

A Summary of the External Evaluation of the World Class Skills - Developing Responsive Provision Programme

A Report on the Impact of the Programme

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1.0 Introduction

ECOTEC Research & Consulting was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) in September 2008 to undertake an evaluation of the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme. This report provides an overview of the impact of the programme as evidenced and reported in March 2010. It is drawn from the analysis of data collected between September 2008 and March 2010 through a two phased evaluation process. Phase 1 evaluation took place between September 2008 and August 2009 with a full report and a summary report on emerging impact produced for LSIS. Phase 2 evaluation took place between September 2009 and March 2010 with a full report and a summary report on impact produced in March 2010.

1.1 Overview of the programme

The World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme supports providers in the learning and skills sector to improve the responsiveness and quality of their offer to employers. It has four key aims as follows:

- Aim 1 – Strategic, Reform, Mission and Culture Change;
- Aim 2 – Organisational changes in management, systems and processes;
- Aim 3 – Delivery changes in respect of staff resources; and
- Aim 4 – Effective collaboration and partnership.

The programme was set up to offer a wide range of workshops, seminars, and consultancies as well as sector specific support through National Skills Academies (NSAs), Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Pathfinders and Training Quality Standard (TQS) Part B activities. Additional activities to strengthen sector specific support were introduced from September 2009, with more priority given to Apprenticeships and NSAs as well as a new focus on regional support for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Pre Employment Programmes.

Table 1.1 provides a context for the evaluation in setting out an overview of the scale and scope of programme activity.

Table 1.1 Overview of the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme

Event strand	Description	No. events/ delivered days	No. Delegates/ Providers involved
Workshop and seminar events	<i>Regional events addressing a range of thematic areas (Management Agenda, Operations, Employer Relationships and Sector Skills). Delegates are provided with detailed event packs to assist with the transfer of learning into the workplace.</i>	329 events	3783 Delegates
Consultancy support	<i>Tailored support for individual providers based on a diagnostic Employer Responsive Framework which assesses all elements of the 'employer journey'. Providers work with a specialist consultant over a period of time in order to achieve high quality and sustainable employer responsive provision.</i>	7,209 days	533 Unique Providers
Thematic Development Project	<i>Grants for providers to develop and share effective practice across the sector 3 seminars per theme (9 themes) Individual Consultancy Support National dissemination conference Development of sector resources</i>	91 projects 621 consultancy days	124 Unique Providers
In-house events/ Network Events	<i>Aimed at providers either unable to attend regional workshops or who have specific requirements within their organisations.</i>	197 events	2584 Delegates
National Skills Academies	<i>Support for NSAs to develop provider networks to collaborate and share practice Consultancy support to providers Training and development Partnership development activities</i>	17 events 150 consultancy days	148 Delegates
Innovation Pathfinders	<i>5 consortia projects to develop Further Education (FE) capacity to drive business innovation through knowledge and technology transfer Individual consultancy support 2 residential events Reflective reports on progress 3 open access regional events</i>	13 events 236 consultancy days	319 Delegates
SEMTA events	<i>Network events for Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies</i>	3 events	89 Delegates
Apprenticeships	<i>Support for providers delivering Apprenticeships</i>	10 Events	126 Delegates

Event strand	Description	No. events/ delivered days	No. Delegates/ Providers involved
		804 consultancy days	
Pre-Employment Strand	<i>Group consultancy support and one to one tailored support for providers delivering LSC Pre-employment programmes</i>	394 group consultancy days	110 Unique Providers
TQS Part B events	<i>Tailored events delivered in a number of sector specific areas for providers looking to apply for the TQS Part B</i>	31 events 228 consultancy days	272 Delegates
Group consultancies	<i>Group Consultancies allow providers to work together in groups on a particular topic. Providers attend workshops which are then supplemented by limited one to one consultancy support for each provider</i>	180 consultancy days	29 Unique Providers
Post consultancy support	<i>Additional support following the core consultancy to support benefits-realisation</i>	91 consultancy days	54 Unique Providers
Surgeries	<i>1.5 Hour slots for a provider to access expert knowledge on a prearranged topic</i>	3 Events	8 Unique Providers
Sector Coaches	<i>Sector coaching gives coaching for a provider from someone who is working in the sector and has been trained as a coach through the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme</i>	54 Sector coaches	43 Unique Providers
Peer Groups	<i>Peer groups are small organised groups of providers (maximum six). The groups decide, run and organise themselves with limited supervision from a programme facilitator and some funding provided to support their work</i>	46 consultancy days	33 Unique Providers

Source: KPMG Programme Data – July 2008 to March 2010

1.2 Evaluation Activities from September 2008 to March 2010

The overall aim of the evaluation was to review the success of the programme in meeting its stated objectives, and to assess the impact of the programme on participating organisations and their staff. The evaluation has therefore been designed to collect and analyse data to evidence the extent to which organisations have changed to be more responsive to employers, and to explore the extent to which employers experience a better service from the providers they work with as a result of changes made.

A number of evaluation activities were carried out involving qualitative and quantitative methods across the 18 months of the two- phased process. An overview follows:

- 863 provider staff have been involved in postal and online surveys carried out as part of the evaluation;
- 204 organisations receiving consultancy support have responded to online surveys exploring their perceptions and changes made as a result of their involvement in the programme;
- 156 consultations have been carried out across different stakeholders – mainly provider staff involved in the programme;
- 32 case study visits were made to providers involved in the programme; and
- 34 employers have provided feedback on the training delivered by providers involved in the programme.

Tables 1.2 and 1.3 provide a summary of the evaluation methods used in the two phases of activity. It should be noted that in order to prevent research fatigue, Phase 1 and Phase 2 where possible targeted different organisations and people.

Table 1.2 Phase 1 evaluation activities, September 2008-August 2009

Description of quantitative research method	Response
Online Survey with providers to explore perceptions of the content and delivery of WCS activities (i.e. benefits and knowledge gained from participation and overall satisfaction)	380
Analysis of programme ' reach ' data to examine levels of participation across different strands	N/A
Impact survey (postal) to explore the impact on providers' employer offer	337
Consultancy Pro Forma to assess the support provided through the consultancies	103
Description of qualitative research method	Response
Documentary review of KPMG qualitative monthly reports to explore the design and delivery of the programme	N/A
In-depth interviews (telephone) with providers engaged in consultancy and/or workshop and seminar events	62
Case study visits to explore changes made to providers' employer offer	15
In-depth interviews (telephone) with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)	8
In-depth interviews (telephone) with programme planners	8
Consultations with LSC representatives	6

Table 1.3 Phase 2 Evaluation activities, September 2009 – March 2010

Evaluation Area	Evaluation Methods	Response
Consultancy Support (Main)	Survey across organisations receiving consultancy support	101
	Consultancy interviews	35
	Consultancy case studies	9
Pre-employment strand	Pre-employment interviews	21
Coaching and Mentoring models (Group Consultancy, Peer Group, Surgery)	Peer Group interviews	14
	Group consultancy interviews	7
Thematic Development Projects	Thematic Development interviews	18
Support for Apprenticeships (Consultancy Strand)	AID interviews	8
	Frameworks for improvement interviews	11
Employers	Employer questionnaires	96
	Employer case studies	7
Postal Survey (Seminars and Workshops events)	682 questionnaires	180

2.0 Impact of the Programme

A key aspect of the evaluation was to explore the changes that providers had made to their systems, structures and processes as a result of participating in the programme, and the impact of these changes on their employer offer and the way that they work with employers. This section presents evidence of a small study carried out with employers to explore the impact of the changes made by providers on the service that they offer to employers.

The section also presents evidence on the overall impact of the programme on providers' employer responsive provision. It has been structured under the following headings:

- **Organisational Development:** this section discusses the impact of the changes made around providers' structures, core processes and/or staff roles.
- **Sales and Marketing:** this section discusses the impact of the changes that providers have made around their sales and marketing functions.
- **Learning and Training:** this section looks at the extent to which the changes made around the learning and training functions has impacted on their work with employers.

The majority of the evaluation work carried out to explore the overall impact of the programme was done under the second phase of the evaluation, hence most of the figures presented here relate to work carried out under this phase of the evaluation. It should also be noted that unless stated specifically, quotes used throughout the report include and reflect the views of both colleges and independent training providers.

2.1 Impact on employers

In October 2009, ECOTEC Research and Consulting distributed 96 questionnaires to employers who had been nominated by learning and skills providers that had accessed support under the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme. The survey explored employers' perceptions of the training delivered by FE Colleges and Private Training Providers in six key areas:

- Assessing employer needs
- Engaging and maintaining employer relationships
- Understanding employers' business and training needs
- Tailoring the curriculum to the needs of employers
- Developing flexible delivery models to suit employers' needs
- Demonstrating the benefits of the training

The survey generated a 35% response rate (34 responses) which is a good response rate for a survey. However, as this was a small study to explore how the impact of the changes made had filtered down to

the employers that they work with; the findings should be seen as emerging evidence of the impact of the programme on employers.

2.1.1 Assessing employer needs

The survey sought to explore whether employers were clear about the 'business benefits' of the training being offered to them. Overall, the findings in relation to whether or not providers were identifying the business benefits of the training to employers were positive, and suggest that providers are demonstrating the value of the training to the employers that they work with. The majority report that providers were clear (88%, 30) about the business benefits of the training that they received.

2.1.2 Engaging and maintaining relationships

A number of support activities were delivered under the programme to improve the way that providers engaged and maintained relationships with employers. The survey highlights that a significant proportion of employers believe that the level of customer service they receive from their training provider has improved in the last 18 months. For example, around three quarters (73%, 25) report that the speed at which queries or issues are dealt with by their provider has improved in the last 18 months. A similar proportion (70%, 24) also report that the level of communication and updates on learner progress has improved in the last 18 months.

2.1.3 Understanding employers' business and training needs

Activities delivered under the World Class Skills programme aimed to help providers conduct better initial assessments of employers' training needs and the skill needs of their workforce. The findings from the employer survey suggest that they felt that their provider's understanding of the business has improved in the last 18 months.

Over two thirds of the employers (67%, 23 out of 34) involved in the survey report that their training provider's understanding of their main markets, products and services has improved in the last 18 months. A similar proportion (65%, 22) report that their provider's understanding of the skills needed by their staff in order for them to carry out their jobs effectively has improved in the last 18 months, and the same proportion (65%) report that their provider's ability to suggest training solutions to meet their organisation's needs has improved over this period.

2.1.4 Tailoring curriculum to the needs of employers

As the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme also aimed to support providers in tailoring their curriculum and training offer to the needs of their employers, the survey explored the extent to which employers felt that this was the case.

A high proportion (73%, 25) report improvements in the extent to which the training offered has been tailored to meet their organisation's business objectives.

2.1.5 Developing flexible delivery models to suit employers' needs

Improving the way in which providers deliver training, and encouraging them to implement a range of flexible delivery methods to suit employers' needs were key objectives of the programme. The survey sought to explore the extent to which employers felt providers were adopting flexible delivery methods in the training provided to them.

The biggest improvement reported by employers was in relation to the support offered to their learners. Three quarters (74%, 25) report that the level of learner support offered by the providers they work with has improved/greatly improved in the last 18 months. Around two thirds of employers (65%, 22) also report improvements in the skills and knowledge of the tutors and assessors, their provider's ability to transfer the learning into a practical setting in a business and the flexibility of the provider to adapt to their organisation's needs.

2.1.6 Demonstrating the benefits of the training

The survey explored with employers how the benefits of the training are demonstrated by the providers that they work with:

- approximately two thirds (65%, 22) of the employers report improvements in the level of feedback provided to them about the training course;
- a similar proportion (62% ,21) report improvements in how their provider demonstrates the business benefits of training for the organisation; and
- a slightly lower proportion (59%, 20) report improvements in how their providers review training outcomes against initial business goals and objectives.

2.1.7 Overall perceptions

Lastly, employers were asked to rate the overall quality of the training delivered by their providers. The majority (71%, 24) rated the provision as very good, with a quarter (26%, 9) rating the provision as good.

Verbatim feedback provided by employers at the end of the survey was mostly positive. Several employers commented on how the delivery of their training had been structured to suit the needs of the business and the employees:

'The tutors are very flexible with the provision of workshops and support to our learners, which fits in with the demands of the business'

Case studies carried out with 7 employers provide further evidence on the impact of the programme on providers' employer offer. Two examples are presented below. A list of all the case studies can be found in the final report.

Table 2.1 Employer case study 1

Hammond Motor Group (employer) and Norfolk Training Service (NTS) (provider)	
Participation in the Programme/ Impact	<p>Provider and Employer</p> <p><i>What support did NTS access under the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme?</i></p> <p>NTS attended the ‘Sales’ events under the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme.</p> <p><i>How did the ‘Sales’ events support NTS’s employer offer? How did it change the way they work with employers?</i></p> <p>NTS plans to roll the training out to their staff as they found the ‘Sales’ events very useful. They have changed the way they work with employers and developed a different approach to employer engagement. The ‘Sales’ events have "raised their awareness of how to look at things differently, try new ideas and new approaches."</p> <p>NTS has developed a new approach to how they "sell" training to employers. For example, NTS no longer "push for sales straight away" but instead get "to know the customer" first to understand how they work, and their individual needs, before discussing potential training opportunities.</p> <p><i>How has the employer benefited from these changes?</i></p> <p>The change in NTS’s approach to employer engagement has led to an improved relationship with Hammond Group. They meet up with the HR manager on a regular basis to discuss how the training they provide meets the company’s needs. They also use these meetings as a route to explore other ways in which they could support Hammond’s training requirements.</p> <p><i>Has this led to a change in their working relationship (i.e. increased budget allocation, become the preferred provider)?</i></p> <p>NTS Training believe their new approach to engaging with employers has enhanced their relationship with Hammond Group, leading to "significant growth in the staff that they are now training" and ultimately "increased revenue".</p> <p>The Hammond Group has been impressed with the success of the training and the new skills their staff have gained. The company is now considering progressing some of their staff on to higher level qualifications which they would be prepared to pay for by increasing their training budget. In addition, as a result of these regular meetings, Hammond Group have requested that NTS deliver their Automotive Training Association (a new recognised standard</p>

Hammond Motor Group (employer) and Norfolk Training Service (NTS) (provider)

that people who work in the industry have to achieve) and Refrigeration training.

“NTS have done a great job for Hammonds and we would have no hesitation in recommending them to any employer that is considering using them for their training requirements” (Derek Hammond)

Table 2.2 Employer Case Study 2

P&O Ferries (Employer) and Thanet College (Training Provider)	
<p>Participation in the World Class Skills Programme/ Impact</p>	<p><i>What support activities did Thanet College access under the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme?</i></p> <p>Thanet College received approximately 20 days of consultancy support from the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme. The support included mapping the employer journey from when the first enquiry was received to the delivery of provision. It also explored the concept of one staff member taking responsibility for an employer. The support was complemented by staff attending the ‘Key Account Management’ event.</p> <p>Another element of the consultancy support focused on improving the College’s existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The consultant helped them to update the system and delivered CRM training to key staff members who cascaded the information down to other members of their team.</p> <p>An in house sales training event was delivered to vocational curriculum staff to raise their awareness of the key role they can play in engaging employers. The training included cross selling to other vocational areas of the College, offering advice on progression routes and helping employers to understand the business benefits of training.</p> <p><i>How did Thanet College benefit from the consultancy support?</i></p> <p><u>Development of a ‘Contact’ point for employers</u></p> <p>A key outcome from mapping the employer journey with the consultant was the development of a ‘Contact Strategy’ for all employers that the College works with. This replaced the existing key account management process that was only used for the College’s 20 biggest clients. The ‘Contact Strategy’ involved developing a unique plan for each employer which outlined the process for regular meetings. The ‘Contact Strategy’ ensures that the same quality of service is delivered across the company.</p> <p>The mapping process undertaken with the consultant has also emphasised to the College the importance of going the extra mile to diversify their employer offer. In terms of their provision for P&O, this has led to the development of a bespoke P&O qualification in ‘advanced management apprenticeship’. Thanet arranged to get the relevant aspects of the framework funded through employer responsive funds and approved as a full apprenticeship framework, as it was important to them that the qualification was formally recognised. This is the first time that Thanet have sought to accredit a bespoke qualification for an employer through the SSC.</p>

"This is not something we have done before, but I think we have recognised through mapping the relationship building process with the employer how important it is that we look at ways of diversifying what we are doing and achieving what the employer wants."

Streamlined paperwork

As part of the process of mapping the employer journey with the consultant, Thanet also looked at streamlining their paperwork, recognising that they had very heavy paper-based processes which involved duplication of efforts from the employer.

"We have reduced the amount of paper and the amount of intrusion on the employer's time in terms of giving them documents to complete and sign...so the employer is involved as little as possible in the administration process. The mapping process through the consultancy support made us question what we were doing and why we were doing it".

CRM improvements

The updated CRM system allows Thanet College to coordinate the training delivered to P&O better by different assessors as all the information about P&O is stored on one central system.

"[Improvements to the CRM system] will have a direct impact because there are a number of developments of the College that work with P&O and so having comprehensive information like that in one central place helps us to have an effective relationship with P&O as we know what each other are doing and this will stop people from contacting them at the same time."

Cross selling of training provision

As a result of attending the sales training, the College staff now have a better understanding of the training provision available from other parts of the College, and how to cross-sell this provision by signposting learners to other progression routes outside of their vocational area. This is particularly beneficial when working with large organisations like P&O who operate across a range of business areas and provide staff with ongoing training and development:

"The sales technique training that was undertaken by the tutors means that tutors will ask learners what they want to do next, or show them opportunities that they can go on to as they will see their role more as an opportunity to sell-on and will be able to talk intelligently to the employer about other programmes outside of their vocational expertise. And this has happened a lot

with P&O as they have a diverse range of staff needs."

Account management

Thanet College changed their arrangements for account management as a result of the consultancy support and now have a 'one named' contact for each employer. The named contact for P&O is aware of all the training delivered and can easily follow up on any issues that arise.

"Having a named account is a key benefit to P&O. It means they are getting a consistent message from the College, and that they only have to deal with one person so that one person will do the leg-work and find out what the employer needs to know and pass that message on to them."

How has the employer benefited?

P&O feel that having a 'one named' contact from Thanet College is a great improvement in the service they receive as they now know who to discuss training issues with.

"I've got a nominated person to always contact and I like that because I know all the tutors and never know if I should talk to the head of this team or the head of that. Now I can have a chat with him and he knows the internal politics of the College and can advice me on the best way to get something done."

Following the sales training delivered to staff at Thanet College to aid better cross-selling, P&O have also noticed the difference in the advice and guidance provided by Thanet College staff to their learners in terms of both progression routes and support with learning. P&O are also a lot happier with the reduction in paperwork required by Thanet College.

"Previously we would have too much paperwork that was very repetitive and they have now improved it greatly so we are doing less."

Has this led to a change in their working relationship (i.e. increased budget allocation, become the preferred provider)?

P&O feel their good working relationship with Thanet College has been strengthened by the 'one named' contact system. In addition, the fact that trainers and assessors are more aware of their role in selling, and have a greater knowledge of all Thanet College's training programmes, enables them to discuss further training opportunities with P&O.

"Trainers are very much aware now of the other programmes being offered and so can maximise opportunities as they arise when they are in contact with

P&O Ferries (Employer) and Thanet College (Training Provider)

the employer."

Lastly, the training manager feels that the steps that Thanet College have taken to provide them with a tailored and responsive training service that is continuously developed to suit the changing needs of the business, allows P&O to continue to invest in training and development during difficult economic times and protect budgets for staff development.

2.2 Impact on providers' systems, structures and processes

As outlined in the introductory section, the evaluation sought to explore the impact of the programme on providers' systems, structures and processes. Providers who were involved in the evaluation were asked to rate the extent to which the programme had impacted on their employer offer based on a set of statements provided in a survey. Table 2.3 outlines a summary of the responses provided in relation to three key areas; organisational development, sales and marketing and learning and delivery functions. The rest of the section discusses these areas in more depth.

Table 2.3 Overall impact of the programme

	Percentage	Number of providers
Our organisational structures and operating models are better aligned to the needs of employers	34%	52
Staff in our organisation are more confident in supporting our employer responsive agenda	33%	50
New team structures and/or staff roles now enable us to effectively respond to employer's needs	32%	49
The culture/ ethos of the organisation has become more employer focused	32%	49
We are able to offer our employers a broader range of delivery models to suit their specific needs	30%	46
The marketing of our employer offer is clearer, more informative and more visible, leading to more	29%	44
We are better equipped to deliver pre-employment programmes	24%	37
We are delivering employer provision in new markets and/or new curriculum	22%	34
Our employers know exactly how their training links with their business needs	22%	34
More effective targeting of priority employers in specific sectors has increased existing business	21%	32

	Percentage	Number of providers
No reply	29%	44

Base Number: N is equal to 152. Source ECOTEC Postal Survey, March 2010 (Phase 2)

Note multiple responses- providers are allowed to select more than one statement

2.2.1 Organisational Development

Overall, the main impact of the programme has been on the organisations themselves – more specifically the ethos and culture of the organisations, and their structures and operating models.

2.2.1.1 *Ethos and culture of the organisation*

Providers involved in the impact survey believe that the changes made to their structures, processes and systems have begun to have an impact on the way that they shape and deliver their employer offer. They believe that these changes have impacted on the culture and ethos of their organisations.

For example under Phase 2 evaluation, approximately a third (32%, 49 out of 152) of the providers involved report that the culture/ethos of the organisation has become more employer-focused. A similar proportion (32%, 49 out of 152) also suggest that new team structures and/or staff roles incorporated around their employer offer have enabled them to respond effectively to employers' needs.

The findings from the consultancy survey carried out under Phase 2 highlight that the consultancy support has been key in supporting a culture change in the organisations involved. A significant proportion (44%, 37 out of 84) felt that the culture/ethos of their organisation had become more employer-focused as a result of the support. Just over a third (38%, 32 out of 84) felt that their employers would get a more tailored training service as a result of the changes made to their organisation's employer provision.

2.2.1.2 *Alignment of organisational structures, operating models and staff roles to meet the needs of employers*

Providers involved in the evaluation believe that the changes made around their organisations' structures and systems have had an impact on their organisation's readiness and ability to respond effectively to employers needs.

Approximately half (48%, 194 out of 408) of the providers involved in both Phase 1 and 2 evaluations report that their organisational structures and operating models are better aligned to the needs of employers as a result of participating in the programme 55% (142 out of 256) under Phase 1 and approximately a third (34%, 52 out of 152) under Phase 2.

The qualitative interviews highlight that a lot of the changes made involve either restructuring teams or employing new staff to support their employer offer.

"We've adopted a couple of team leaders rather than everyone reporting directly to the top and this is starting to bear fruit recently, it's starting to work better in terms of closer management of our staff and the benefits that come with that - that is a very positive part of what we have done." (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"We looked at if we were going to diversify [our curriculum offer], what this would mean for the staff that may be left behind. We looked at whether existing staff were best placed to support these changes. Two

of our ten staff are now working in completely different areas and we have set much clearer objectives for two other staff [which has involved] taking some work away and adding other aspects to the role. So we are much clearer about what people are best placed to do, what additional training some do need and what the future needs of the organisation are likely to be and how that affects our roles - including my role and the technical director's role". (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"A key change as a result of the consultancy support was creating the post of director of employer services. Having this role shows our commitment to employer responsive provision, and has helped to change the culture from just having the learner at the centre of everything they do to having employers as their focus as well. There was no role that focused on employer engagement and seeing employers as a key customer of the College. So internally it has prioritized, it has shown the commitment of the Principal, other senior post holders and the governors that employer engagement is a fundamental aspect of what the College does." (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

Others have re-structured the remit and responsibilities of their teams or created new business units. For one organisation, this involved bringing all employer responsive activity into a single part of the team.

"The responsiveness in the previous structure was based on an area structure. This meant that all teams were responsible for responding to employers in their area, which meant that there was not necessarily a consistent and a procedural approach to responsiveness. This will not be the case in the new structure. All engagement activity will be from a single point and there will be more clarity."(Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"The whole structure of the organisation has changed...we created a new department called Employer Services... before an employer could ring up and be passed around the College before being put through to someone from the vocational area who might not have been the best person to support their needs. Now it's so much better. When an employer rang before the phone would keep ringing and there was not an adequate messaging service; now it goes straight through to the business unit." (Consultancy Case Study – Phase 2)

"Following the consultancy, we turned the organisation on its head and restructured our Senior Management Team (SMT) around the principle that we would group employers and learners together as 'users' under a single tier". (Consultancy Case Study – Phase 2)

2.2.2 Sales and Marketing

The evaluation findings suggest that providers involved in the programme have made changes around their sales and marketing functions to support their work with employers. As a result of these changes, they believe that:

- their marketing is clearer and more visible thus leading to more enquiries and sales leads;
- they are now able to better demonstrate the links between their training and the business needs of the organisation; and
- they are more effective at targeting priority employers in specific sectors.

2.2.2.1 Clearer and more visible marketing leading to more enquiries and sales

Over a quarter (29%, 44 out of 152) of the providers involved in Phase 2 evaluation report that their marketing is clearer, more informative and more visible as a result of the changes made.

2.2.2.2 Demonstrating how training links with employers' business needs

Just under a quarter (22%, 34 out of 152) of the providers involved in Phase 2 believe that their employers know how their training offer is linked to their business needs.

The qualitative interviews highlight that the provider's ability to measure and demonstrate the impact of their training on employers' businesses was a key reason why they felt their employers were now more aware of how the training benefited their business.

"We have developed an impact analysis to establish reasons why the employer has entered into the training and evaluate the impact to the business afterwards. This will establish employers' expectations at the outset... When the training is completed we can determine whether these outcomes have been achieved which will mean that everyone understands the reasons for entering training and it will firm up the benefits of training to the employer." (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"We can now measure the impact of our training with employers. The toolkit enables us to capture information which allows us to determine where the employer is at the beginning so as to chart the progress made." (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"The impact of the new CRM system on curriculum staff who use it has been that they have become more aware of identifying employer needs and measuring the impact of the training. Before, they just focused on getting in new learners and delivering the training."(Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

2.2.2.3 Effective targeting of priority employers in specific sectors

Under a quarter (21%, 32 out of 152) of the providers involved in Phase 2 evaluation also report that they are now more effective at targeting priority employers in specific sectors.

Qualitative interviews carried out with those involved in the consultancy support highlight that providers who had developed or improved CRM systems and/or methods for collecting and analysing Labour Market Information (LMI), were more likely to report that they were better at targeting priority employers or employers in specific sectors as a result of these changes.

"We have started this process [of using LMI] but there has been no impact yet. We look at what the local LSC needs in terms of their local and national priorities and marry that up with sector priorities and see if they have the training required. " (Consultancy Case Study – Phase 2)

"[We] have been able to target employers through creating reports on the CRM using the Organisational Needs Analysis (ONA) information and getting telesales to call. People are beginning to realise how useful the CRM system can be as they are using it more." (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"[We have introduced] an electronic LMI tool to identify suitable employers on a map and then buy data to contact them...we are reaching many more employers." (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

2.2.3 Learning and Delivery Functions

With regards to the learning and delivery functions of their employer offer, providers involved in the evaluation believe that the changes made around this area mean that they can now deliver in new markets, and offer a broad range of delivery models for the employers that they work with.

2.2.3.1 *Delivering employer provision in new markets and or curriculum areas*

Just under a quarter (22%, 34 out of 152) of the providers involved in Phase 2 evaluation report that they are delivering provision in new markets and or curriculum area as a result of the changes made around their learning and delivery functions.

The qualitative interviews highlight that providers had either expanded the number of courses offered to employers or their provision into new markets.

“Previously the College had had a substantial Apprenticeship and Train to Gain programme in the construction sector, but there was little commercial activity. We have now trebled our business in this sector, primarily through being flexible over issues like timing of courses – for example we run an Asbestos Awareness Course at 7.00am before people go on site for the day.” (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

“We are expecting to get more employers on board and increase the number of learners on the programme, and [deliver] a better learning journey for the learner.” (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

“[We’ve] got that foundation now which has enabled us to move forward and expand our provision in different areas.” (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

2.2.4 Offering employers a broad range of delivery models to suit their needs

Approximately a third (30%, 46 out of 152) of those who report making changes to their learning and delivery functions were offering their employers a broader range of delivery models to suit their specific needs.

Those involved in the qualitative interviews report that having a broad range of delivery models, such as using e-learning solutions to accommodate different shift patterns of employees involved in training had impacted positively on how they delivered in the workplace.

“We have introduced the e-portfolio and purchased internet - enabled laptops so that all the trainers can go out and get access to the platform. We have gone from having 25 e-platform learners to 910 which affects how we deliver in the workplace.” (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

“As we are working with an NHS Trust, the delivery models have had to accommodate shift patterns, night staff. So this has included blended learning with some structured delivery and on site flexible assessment. Also Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and e-learning materials are available for many courses...” (Consultancy interview – Phase 2)

3.0 Outcomes of the Programme

The evaluation sought to explore the outcomes of the programme on providers' systems, structures and processes. These outcomes were mainly in relation to the changes made to their employer offer as a result of participating in support activities delivered under the programme.

This section of the report focuses on the outcomes of the programme on providers' systems, structures and processes.

The summary of findings is structured under three key headings:

- **Organisational Development:** this section looks at the extent to which providers have changed structures, core processes and/or staff roles in their organisation to make them more employer responsive.
- **Sales and Marketing:** this section looks at the extent to which changes have been made to marketing and sales processes, and/or the ways that providers manage their relationships with employers, for example through initial analysis of employers' needs and systems to manage employer relationships (e.g. CRM systems).
- **Learning and Training:** this section looks at the delivery of training provision, including any changes to the curriculum offer or processes for feeding back to employers on learners' progress.

The evidence presented here is sourced from an analysis of data collected via different evaluation activities.

3.1 Organisational Development

The two main strands of the programme found to have been particularly effective in supporting change around providers' structures, systems and processes were the intensive support offered through consultancy and, to a lesser extent, activities provided through seminars and workshops.

In this section the evaluation explores the changes that providers have made to their organisation's structures in terms of the responsibilities and remits of teams, staff roles and core processes. It examines the extent to which the programme has raised staff awareness of the employer responsive agenda, and changed attitudes around engaging with employers. It provides a summary of changes made by participating organisations on a journey to improve their employer responsiveness and is structured under the following subheadings:

- Awareness of the employer agenda
- Development of action plans and strategies
- Achievement of the TQS

3.1.1 Awareness of the employer agenda

The evaluation highlights the importance that providers place on raising staff awareness of the employer responsive agenda. An overall assessment of the programme carried out under both phases of the evaluation suggests that a significant proportion felt that the programme had raised staff awareness, and increased their confidence in supporting this agenda. Under Phase 1, providers indicate that:

- approximately two thirds (61%, 159 out of 260) of their staff are more aware of employers' needs and how to respond effectively to them; and
- just over half (54%, 132 out of 246) report that the programme has increased staff confidence in supporting the employer agenda.
- Similarly, Phase 2 findings highlight that:
 - just under half (41%, 63 out of 152) believe their staff are more aware of employers' needs and how to respond effectively to them; and
 - approximately a third (33%, 50) feel their staff are more confident in supporting the employer agenda.

The qualitative interviews carried out illustrate the extent to which the programme has raised staff awareness, and made them more confident in supporting the employer agenda. Providers involved in both phases of the evaluation highlight how staff awareness and attitude towards the employer agenda has improved as a result of the training workshops delivered as part of the consultancy support.

"Raised their awareness of opportunities - what they were doing was going into existing employers and just carrying out their assessments and reviews. What they're now doing is ...asking pertinent questions which have enabled them to identify this new business." (Consultancy Interview – Phase 1)

"It gives us more confidence and the ability to go out and get involved with employers. You can't just go into employer organisations and say 'right I can help you'. It gives staff and myself the confidence and the tools to facilitate the first meeting with the employer." (Consultancy interview – Phase 1)

"There will be individuals who are more confident about their role.... they understand the bigger picture better." (Consultancy interview – Phase 1)

"Staff are more aware of our employer agenda and are positive about working with employers. It has raised awareness through internal training not only for curriculum delivery staff but all support areas in the College including finance, IT, IAG, HR, MIS, and also quality. Because the department has been created, and because the college has been going for the TQS, it seems to have pulled everyone in the college together to share common goals. All curriculum staff know exactly what the business unit do and how it feeds into their roles and vice versa."(Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"Staff are a lot better about the employer agenda. A lot of the development they did with staff was important as structural impact would not happen if staff were not aware of the importance of engaging with employers". (Consultancy Case Study-- Phase 2)

3.1.2 Development of action plans and strategies

The evaluation findings highlight that providers involved in the programme have developed key action plans and strategies to support their organisations' employer responsive strategies.

Just over half (54%, 126 out of 234) of the organisations who have accessed support under the consultancy strand have developed action plans and strategies to improve employer responsiveness. A breakdown of the responses highlights that:

- approximately half (52%, 78 out of 149) involved in the consultancy strand under Phase 1 evaluation have developed action plans/strategies; and
- just over half (56%, 48 out of 85) involved in the consultancy strand under Phase 2 have also developed action plans/strategies.

In addition to the consultancy support, the evaluation highlights that seminars and workshops run across the whole programme have supported approximately two thirds (65%, 85 out of 131) of the providers involved to develop action plans/strategies to improve employer responsiveness. As before, a breakdown of the responses suggests that:

- just under two thirds (63%, 45 out of 71) of those involved in Phase 1 evaluation have developed action plans and strategies to improve employer responsiveness; and
- a slightly higher proportion (67%, 40 out of 60) under Phase 2 evaluation have developed action plans and strategies to improve employer responsiveness.

Interviews carried out across the programme illustrate the extent to which these action plans and strategies have enhanced providers' employer offer.

"We've never really had a standard process for gathering LMI, and more importantly, collating and analysing it. Now we are developing clear policies, procedures, processes and systems, that's where we've been really lacking, and across the college which has been an absolute need". (Consultancy interview – Phase 1)

"We have developed a whole college approach to employer engagement and increased awareness among our staff. We introduced clear SMART employer Key Performance Indicators, and have developed an employer journey process" (Consultancy Case Study - Phase 2).

"The College now has an employer engagement strategy with benchmarks and employer-facing staff in each division. Each division also has employer engagement targets with related staff development support". (Consultancy Case Study – Phase 2)

"We were already engaging but this was about engaging differently. I don't think it was clear what we were offering or why there was a good reason to choose us over our competitors...this has involved us revisiting some employers [on our books]...we are going out and having these conversations now." (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"The new strategy will enable us to "cross reference" different departments' contacts and utilise these for leads. We hope this will bring in a greater variety of employers, and allow us to cover more curriculum areas and involve the whole College. It's utilising the leads that we've got...and bringing the wider College on board and the need to have a coordinated approach. (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)"

3.1.3 Achieving the TQS

In both phases of the evaluation, it is clear that providers give priority to achieving the TQS. Of the 176 organisations engaged in the overall evaluation (Phases 1 and 2) of the consultancy support, the analysis highlights that the support has been successful in moving the majority (84%, 148) closer to achieving the TQS.

For example, of the 100 organisations who sought consultancy support in relation to the TQS under Phase 1, the data highlights that 82% (82) are now closer to achieving the TQS. A breakdown of these responses suggests that:

- just over a quarter (27%, 27) have decided to apply for the TQS;
- over a third (38%, 38) have put an action plan in place;
- a small proportion (8%, 8) have applied for the TQS; and
- a similar proportion (9%, 9) have achieved the TQS as a result of the support received under the consultancy support.

76 organisations had specifically sought consultancy support to help their organisation achieve the TQS under Phase 2, the findings highlight that the support had moved at least 87% (66) closer to achieving the TQS. A breakdown of these responses highlights that:

- just under a third (30%, 23) have decided to apply for the TQS;
- over a third (36%, 27 out of 76) have put an action plan in place;
- a small proportion (13%, 10) have applied for the TQS; and
- a slightly lower proportion (8%, 6) have achieved the TQS.

3.2 Sales and Marketing Functions

The World Class Skills programme set out to equip providers with the knowledge and skills required to build effective relationships with their employers. These include how to develop effective marketing strategies and tools in carrying out Organisational Needs Analysis (ONAs) and Training Needs Analysis (TNAs). The two key strands of the programme found to have significantly enhanced this area of their work were the tailored consultancy support and the seminars and workshops.

Seminars and workshops designed to support providers' sales and marketing activities have enabled approximately two thirds (68%, 143 out of 216) of the providers involved in both Phase 1 and 2 evaluations to carry out changes.

A breakdown of the responses across the two Phases highlights:

- that approximately two thirds (66%, 83 out of 125) of the providers involved in Phase 1 evaluation have made changes to their sales and marketing functions; and
- the same proportion (66%, 60 out of 91) involved in Phase 2 have made changes in this area.
- Changes made were mainly around:
 - conducting ONAs and TNAs;
 - selling business benefits of the training to employers;
 - developing new marketing and sales strategies; and
 - implementing/developing new CRM systems.
- The rest of this section is structured under the above sub-headings.

3.2.1 Conducting ONAs and TNAs

The evaluation findings suggest that providers have introduced new processes for conducting ONAs and TNAs as a result of participating in seminars and workshops linked to this area of their employer offer.

- Over half of those who participated in the seminars and workshops during the Phase 1 evaluation have developed new tools and techniques for conducting ONAs and TNAs (58%, 48 out of 83).
- A similar proportion (57%, 34 out of 60) involved in Phase 2 have also developed new tools and techniques for conducting ONAs and TNAs.

The evaluation highlights that the consultancy support has been key in helping providers develop new tools or techniques for their ONA and TNAs.

Approximately half (51%, 43 out of 84) of the organisations involved in the consultancy support report have developed new ONA and TNA tools and techniques to support this area of their employer offer.

The qualitative interviews suggest that providers have developed a better understanding of the training requirements of the employees that they deliver training to as a result of the new ONA and TNA tools developed. The quotes below provide further insight into how these new tools and techniques have enhanced the way that they work with employers.

"The team that are going out and conducting the ONA or TNA with employers now understand that the [employees] training needs are greater or different than they initially thought. We have already seen vast improvements in that employers have been thoroughly impressed... they may for instance identify literacy and numeracy needs." (Consultancy interview –Phase 1)

"We finished up with a suite of tools to help us in this area. We did not have any formal ONA and TNA processes in place before so this was a good step for us to formalise things. Generally they have helped

the relationships we have and have focused some of the discussions with the employers that we work with.”(Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

“Staff have had good responses from the ONA, saying that it’s a really professional way of working and have already had two new employers on board (an increase of 17%)” - (Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

3.2.2 Selling business benefits of the training to employers

In addition to the above, the findings highlight that seminars and workshops have helped providers sell the business benefits of training to employers.

Of the 83 providers involved in Phase 1 evaluation, over half (57%, 47) indicate that they have changed the way that they sell the business benefits of training to employers.

For Phase 2, a slightly lower proportion (48%, 29 out of 60) report making changes in the way that they sell the business benefits of training to employers. It is not clear why the proportion in this case is slightly lower than that of Phase 1, however this could be due to the fact that there were more events delivered during the Year 1 of the programme (which run from September 2008 – August 2009) linked to this aspect of providers’ employer offer than under Year 2 (September 2009 – March 2010).

Organisations involved in the consultancy support have improved the way that they sell the business benefits of training to employers. Over a third (38%, 32 out of 84) of those involved in the evaluation have made changes around this area of their employer offer.

The qualitative interviews illustrated by the quotes below, offer an insight into the changes made under this area.

“We can now actually list these [benefits]. It’s helping us with our ONAs and TNAs, to really focus on working with the employer to think through the positive benefits of training, e.g. profitability, staff turnover, reduced sickness/absence.” (Consultancy interview – Phase 1)

“The consultant helped us to understand the different ways that the effectiveness of training can be measured, so not just what the learners are gaining, but the benefits that [the learners] bring to the business. We are now going back to the employer and asking them those sorts of questions”. (Consultancy interview –Phase 1)

“Previously the approach to employers had been based on what we were offering and also selling provision for young people – not what the employers were saying that they needed. The TNA/ONA approach has changed all that and enabled me and my colleagues to measure the impact of employer-related work much more effectively.” (Consultancy Case Study - Phase 2)

3.2.3 Developing new marketing and sales strategies

Providers involved in seminars and workshops under the programme believe that these support activities have been crucial in supporting them to develop new marketing and sales strategies to improve their employer responsiveness.

Just over half (55%, 46 out of 83) of the providers involved in Phase 1 evaluation have developed new sales and marketing plans for their employer responsive provision.

A slightly lower proportion (48%, 29) involved in Phase 2 have developed new marketing and publicity resources for employers. Again, it is not clear why the proportion was slightly lower under Phase 2. This could be due to the fact that more events linked to this area of their employer offer were run under Year 1 of the programme.

The evaluation highlights that the consultancy support has been key in helping providers develop new marketing and sales strategies for their employer provision. Just over a third (36%, 30 out of 84) of the organisations involved in this strand have developed new marketing and sales strategies for employers.

3.2.4 Implementing or developing new Customer Relationship Management (CRM systems)

The evaluation highlights that providers were keen to either implement or develop new CRM systems to support the work that they did with employers. The findings highlight that 41% (34 out of 83) of the providers involved in the seminars and workshops under Phase 1 have implemented or developed new CRM systems, and over a third (37%, 31) have trained staff on how to use CRM systems.

A slightly higher proportion (54%, 14 out of 26) under Phase 2 have also implemented or developed new CRM systems. It is not exactly clear why the proportion is higher in this case compared to that of Phase 1.

The evaluation findings highlight that the tailored one - one intensive consultancy support offered has helped some providers to implement or develop new CRM systems to support how they manage their relationships with employers. Over a third (36%, 30 out of 84) have implemented or improved their CRM systems as a result of the support received under this strand of the programme.

The follow up qualitative interviews (as illustrated in the quotes below) provide further insight:

"The system that the consultant helped us to implement has really aided planning. The system is still evolving but in the future it will allow us to see information by sector, industry, qualification and can be used for marketing purposes. It also shows the different streams of funding so we can compare which areas are bringing in the money. From an operational point of view, the information that is coming out of the CRM is invaluable."(Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)

"We now do a business needs analysis with all employers regardless of their size. These [processes] have become far more formalised as they can have a look at a whole range of options... Before, we would address the training that was originally requested and nothing else. This has led to employers getting a much better offer and gives them an option to tailor training to meet these needs or refer them to a network of other providers." (Consultancy Case Study – Phase 2)

3.3 Learning and Delivery Functions

The programme includes activities designed to improve providers' learning and training offer. The two key areas linked to this aspect of providers' employer offer that the programme has supported are in relation to:

- developing bespoke training programmes tailored to employers' needs; and
- improving systems for gaining feedback from employers.

3.3.1 Developing bespoke training programmes tailored to employers needs

Support activities delivered under the programme that were found to have been crucial in supporting providers in this area were the Consultancy support, Thematic Development strand, the Pre-employment strand and to a limited extent the seminars and workshops delivered under the programme.

The evaluation highlights that just under a third (32%, 20) of the providers involved in Phase 1 evaluation who had participated in seminars and workshops have developed bespoke training programmes tailored to the needs of employers.

Specific evaluation activities targeted at those involved in the consultancy support under Phase 2 also highlights that organisations felt that the support had helped them make changes to their learning and delivery functions. A quarter (25%, 21) have expanded or developed new bespoke training programmes for their employers as a result of the support received under this strand of the programme.

The qualitative interviews carried out with providers demonstrate the extent to which other strands of the programme have supported improvements under this area. For example, under the pre-employment strand, providers were restructuring their delivery models either as a result of the support they had received, or due to raised awareness of how other Colleges involved in their group meetings were delivering their programme:

"We have restructured the model of delivery.....we had a very disjointed offer in terms of curriculum, this has all changedwe will be able to offer a much better service for clients because we are managing the process much better now... we will have a more coherent offer rather than a disjointed one" (Pre-employment interview – Phase 2).

"We have put a procedure in place to capture learner progression routes" (Pre-employment interview – Phase 2).

"We have re-organised ourselves to focus on our pre-employment provision.....we are making it one of our key programmes with someone responsible for it.... we also plan to look at the nature of our training to ensure that we are delivering meaningful training. This includes mapping the training onto QCF modules to ensure that we are delivering components that are useful for people on the provision" (Pre-employment interview – Phase 2)

Providers involved in the Thematic Development strand have developed alternative approaches to delivering their employer provision, including using e-learning and e-portfolios as illustrated in the quotes below:

"We have adopted a particular e-portfolio brand that we are very happy with" - (Thematic Development Project Interview – Phase 2)

"A tangible outcome was setting up the e-portfolio pilot which began in September and will run this academic year. We hope to pilot the approach in 5 qualifications." (Thematic Development Project interview – Phase 2)

"We now have 55 Health and Social Care learners working online using e-portfolio. This is the first time we have used this approach."(Thematic Development Project interview – Phase 2)

"The e-learning pilot was very successful. 29 out of the 30 participants achieved their NVQ in Health and Social Care. The findings were given to the Strategic Health Authority and they are now doing a pilot along with another Trust using a different e-platform." (Thematic Development Project Interview – Phase 2)

There were examples of where support activities such as the peer group had allowed providers to take a step back and look at how they deliver their employer provision.

"The peer group has helped us to take a step back and deliver things differently and given us food for thought on how we market our products to employers" (Peer Group Interview – Phase 2)

'It's given us a clearer understanding of what employers really want, what other WBL providers are doing and working together with them and sharing resources, ensuring our offer is a simple process for employers'. If we'd approached it individually, I don't think we'd achieved anywhere near what's come out of the peer group" (Peer Group Interview – Phase 2)

3.3.2 Improving systems used to gain feedback from employers

The evaluation findings suggest that providers have developed better systems for gaining feedback from the employers that they work with as a result of the support received under various strands of the programme. In this case, seminars and workshops run under the programme and the consultancy support were the key strands found to have supported improvements around this area of their employer offer.

Over half (51%, 32 out of 63) of those who were involved in Phase 1 evaluation and who participated in seminars and workshops have made changes to their employer feedback systems.

Almost half (46%, 39 out of 84) of the organisations involved in the consultancy support under Phase 2 have also developed processes for gaining feedback from employers.

The qualitative interviews highlight that these new systems were mainly employer surveys designed to explore employers' satisfaction with the training delivered as illustrated in the quotes below.

"We work with a couple of large national employers and they are now looking at things like embedded programmes which we will be able to help them with. [We will keep on top of these developments] through the surveys and structured account management meetings, that were previously quite ad hoc." (Consultancy interview –Phase 1)

*"The [sales] person going in and doing that initial contact is very switched on to the employers and they will make sure that whatever is delivered is tailored to the employers' needs, rather than offering them a bog standard approach or an approach that focuses on the learner rather than the employer."
(Consultancy interview- Phase 1)*

*"This was a key aspect of the support. We developed an employer survey which was set up in August 2009 and by October had 200 employer responses. This is a big improvement on our previous survey which only had 67 responses from the 600 employers it was sent to. The survey is being analysed to gauge customers' level of satisfaction."
(Consultancy interview – Phase 2)*

*"This has changed massively. We are now much more consistent with evaluation and we have a number of models that we use and a number of our staff use those. Before it was being done but not formally, and we probably wouldn't have recorded the evaluation data before."
(Consultancy Interview – Phase 2)*

*"We do have many employer forums and surveys to find out what the business needs of employers are, and whether they were happy with [our] training."
(Consultancy Case Study – Phase 2)*

4.0 Conclusions

A number of evaluation activities were carried out involving qualitative and quantitative methods across the 18 months of the two- phased process:

- 863 provider staff have been involved in postal and online surveys carried out as part of the evaluation;
- 204 organisations receiving consultancy support have responded to online surveys exploring their perceptions and changes made as a result of their involvement in the programme;
- 156 consultations have been carried out across different stakeholders – mainly provider staff involved in the programme;
- 32 case study visits were made to providers involved in the programme; and
- 34 employers have provided feedback on the training delivered by providers involved in the programme.

This section provides a short overview on the extent to which the World Class Skills – Developing Responsive Provision programme has supported improvements in providers’ employer offer.

4.1 The extent to which the programme has achieved its objectives

The programme aimed to improve the responsiveness and quality of learning and skills providers’ offer to employers, by raising their awareness of the importance of the employer agenda, and providing them with the tools and resources which would support them in making changes to their structures, systems and processes. The evaluation therefore sought to explore the extent to which the programme has enabled organisations to make changes in these areas.

It is quite clear from the evidence presented in this report that the programme has helped providers make improvements to their employer offer. The programme has moved at least 84% (148 out of 176) organisations involved in our evaluation closer to achieving the TQS.

Providers involved in the programme have made changes to their structures, systems and processes. For example, just over half (54%, 126 out of 234) of the organisations involved in the consultancy support have developed action plans and strategies to improve employer responsiveness. Seminars and workshops delivered have also supported approximately two thirds (65%, 85 out of 131) of those involved to develop action plans/strategies to improve employer responsiveness.

Seminars and workshops designed to support providers’ sales and marketing functions have enabled approximately two thirds (68%, 143 out of 216) of the providers involved in the evaluation to carry out changes in this area.

Support activities targeted at providers’ learning and delivery functions have helped them to make changes. Nearly half (46%, 39 out of 84) of the organisations involved in the consultancy support have

improved processes for gaining feedback from employers. A quarter (25%, 21) have expanded or developed new bespoke provision for employers.

With regards to their organisations, providers believe that the main impact of the programme has been on the ethos and culture of the organisation and their structures and operating models. For example, providers believe that the changes made around their organisation's structures, systems and processes has had an impact on their readiness and ability to respond effectively to employers' needs. Approximately half (48%, 194 out of 408) involved in the evaluation report that their organisations' structures and operating models are better aligned to the needs of employers.

Approximately a third (32%, 49 out of 152) report that the culture and ethos of the organisation have become more employer-focused. A similar proportion (32%) suggest that new team structures and/or staff roles incorporated around their employer offer have enabled them to respond effectively to employers' needs.

Providers also believe that the changes made around their sales and marketing functions has impacted on their employer offer in three key areas. They report that:

- their marketing is clearer and more visible thus leading to more enquiries and sales leads;
- they are now able to demonstrate the links between their training and the business needs of the organisation better; and
- they are more effective at targeting priority employers' in specific sectors.
- For example:
- over a quarter (29%, 44 out of 152) of the providers involved in the evaluation believe that their marketing is clearer, more informative and more visible leading to more enquiries and sales leads;
- just under a quarter (22%, 34 out of 152) felt that their employers knew exactly how their training linked with their business needs; and
- under a quarter (21%, 32 out of 152) felt that they were now more effective at targeting priority employers in specific sectors.

The evaluation highlights that changes made around providers learning and delivery functions have enabled them to deliver provision in new markets, and offer a broad range of delivery models. Just under a quarter (22%, 34 out of 152) report that they are delivering provision in new markets and curriculum areas. Under a third (30%, 46 out of 152) report that they are now able to offer a broad range of delivery models to suit their specific needs.

A study carried out with employers working with providers involved in the programme suggests that the changes made as described above have begun to filter down to the employers that they work with. The majority of the employers (88%, 30 out of 34) report that they are clear about the business benefits of the training that they receive. In addition to the above:

- around three quarters (73%, 25) report that the speed at which queries or issues are dealt with has improved in the last 18 months;

- over two thirds (67%, 23) suggest that their training provider's understanding of their main markets, products and services has improved in the last 18 months;
- a similar proportion (65%, 22) indicate that their provider's understanding of the skills needed by their staff in order for them to carry out their jobs effectively has improved in the last 18 months;
- the same proportion (65%) indicate that their providers ability to suggest training solutions to meet their organisation's needs has improved in the same period; and
- a high proportion (73%, 25) of employers report that their providers have made improvements around the extent to which they tailor their offer to meet their organisations business objectives.

Employers however believe that the biggest improvement has been in relation to the support offered to their learners. Three quarters (74%, 25) believe that the level of learner support offered by the providers that they work with has improved in the last 18 months.

The evaluation placed a greater emphasis on the changes that providers had made to their structures, systems and processes. However, providers in general believe that a major impact for them has been the extent to which the programme has raised awareness of the employer agenda amongst their staff; this has made their staff more confident about supporting the agenda. For example under Phase 1 of the evaluation, approximately two thirds (61%, 159 out of 260) believe that their staff are more aware of employers needs and how to respond effectively to them. Similarly under Phase 2, just under half (41%, 63 out of 180) suggest that their staff are more aware of employers' needs.

Providers were aware that they needed a 'cultural change' in the way that they approached their employer offer, but also recognised the need to gain buy in from their staff to make that happen. This was an area where they felt the consultancy support had been invaluable. Just under half (44%, 37 out of 84) of the organisations involved in the consultancy support believe that the culture/ethos of their organisation has become more employer-focused as a result of the support. As one provider described it:

"We needed a third party influence to get the buy in across the College and that was what the consultancy process did."¹

A key emerging theme across the programme has been the extent to which it has impacted on the ethos and culture of the organisations involved :

"The support is beginning to have an impact on organisational culture at an operational level."

However, the evaluation suggests that the end result has been more far reaching in some cases. As summarised by one case study:

"The impact has been more far-reaching than our employer offer..... This is because what we felt as a College that what we needed was further support on implementing business deployment at a top strategic level. What we needed particularly for the TQS was a cohesive top level strategy.... Working with the

¹ Unless noted specifically, quotes used throughout the report include and reflect the views of both colleges and independent training providers.

consultant, we have put together a business deployment planning tool kit which has completely changed the way we monitor performance levels across the College including that of our employer responsive agenda”.

4.2 Future support

Discussions with providers suggest that they were keen that the support continued in the near future. For example, providers involved in the consultancy support who had established good working relationships with their consultants were keen to maintain some level of continuity, mainly in the form of the consultant following up on their progress in relation to the changes made around their employer offer. One College felt that:

‘It would be great to have long term support as the College is a large organisation which has for years been focusing on students...Taking the rest of the College with us, is quite a challenge. The consultancy support has started the process of culture change – people have begun to understand or change... About a year ago the College would not have taken seriously the need to have an employer strategy- it is quite a big shift for people to recognise that’.

Other strands of the programme that providers really valued and were keen to maintain were the pre-employment strand and the peer groups. Providers in both cases valued the networking opportunities that both strands offered. Most providers involved in the group working sessions under the pre-employment strand have maintained links with each other and plan to meet outside the programme. As described by a couple of them:

"The strongest aspect was] the opportunity to network...being able to get ideas from people, sharing ideas, sharing good practice, looking at how other people deliver things and the possibility of we could change what we were doing".

"Sharing of good practice with other providers was really helpful in re-structuring our offer and increasing communication with Jobcentre Plus".

