills and a first level 2 qualification. The third part of the Pledge is to "demonstrably raise our employee's skills and competencies to improve company/organisation through investing in economically valuable training and development". UCU advocates a 'Pledge Plus' for FE. Whilst there are undeniable pockets of low skills in FE the majority of the workforce already possess at least level 2 skills. Indeed it may well be that a majority of the workforce possess at least level 3 skills and qualifications. It should therefore be incumbent on the sector, which has a major role in assisting other employers to implement and meet the Skills Pledge, to implement both the Pledge for low skilled employees and a Pledge Plus. This would mean undertaking to assist all employees to reach the appropriate skills level and qualification appropriate for the role they are undertaking in the sector.
- This workforce development strategy will be yet another well intentioned set of policies unless there are robust mechanisms for implementation. UCU believes that the section on implementation would be far stronger if it outlined some mechanisms. We favour firm proposals for learning agreements between the institution and the organisations representing the workforce setting out how the workforce development strategy will be implemented at local level. Such agreements would be monitored by Learning Committees made up of management and organisations representing the workforce. Such a model led to considerable success in implementing health and safety policies in the workplace in the 1970s and 1980s and would be a positive example of partnership working in the sector. UCU regrets that the Strategy makes little mention or use of the growing numbers of union learning representatives in sector organisations.
- Whilst there is a section of the Strategy on equality and diversity, UCU would advocate that the strategy as whole is subject to an equality impact assessment before it is implemented.

# Detailed Comments on Consultation Document sections and specific questions

## 2. THE FE SECTOR WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

### 2.1 The proposed vision

UCU broadly agrees with the vision set out in the Strategy. We support the proposal that that it should cover all providers. We agree that the sector's employers should be exemplars. However we find that human resource management and workforce development in the sector are extremely variable. The FE sector purports to lead and assist other employers and organisations on workforce development, yet all too often it is more a case of "do what we say, not what we do". The sector has a somewhat lamentable record taken as whole in relation to development of its own workforce. We consider that there needs to be particular attention to management and leadership in workforce development. Far too many organisations do not follow national recommendations and policies, as for example on pay when year after year at least a third of colleges do not implement nationally negotiated salary settlements.

UCU proposes adding to the Strategy's vision for the future a reference to "a workforce whose professionalism is recognised and valued by all, and whose salaries and conditions of service are conducive to the recruitment and retention of committed staff empowered to deliver high quality learning programmes"

UCU would also wish to see in the vision the valuing of softer and flexible skills such as the encouragement of subjects which promote social and interactive skills. These would enhance co-operation, respect and therefore diversity.

Whilst recognising the necessity for the sector to follow the direction of government policies there is a need to transcend them as they are all too often subject to great variations and changes. In terms of workforce development there is a need to look beyond the policies and priorities of one government to what the sector needs in the long term.

### 2.2 How do we get there?

UCU is in broad agreement with the priorities and themes set out in the Strategy. We will address the four detailed priorities and nine underpinning themes later in this response. The policies set out in the Strategy are probably ambitious enough given the sector's poor record in developing and implementing any sustained workforce development. It may be best to see how this Strategy is received and implemented before setting other more ambitious priorities and themes.

The Strategy asks what more is needed. UCU believes that one of the things needed is a more serious and sustained discussion about career choice in the sector and what

determines this. Such a discussion would have to cover sector pay and conditions. In our view these underpin many of priorities and themes in the Strategy. We would also want to see the emergence of a culture and style of management and leadership that recognises, respects and values employees as the sector's greatest asset. This would be made tangible for example by the implementation of human resource management policies in areas such as work-life balance and recognising family and caring responsibilities.

## **2.3 What will success look like?**

UCU supports the measures proposed to evaluate whether the Strategy has been successful. However, in line with previous comments, we would stress the need for a measure referring to salaries levels and conditions of service that would attract and retain the high quality professional staff required to deliver the vision set out.

We also favour having success measures that explicitly recognise and refer to all staff working in the sector. For example we very much welcome the references to having a fully qualified teaching workforce, but the Strategy also needs references for all the workforce to be fully qualified to the appropriate level.

UCU would also argue that the commitment to a fully qualified teaching workforce and a commitment to CPD, should be accompanied by entitlements to proper support from the employer for both initial training and CPD.

We have commented above on the Skills Pledge. We welcome and support the proposals that the FE sector signs up to the Skills Pledge. Indeed anything other than 100% signing by sector organisations would be a disgrace for the sector that should be leading in skills development. We have also expressed our desire to see the sector go beyond the Pledge to the Pledge Plus - to develop and support all employees to their appropriate level.

UCU does have concerns about what "success" in workforce development might mean. We have already signalled that support for the growth of new professional roles to deliver national ambitions should not mean, as it has far too often in the past, the dilution of skills and professionalism to meet short term financial goals.

We are not clear to what the bullet point in this section "increasing employment rate" refers: sector workforce employment rate? national employment rate?

The Strategy states that a measure of success would be 'providers securing greater proportion of their income from non-public sources'. We are opposed to this as a success measure. For UCU, FE is a public service which should be largely supported by public resources. We are not opposed to employers paying realistic contributions to their own workforce development, but the infra-structure and the bulk of the programmes delivered by FE should be supported by public funds.

UCU would suggest that the five most important measures of success of the Strategy would be:

- Appropriate pay and conditions to attract and retain high quality staff
- All employers signed up to Skills Pledge and Pledge Plus
- An increased proportion of the workforce from under-represented groups
- A fully qualified teaching workforce
- Information, advice and guidance to support workforce development across the sector

### 3. The Challenge

Although no questions are posed for this part of the Strategy, UCU does have some comments to make

- The Strategy refers to Regional Economic Development Plans and the London Skills and Employment Board, although not the powers contained in the FE and Training Bill and the proposals in the Leitch implementation White Paper to extend these. The Strategy also comments on the local authority Area Agreements and pilots for Multi-Area Agreements. However it does not make any reference to the joining up of these various planning and forecasting initiatives into some sort of clearer picture, perhaps akin to the National Learning Model as recommended by the Foster Report. A loose planning framework such as this would assist the FE sector to have a much clearer idea of future skills and learning needs and the kind of flexibility and responsiveness required. This would greatly assist the implementation of any workforce development strategy
- References are made to partnership work across schools, colleges and training providers in relation to the delivery of the Diplomas, to teachers reflecting on their own practice to swiftly learn the skills they need whilst delivering a new curriculum, to support staff working across institutions within a local authority. UCU does not disagree with the challenges outlined, but we do not see either in current work developing the workforce in support of the new Diplomas or in the Strategy itself, signs that these challenges are being met. Indeed despite the education unions repeatedly raising the issues around workforce development in support of the introduction of the new Diplomas, actual support has been slow and fragmented between the seven different national agencies. Each has only partial coverage of the sectors who will be involved in the delivery of the Diplomas, and they have not as a group or singly entered into dialogue with the unions around the workforce development issues.
- Train to Gain and demand-led learning: we have already referred to our fears that demand-led learning, at least as conceived of by government policies and exemplified by Train to Gain could bring instability and uncertainty to FE providers. This in turn could undermine the very professionalism and high quality delivery that

this Strategy intends to bring about. We fear, and indeed we are beginning to see evidence that providers are again, in the face of uncertainty and instability of funding, turning to employment practices that may undermine this Strategy.

- Higher Education (HE) in the FE sector: although the Strategy refers to partnerships with schools, UCU is disappointed there are so few references to partnerships and the interface with HE. Given that government policies and targets to develop sub-degree work will be delivered largely by FE institutions, we would have wished to see more discussion on the issues involved, especially in this section. We would have liked to have seen some discussion setting out the challenges to the sector and the Strategy. UCU believes that there should be an overall aim of having an 'integrated' CPD process across FE and HE. What is common to staff across HE and FE is that they have the 'skills to cater to a wider student body with diverse learning styles and demands'. Yet there are questions over what qualification will be appropriate for FE lecturers delivering HE? Is it the Post Graduate Certificate Higher Education (PGCHE) as managed by the Higher Education Academy in accord with LLUK? The new Initial Teacher Training Regulations exclude FE lecturers whose work is exclusively delivering HE programmes. Yet is it known how many of such lecturers there are or what proportions of FE and HE work they are delivering? There are similar questions around the implementation of the new Regulations for CPD in the sector and the role of the Institute for Learning. For example with the new requirement for all FE lecturers to undertake 30 hours CPD: where do HE in FE staff fit in to or access that, if at all? What is the relationship of such staff to the Higher Education Academy? There are also issues around comparisons between the contracts and workloads that FE staff delivering HE programmes have, and those working in higher education institutions.
- Demographic changes: there are references to demographic changes in various places in the Strategy, including in this section on Challenges. These refer to the age profile of the sector's workforce and the increase in black and minority ethnic communities. However UCU believes that the Strategy needs to go further and discuss the impact of the ageing population as a whole on FE. For example there are similar age profiles for the workforce across education and in many other sectors. This will greatly increase labour market demands at both national and sectoral levels, and the FE sector may find itself increasingly disadvantaged in this area as it struggles to attract younger people into employment across the sector. These demographic changes also need to relate to both the current and future skills needs of the sector.

## **4. Proposed Priorities for Action**

### **4.4 THE PROPOSED PRIORITIES FOR ACTION**

UCU considers that the four proposed priority areas and nine themes capture the main areas for action over the next four years. We have already drawn attention to aspects of

the debate and issues missing in our view. We consider that all the priority areas and themes are important. It would be invidious to say which is more important.

## **4.1 Priority 1: Understanding the workforce**

UCU regards improved data collection as an absolute priority. Good information on the workforce is the bedrock of workforce development. UCU and before it NATFHE, have been calling for robust sector data ever since the incorporation of colleges in 1992/3. It is scandalous that our calls were not heeded, and that when the LSC introduced collection of staff data, neither it nor many colleges took it seriously. The consequence of this sorry history is that now there is no robust historic data on staff that would enable the sector to see the information on staffing and track trends over time. There will be an urgent need to ensure that data collection is sector wide. UCU strongly argues that a legal requirement to collect and submit workforce data should go with the receipt of public funding.

Work needs to be undertaken on workforce data to support the fourth priority of this Strategy: equality and diversity.

We need a much clearer picture of which groups are under-represented. Although there is some data on gender, race and age, it needs refinement and development. The data on disability is enormously un-reliable. The issue of disclosure needs to be addressed by all elements of the FE sector, following the lead of the Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning.

For sexual orientation and Religion or Belief there is virtually no data so it is in fact impossible to know if there is under-representation. Monitoring of sexuality will only work if staff feel that their work environment is free from homophobia and a safe place to come out. CEL's report into this showed that that is far from the case. Hopefully, the work now being developed by the Forum for Sexual orientation and Gender identity in post-school education will improve the situation in the sector.

UCU is an active member of the Workforce Data Collection Strategy Group, and it is our understanding that the Group has come up with a consensus on key data to be collected. We have been told this can be supplemented by surveys. However we do believe that there is also a need to drill down beneath headline figures and find more information and causes of certain issues. Among the additional data we consider should be collected would be data on an institution's industrial relations record, staff satisfaction rates, take up of CPD and staff opinion of CPD offered, the effectiveness of new recruitment initiatives, staff turnover, skills gaps, job vacancies and the number and kind of unfilled posts and for how long.

The Strategy asks what are thought to be the key variables of workforce data which should be collected annually. The Workforce Data Collection Strategy Group has had thorough discussions on this, and this group should continue to keep the data requirements under review. We consider that the issues and the variables are the same at national and local



levels. It may be worth looking also at regional levels in case there are issues that can be identified at this level of operation.

UCU very much considers that better use of workforce data has to be a priority. If it is not, why collect it? We also agree that Human Resource capacity within institutions has to be improved so that workforce information can be used effectively. As we have already stated we find HR within institutions very variable. UCU will use workforce data to support the cases we make on behalf of sector staff, specifically academic staff.

## **4.2 Priority 2: Attracting and retaining the best people and improving the sector image**

UCU believes that the priorities identified concerning attracting and retaining staff, are the key ones. However we do consider that this section is the weakest of the Strategy because it does not address the main variables in terms of attracting and retaining the best people and so improving the sector image – pay, conditions of service and industrial relations. A long history of poor and bad management and leadership has resulted in very poor industrial relations damaging the reputation and image of the sector, especially at local level. UCU does welcome the various new initiatives around recruitment. However we consider that these initiatives are, and will remain marginal in their impact, unless and until the problems of pay and conditions are resolved at a national as well as local level.

We recognise that FE organisations are autonomous organisations, but merely to state as the Strategy does on Page 39 that “issues relating to pay and reward...are the responsibility of individual institutions” is a complete abrogation of responsibility by LLUK which is after all an employer-led body. Unless there is some clarity, order and national direction over these matters, then attracting the best into the sector will continue to be a problem. There will continue to be industrial unrest as long as a third of colleges chose not to implement nationally negotiated salary settlements. Such industrial unrest damages the image of the sector. UCU also agrees with the statement at the bottom of Page 38, that all these initiatives around recruitment and retention are against a backdrop of uncertainty and potential instability especially in relation to adult learning. We have expressed our fears that the direction of travel of government policies towards their definition of ‘demand-led’ may run counter to the direction of workforce development policies.

UCU acknowledges that the current capital programmes in the sector are finally beginning to make a major contribution to improving the plant and equipment in the sector. This will make a tremendous difference in improving the image and the actuality of sector organisations being attractive places to work. It will be imperative that the next Comprehensive Spending Review continues spending in this area.

However there is still an enormous amount of work to be undertaken by sector institutions to improve work organisation so that the sector can present itself as attractive and responsive in areas such as work-life balance and allowing staff to take-up family

responsibilities, ensuring staff are working reasonable hours and have sensible workloads, supporting and understanding career breaks, job sharing and having proper and adequate leave arrangements. It seems strange that many of these issues can be taken on board by sector institutions in relation to students but not always to staff. The recent interim report of the Commission on Disabled Staff highlights just how little has actually been achieved for staff with disabilities in the sector.

Given the high level of part-time staff employed in the sector, it will be important that improvements in the workplace “offer” extends to all staff including part-time staff. Too often such staff have far worse working conditions, often without access to even a desk or proper IT facilities. Given how many of the FE workforce especially the teaching workforce enter the sector through part-time work, this must be remedied urgently.

Useful as the various initiatives around recruitment and retention of staff are, it should be noted that the initiatives introduced for the FE sector are not as extensive, wide reaching or well-funded as similar initiatives for the school workforce. We believe that there need to be more extensive and radical solutions to issues of future recruitment of staff, especially the competitive pressures on staffing that will result from the demographic realities we referred to earlier. Joint work with other trade unions representing workers in sectors where there are or will be shortages of teachers and trainers, could be investigated. Perhaps posts that were shared between outside employers and sector institutions could be explored. There should be more consistent attempts at ‘growing’ our own staff in the sector.

Teaching and learning are not static in FE. The roles and functions of staff continue to evolve and change. This is particularly true in relation to developments around the use of ICT in teaching and learning. UCU is not resistant to the development of new roles in the sector. We are firmly opposed however to the use and misuse of new roles to dilute professionalism, especially the delivery of high quality learning programmes. It is imperative that changes in existing roles and the development of new ones are properly negotiated at national and local levels with the organisations representing staff in the sector.

### **4.3 Priority 3: Training and developing the modern, professionalised workforce**

We agree with key themes identified in this section. However it will be essential not to confuse the gaining of qualifications with acquiring skills - through using qualifications as a proxy for skills. It will be essential to present the new requirements around qualifications and CPD as opportunities, not as another stick with which to beat staff. Training and development must empower staff. They should arise from proper development appraisal and performance management procedures that have been negotiated with, and are owned by staff. This is especially true of CPD which must be a marriage of both individual and

organisational development needs. UCU considers that the basis for this kind of approach has been laid down by the way these recent changes and Regulations have been introduced. We consider that, in the context of the recent changes, alongside the requirements there should be a clear entitlement to support for gaining what are now mandatory qualifications, and professional development. Such entitlement should be based on clear and transparent policies. Such support should include time off for study and financial support.

Most FE staff are reasonably satisfied with both the CPD and the initial training they receive, especially that focused on subject teaching and teaching practice. This is shown by recent UCU/IFL research into CPD experiences and UCU research into the experiences of initial teacher trainees in the sector, that. However the results also reveal serious gaps in both the support staff receive and information about their employers' policies around training and development.

UCU is very aware that most if not all the recent work in the sector on training and development has been for teachers. Far less has been undertaken for other staff especially those in support roles, learning, learner and business support. There is an urgent need for such development programmes.

To assist the process of training and development, UCU over the last four years has been creating and training a network of branch learning representatives. There are now UCU learning representatives in around half the English FE colleges. Learning representatives are there to assist and add expertise in training and development in local UCU branches - especially important as we move into local implementation of the recent training and development reforms. They are also available to give information, advice and guidance on training and development to UCU members. Unfortunately not all FE colleges have encouraged and facilitated the work of UCU learning representatives. UCU looks to this Strategy to support and endorse the vital partnership work of sector union learning representatives. We have referred to in this response the need for learning agreements and learning committees within sector organisations. Union learning representatives can make a significant contribution to the successful working of these initiatives.

The Strategy document refers to other skills that may be required. We do not disagree with the range of skills set out on Page 44 but many are not new. We believe that FE staff already have and demonstrate the skills and flexibilities needed for adaptive engagement with communities and employers, for outreach and partnership working, for electronic teaching and learning. We of course recognise that with speed of developments, there will always be a need for opportunities to learn new ICT skills. Similarly with the concept of personalised learning, many if not most FE staff already negotiate the curriculum with their students, especially when working with mixed ability groups. Again there will be staff who will need to acquire these skills. UCU members have identified new areas of knowledge that they require, especially in relation to working with students such as under-16s, or those with challenging behaviour, or working around the National Curriculum. In some

respects these may not represent totally new areas, but resources and opportunities for staff to develop and extend existing skills and knowledge.

The Strategy asks what respondents consider to be the characteristics of a learning organisation. We would include among these the following: the recognition by all within an organisation that it is a site for a rich variety of learning experiences; that the learning opportunities are integrated into work practices; that these include opportunities for reflection on both work and learning; that there are clear management decisions to encourage continuous development in the workplace through processes such as appraisal and performance management, that these are used as tools for individual, collective and organisational development; that management encourage the opportunities for people to engage in a wide range of training including that which is meaningful for the individual in a holistic sense and includes higher level courses. We believe that learning organisations will be characterised by managements that seek to empower rather than impose and have good communications from top to bottom as well as bottom to top. Sadly in the experience of UCU few organisations in the sector exhibit these characteristics - regrettable for a sector and institutions whose core mission is learning. We hope that the implementation of a workforce development strategy will change the culture of many, if not all, of the sector's institutions so that they really become learning organisations.

UCU considers that there are a number of actions that need to be taken by providers to ensure that they offer opportunities for their staff to develop their leadership and management skills. These include such actions as

- Value and respect all staff
- Recognise that leadership and management are skills that all staff in the sector exercise to some degree, and so all staff need development in these skills. Academic staff in particular lead and manage teaching and learning, so certainly need their development needs in these areas recognised and met
- Improve current management and leadership
- Supply resources so that all staff can be offered opportunities to develop their skills: resources not only to meet the costs of development programmes which can be high in leadership and management, but also resources to cover staff whilst they attend such development programmes; and resources to meet the costs of mentoring and coaching for both trainees and mentors/coaches.
- Equality and diversity training within initial training and CPD.

UCU considers that the key challenges faced by providers in increasing responsiveness of staff to meet future needs are:

- The need for better management and leadership that is empowering and does not seek to impose top-down solutions

- The need to be able to offer competitive salaries and conditions of service to attract and retain the highest quality staff in what is likely to become an increasingly tight labour market because of demographic considerations
- The need and willingness to fund training and development programmes properly and fully
- The need for much better communications including better information, advice and guidance on both initial and continuing professional development. Recent UCU research already referred to, into both ITT and CPD shows an alarming lack of knowledge from a wide cross section of staff on their employers' policies concerning training and development, the opportunities for training and development and the kind of support they might be able to receive to access this.

The Strategy asks what kind of support will providers need to ensure that they can successfully adapt the skills of their staff to the new requirements of the FE reform programme. We consider that the support should include:

- Advice and guidance on properly implementing equality and diversity strategies which this Strategy states are at the heart of meeting the future challenges
- Increased resources to meet the challenges set out above
- More support for current information advice and guidance on training and development opportunities, and expansion of such centralised services, as well as real encouragement and support for sector institutions to develop better IAG services on training and development for their own staff.

#### **4.4 Priority 4: Increasing the diversity of the workforce**

UCU considers that the following actions are necessary to ensure that equality and diversity are at the heart of policy, planning, strategy and training:

- Equality and diversity must run through every and all aspects of policy making at all levels,
- Equality and diversity must run through all delivery of learning
- Equality and diversity must be at the core of the implementation of this Strategy at all levels
- There must be sanctions and penalties for failure to ensure the above. Thus it would not be possible to be declared excellent and/or a beacon institution if there were deficits in terms of both policies and implementation in equality and diversity
- Equality Schemes with effective action plans should be in place in all providers and non government departmental bodies, covering at least race, disability and gender as required by law, but ideally also extending to cover sexual orientation.
- Equal Pay Reviews should be the norm in the FE sector, again going beyond the minimum position of assessing the extent of the gender pay gap.
- The work on data to support equality and diversity referred to above is essential.

- Equality Fora /Committees should be created by providers if these do not currently exist. Such bodies should include representatives of the recognised unions. Working groups, again with union representation, need to be looking at equality schemes and equality impact assessment. Providers should also be supporting Union equality representatives with time off for training, and the facilities time to work in partnership with management at developing a positive equality agenda in the workplace.
- Diversity profiling in surrounding communities must inform proportionate institutional engagement with surrounding communities revealing priorities for related development / recruitment
- There should be checks on community engagement by providers and a range of media available used to engage with under-represented groups for example, initiatives to draw attention to working in institution amongst under-represented groups including activities which advertise for those not inside and support for those once inside such as networks, constructive mentoring. We are mindful of the provision in the Schools and Inspection 2006 that will add “community cohesion” to schools inspection. A similar addition to the OFSTED Common Inspection framework for FE would be a tool for examining community engagement by FE providers.

UCU would argue that national partners could support the FE sector in increasing the proportion of under-represented groups at all levels across the FE sector by:

- Giving a much higher profile and a greater share of their resources to actual promotion and implementation of equality and diversity implementation
- Taking a much harder line on those institutions who are failing to have or to implement seriously equality and diversity policies
- Closer investigation of the understanding those under represented in the workforce have of the sector, and the views of those who do not remain or develop once in sector institutions.

## **5. MAKING IT HAPPEN**

### **5.1 Roles and responsibilities**

UCU does not disagree with the range of strategic and operational responsibilities for action. However responsibilities should not be undertaken in the rather mechanistic way they are assigned to national partners and individual providers in the Strategy. We consider that the responsibilities run from the government through national partners to individual providers. For example we cannot see how improving the workplace ‘offer’ and sector image can lie primarily with individual providers. The government in its own right and through national partners needs to be ‘hands-on’ in terms of both responsibility and action. We have argued that an overriding issue of poor pay and conditions of service lies at the root of any actions to improve the workplace ‘offer’, hence to an improvement in industrial

relations and so through to the improvements in the sector's image. Whilst actions in this area do need to be at provider level, there must be a strong lead at national level.

Similarly whilst each provider will need to be responsive to its current and future particular circumstances and skills needs, there should be national perspectives on this with government and the national partners need to take a leading role. Finally unless the government and national partners take a strong and firm lead role in support of ensuring that equality and diversity are at the heart of policy, planning, strategy and training, individual providers and institutions will feel that they too can disregard actual implementation and perhaps even policy making, with impunity.

The Union believes that the following issues that have not been focussed on to a sufficient extent:

- Pay and conditions of service
- The issues that arise from the large use of part time staff in all aspects of the sector's work

## **5.2 Measuring the overall impact of the FE workforce strategy**

UCU considers that the measures proposed to evaluate the overall impact of the Strategy are somewhat generalised and aspirational. For example what does 'an outstanding level of leadership' mean in any real and quantifiable terms? What is an increased proportion of the workforce from under-represented groups mean in actual numbers from which groups? Which actual skills shortages will be anticipated and minimised?

The Strategy asks which are the most important of the measures. We believe that it would invidious to say which are most important when our criticisms of them are that they are vague and undefined. We do not feel at this point more are needed, just that those that proposed be made more rigorous and meaningful.

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