

The
Education
& Training
Foundation

SQW

FE and skills sector capacity building workforce
development programme supporting SEND reforms

Needs analysis guidance for ETF consortium

September 2016

Introduction

1. The Department for Education (DfE) has commissioned a consortium, led by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), to build the capacity of staff and institutions across the further education (FE) and skills sector to deliver the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms set out in the 2014 Children and Families Act. As part of the development of the programme, one of the consortium partners, SQW, conducted a needs analysis of the FE and skills sector with regard to implementation of the SEND reforms.
2. This needs analysis set out to identify the particular challenges faced by the FE and skills sector in terms of awareness of the reforms, specific aspects (topics) covered by the reforms, current availability of support on policy and practical issues, and current availability of capacity building interventions for different parts of the sector (regions, organisation types and occupational groups). The needs analysis is based on a literature review and consultations with 11 sector stakeholders listed at Annex A. The document considers this evidence and provides guidance to inform the development of the workforce development programme to be delivered by the ETF consortium.

Context

3. The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced new duties for the FE and skills sector with regard to SEND learners from age 16 to 25. In particular:

“General FE and sixth form colleges must use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision that the young person needs.”

“General FE and sixth form colleges, and approved special post-16 institutions must ‘have regard to’ the new SEND Code of Practice.”¹

4. The government has published both general guidance on implementation of the SEND reforms and specific advice for the FE and skills sector (Department for Education, “Implementing a new 0 to 25 special needs system: further education”, March 2015). However, an Ofsted report published in March 2016, eighteen months after the SEND reforms came into effect, found that,

“...the extent to which... providers... were equipped to support learners with high needs varied considerably. [Some] providers did not have adequate strategies, experience or expertise to ensure that they were able to support their learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties or disabilities. These providers were not able to provide the support and guidance necessary to enable learners to make adequate progress in their continued education and progression to adult life.... The quality of provision offered in the providers visited was too variable and often not of a high enough standard....

¹ Department for Education, ‘Implementing a new 0 to 25 special needs system: further education’, March 2015

While the aims of the Children and Families Act 2014 are commendable, inspectors found that, at the time of the fieldwork, the early implementation of the legislation by local authorities and key stakeholders was not fully effective.”²

5. The task of ensuring all SEND learners (including those without an EHC plan) receive the best possible experience during their progression from school to post-16 provision and entry into adult life is large and complex. Simply, there are a lot of SEND learners: in 2014/15 there were 2.6m adult learners aged 19-25 in the FE and skills sector in England, of whom 0.42m (16%), had a learning difficulty or disability.³ Moreover, the number of 16 and 17 year olds with SEND known to local authorities in England in 2015 was 45,280⁴. This represents the learners entering the FE and skills sector each year, towards whom local authorities and providers have to fulfil the new SEND duties. The complexity arises from the fact that each learner has an individual set of aspirations and needs that will require a range of different provision and support.
6. The FE and skills sector itself is also very diverse, comprising sixth form colleges, general FE colleges, specialist colleges, community learning and skills providers and independent learning providers. Ofsted data for 2015 records 1,150 FE providers, of which there are 233 general and specialist colleges and 94 sixth form colleges.⁵ Not only is there a large number of varied institutions, there is a wide variety of roles in each setting, from teacher to assessor, manager to administrator, governor to careers advisor, teaching assistant to lecturer. Staff working in the sector are also frequently part-time or self-employed. This diversity, of both institutions and staff, complicates the design and delivery of interventions to build capacity and develop the workforce.

Document review

7. Analysis of recent in-year full inspection reports conducted since September 2015 suggest the sector is moving in the right direction.⁶ Two thirds of providers with grades for their high needs provision (42 out of 62) were given Grades of 1 or 2. Nevertheless, implementing the SEND reforms in full remains a significant challenge for the sector.
8. While it has already been recognised that the FE and skills sector is not fully discharging its duties to SEND learners, a survey of the literature indicates that there are particular aspects of the SEND reforms the FE and skills sector needs to be alert to and better prepared to deliver. Arguably the two most significant elements of support that require more attention are English and Maths provision, and preparation for employment and independent living (see Annex B).
9. The evidence is clear that 16 and 17 year olds with SEN (including those with an EHC plan or SEN statement and those without) are not performing as well as their peers without SEN in English and Maths, which has become more prominent with the new obligation for FE to ensure all learners attempt to achieve a GCSE C or above in English

² Ofsted, 'Moving forward? How well the further education and skills sector is preparing young people with high needs for adult life.' March 2016, pp6-7

³ Skills Funding Agency, 'Further education and skills: statistical first release - learner participation, outcomes and level of highest qualification held'

⁴ gov.uk, 'Proportion of 16-17 year olds recorded in education or training, December 2015'

⁵ gov.uk, 'FOI: Further education and skills dataset as at 1 April 2015'

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-further-education-and-skills-inspections-outcomes-from-december-2015> (accessed September 2016)

and Maths. The data show just 33% of pupils with SEN achieved 5+ A*-C including English and Mathematics by age 19 in 2014/15 compared to 78% of pupils without SEN.⁷ This implies the FE and skills sector needs to do more to:

- Understand and provide reasonable adjustments and support for SEND learners to make progress in English and Maths.
10. The SEND reforms give particular resonance for preparing learners for adulthood and gaining independence through, for example, paid employment. However, a recent report from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (previously the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) and DfE found that:
- “These young people [with SEND] have a valuable contribution to make to the economy and have talents which too often aren’t harnessed. ...Many could achieve a high level of technical skill with appropriate support. ...The vast majority of young people with SEND are capable of sustained, paid employment with the right preparation and support.”⁸*
11. Alongside early evidence from Ofsted that providers are not delivering this for their high needs learners, this implies the sector needs to do more to:
- Provide the support and reasonable adjustment SEND learners need to access a route, or other pathway to employment. In some cases this will mean specifically offering a ‘transition year’ to help prepare for further study or employment, including a supported internship and extended work placement.
12. In fact, careers guidance has been specifically identified as an area in which the FE and skills sector is not meeting its obligations to SEND learners. Thus another area for development is to ensure FE and skills organisations:
- Offer specialist, relevant careers guidance.
13. Overall, Ofsted’s view on provision for high needs learners is that not enough study programmes included the necessary elements to meet learners’ individual needs, often failing to set appropriately challenging goals or identify the most relevant training and support. Therefore, providers need to:
- Strengthen study programmes to set more challenging goals and provide more relevant training and support for high needs learners
14. In addition to the particular types of provision for which the sector needs to improve delivery, there are a series of approaches to meeting their SEND obligations that need to be developed. Ofsted found that recording and monitoring activity was weak both for individual learners and the system as a whole:
- “The very weakest aspect of provision was recording of high needs learners’ progress and achievements, resulting in too few learners understanding what progress they were making or what they needed to do to improve further.”*

⁷ Department for Education, ‘Special educational needs: an analysis and summary of data sources’, May 2016

⁸ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for Education, ‘Post-16 skills plan’, July 2016

“Inspectors also found that local and national oversight arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of FE and skills provision for high needs learners ... were ineffective. The limited data and information available was often incomplete or unreliable. It was not possible for inspectors, local authorities or the funding agency to fully evaluate the impact of FE and skills provision on the achievements of learners with high-needs and how well they were prepared to progress to adult life.”⁹

15. The FE and skills sector must therefore take steps to:
 - Improve its approach to recording progress and achievements for individual learners
 - Improve its approach to monitoring provision overall.
16. The nature of the system established by the SEND reforms requires collaboration between many parties. Experience to date suggests that joint-working, information sharing and coordination between the FE and skills sector and local authorities is not consistently practised nor widely effective. The responsibility for FE and skills providers is thus to:
 - Engage more effectively with other organisations, particularly local authorities, in order to share information and deliver more coordinated, appropriate support for learners.
17. In essence, given the extent of inadequate provision, there is a powerful argument for the FE and skills sector to build capacity and develop the workforce in order to effectively discharge the new duties towards SEND learners. This is supported by the Ofsted report that found providers typically were not equipped to support learners with profound or multiple learning difficulties or disabilities. The implication therefore is that organisations need to:
 - Provide generalist and specialist SEND staff training.

Stakeholder consultations

18. Consultation evidence (see list at Annex A) revealed an eagerness within the sector for an opportunity to support the implementation of the SEND reforms. Several consultees highlighted the long-time ‘Cinderella’ status of the FE and skills sector, which has translated into under-funding, including for workforce development. One pointed out that the current uncertainty facing the FE and skills sector through the Area-Based review process might actually be a timely moment to embed new SEND practice.
19. Overall, consultee contributions fell into two categories: content to be included in the ETF programme; and the form of programme delivery. Most consultees also provided some detail on what is currently being done within the sector to build capacity and develop the workforce in delivering the SEND reforms.

⁹ Ofsted, ‘Moving forward? How well the further education and skills sector is preparing young people with high needs for adult life.’ March 2016, pp6-7

Programme content

20. The majority of stakeholders consulted held the view that, broadly, the sector is already well aware of the duties introduced by the 2014 Children and Families Act. As one consultee stated, awareness has been “*done to death.*” There were some dissenting voices: one consultee thought raising awareness across the FE and skills sector workforce was the most important priority for the ETF programme and another thought there were elements of the sector that were not as well apprised of the details of the reforms as they should be. Nevertheless, even those consultees that thought awareness raising was important acknowledged that there were already interventions to address this, not least the Code of Practice itself and supporting guidance.
21. Where consultees did highlight particular SEND reform topics, these included the following:
 - supporting effective transitions and providing good quality careers advice
 - setting more challenging goals for learners
 - better recording of progress and monitoring of provision
 - engaging effectively with other providers.
22. All of these topics were identified in the document review (discussed above). Consultees focused on the importance of transitions in terms of setting learners up for the best chance to succeed during their time in FE. It was emphasised that a poor start to FE could be demoralising and hence detrimental to a learner’s progress. Observations also stressed the significance of being aspirational for learners and setting goals and seeking out provision that matched the learner’s ambition rather than the provider’s expertise and experience: “*Aspiration ...is often what’s missing in a learner’s educational experience*”. One consultee spoke about the need for a “*mind-shift from what is possible or practical to what is good for learner.*” Another remarked, “*curriculum re-design [is important] so that all learners are following programme that will enable them to achieve their outcomes and fulfil their aspirations.*” “*Remember independence is the goal.*” In this context, one consultee highlighted the value of being able to clearly articulate goals, set defined milestones and record progress. Further, more than one consultee expressed the view that building effective partnerships with other organisations was an important element of delivering the reforms.
23. Interestingly, consultees did not single out Maths and English GCSE support as an area of concern. Moreover, there were two additional topics mentioned by consultees. First, it was observed that, while high needs learners may still not be receiving all the support to which they are entitled, there is a wider lack of understanding about learners at the other end of the spectrum, for example those with mental health issues. One consultee noted that SEND learners without high needs form the majority of SEND learners but “*are less visible and receive less funding.*” Another pointed out that most providers were missing the opportunity to exploit assistive technology for the benefit of low needs learners because of the focus on high needs learners through EHC plans. Second, an interviewee pointed out that individuals with highly specific needs, of which there is a low incidence in the population, may not have their needs met because of poor understanding of their circumstances and a dearth of specialist qualified staff, for instance those with the

Mandatory Qualification for Teachers of Children and Young People with Vision Impairments MEd/Postgraduate Diploma. It was explained that low incidence SEND learners are less likely than other SEND learners to get the best outcomes.

Focus on enabling organisational change

24. One issue on which the majority of consultees converged was **support for the practical implementation of change**, which included some of the topics mentioned earlier, namely being able to identify aspirations properly, design appropriate programmes and monitor progress effectively. *“Awareness is out there in all the right places but practice isn’t there yet. Very little is properly embedded although there are pockets of good practice.”*
25. Practical support was identified as the most fertile area for intervention because, while the FE and skills sector as a whole is not yet close to abiding by its SEND duties, *“it is early days”*, and practitioners are often still figuring out what is actually required, how this might be achieved and building the necessary partnerships and coalitions to bring this about. In this context, capacity building and workforce development measures focused on **practical support for embedding high quality SEND provision** were seen as important and likely to yield significant impact. However, in recognition of the diversity of the eventual target beneficiaries, one consultee cautioned, *“it is important not to see students with SEND as a homogenous group. ... different strategies may be required for different groups of students.”* Thus interventions cannot be presented as off the shelf solutions but must illustrate principles and approaches that have already proved effective elsewhere.

An example of effective practice in FE and skills sector for SEND learners

One independent specialist college focussed squarely on the long term aspirations of their SEND learners. This led them to develop strong links with the learners’ local communities and relevant organisations such as housing associations and employers. They created dedicated ‘transition-out’ teams that worked with these organisations to ensure their learners had the best prospects for employment and independent living.

This approach required a lot of investment in terms of building relationships as well as creativity and commitment. Ultimately, it has helped the college to achieve their key aim of supporting learners with long term aspirations.

Programme delivery

To whom...

26. Organisational change was summarised by one consultee as, *“critical. [Other priorities] are being addressed and more of the same will make no difference if [this] is not tackled.”* Consultees identified an **intersection between strategic leadership and professional practice**: *“There is a continuum of good practice from those ...who are at the leading edge to those who have done very little. On the whole this is to do with the quality of leadership both within the organisation and locally at a strategic level.”*

However, consultees observed that, while FE colleges almost always had a senior leader with strategic responsibility for SEND learners, as witnessed by Ofsted inspectors, often this did not translate into organisational strategies for addressing SEND learners' needs being built into the structures, policies and processes of organisations. SEND was still an 'add-on' rather than mainstream. One consultee described it as having a specific standalone SEND policy rather than ensuring all policies catered for SEND learners.

27. The evidence therefore seems to indicate the programme should **target senior leaders**. However, while there was recognition of pockets of good practice, consultees reported that, even where senior leaders had good awareness and the best intentions, the FE and skills sector is undergoing such austerity, combined with a raft of other reforms and potentially significant upheaval through the Area-Based Review process, SEND was often low down a long list of pressing problems. Inevitably in the battle for senior leadership time and attention, capacity building interventions related to SEND are therefore not a high priority. One consultee therefore thought "*It will be hard to get principals to SEND specific training*", and another suggested principal and governor training might be best addressed by being incorporated into existing senior leadership training programmes. A third opined that, "*Changing attitudes and organisational culture within institutions can be enormously challenging.*"
28. There was a variety of other proposed targets for the programme including:
- **independent learning providers** – as it was recognised that this part of the sector tends to be overlooked and is also less able to take advantage of workforce development projects and programmes
 - **non-specialist tutors and trainers** as they will have lower awareness, experience and expertise than their specialist colleagues yet actually interact with a high number of low needs learners
29. There was a view that the interventions would be most effective if they covered a mix of types of providers and staff, thereby spreading ideas and practice beyond a limited circle through a broader network. It was also proposed that other organisations be invited as implementation of the reforms depends on engagement with partners such as local authorities.
- ...and how?*
30. Consultees voiced a range of opinions with regard to where and how workforce interventions should be targeted. One view was that, if the focus is going to be on practical support for implementation, this needs to be sensitive to **local contexts**. Large-scale conferences were seen to be appropriate for sharing information but **small-scale** was deemed more valuable in term of translating policy into action. One consultee proposed the use of **action-research** style interventions that **encourage staff to develop solutions** for their own circumstances. Essentially it was a plea for, "*personalised learning for our staff as well as the learners.*" This approach was also seen to be more effective in **generating genuine, sustainable change** in professional practice. "*One small but real practical change will have more impact than anything.*"

31. It was also observed that ongoing support is an important element of any workforce development programme that seeks to generate lasting change. One consultee proposed that the ETF programme:

“...provide[s] expert external help and support which is then continued via ongoing support and guidance through access to specialists, clusters [or] networks, whereby colleges and ...providers can share ideas and resource via regular network meetings and online materials.”

32. One consultee cited the use of Yammer, a free online private social media service for groups, to support networking among practitioners and sharing of good practice. Another consultee reported that to encourage the take-up of paid-for training in a sector where training (beyond mandatory requirements) can be seen as a luxury, an organisation had introduced certification for practitioners, based on the submission of an evidence folder.

Related SEND programmes

33. Consultees provided examples of other capacity building and workforce development programmes that support the implementation of the SEND reforms set out in the 2014 Children and Families in the FE and skills sector. It is evident that there are a multitude of existing interventions. It is important that the ETF programme adds value, and does not duplicate or crowd out this provision.

Table 1: Current interventions

Organisation and programme	Summary description
Achievement for All – <i>Achieving Further</i> pilot programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with learners with highest needs. Also seeks to develop college and faculty leaders, teachers and support staff. • Based on four elements: Leadership and Management, Teaching and Learning, Engagement with learners, parents, carers and Wider Outcomes and Opportunities. • Delivery through an Achievement Coach and a nominated college leader, working closely with other staff. The Coach undertakes an audit and produces a report identifying ways to address areas of concern. • Also offers individual coaching, CPD and access to online resources. All participating institutions are part of a network to share good practice.
Achievement for All – <i>SEND implementation review process</i>	Review of organisational implementation of SEND policy, tailored to specific organisation’s needs.
Association of Colleges (AOC) – <i>annual SEND Conference</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will cover challenges affecting the full range of SEND students. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ keynote speech from Ofsted based on their recent report “Moving Forward?” ➢ variety of workshops looking at legal requirements, good practice and relationships between colleges and local authorities. ➢ sessions on how to deal with the increase of students with mental health difficulties, with examples of innovative approaches.
AOC – <i>SEND team support to AOC Regional Networks</i>	Disseminate information regarding policy initiatives in relation to LLDD, and gather feedback from member colleges about the impact of initiatives.
Autism Education Trust – <i>post-16 training programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended for all FE settings for all levels of need. • Three components: a competency framework which can act as a self-evaluation tool for practitioners to inform future development; a set of standards and guidance for providers on how to implement practice or policy; and nationally delivered face-to-face training for professionals through regional training hubs. • The training uses a range of teaching tools including video, case studies, problem-solving scenarios, presentations and practical resources and activities. • AET also holds one day regional conferences at which people can receive basic level training and a London conference focused on leadership.
Delivering Better Outcomes Together consortium (NDTi (National Development Team for Inclusion) in partnership with CDC (Council for Disabled Children) and Mott MacDonald)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consortium provides a coordinated support offer to regions and local authorities to enable them to implement the SEND reforms The partnership delivers seven strands of work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Preparing for Adulthood (delivered by NDTi with CDC) ➢ Senior Leadership programme (delivered by NDTi) ➢ Regional Leader Network (delivered by Mott MacDonald)

Organisation and programme	Summary description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Key working (delivered by CDC) ➤ Information, Advice and Support Service (delivered by CDC) ➤ SEND Advisors (delivered by Mott MacDonald) ➤ Tribunal pilots (delivered by Mott MacDonald) • The Preparing for Adulthood programme (PFA) has a range of initiatives including workforce development guidance, incorporating evidence and common core messages across the sectors, to help employers develop good practice in light of the SEND reforms. It focuses on high needs learners.
Natspec – <i>SEND FE and skills sector workforce development programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme focus initially on Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) and then addressing needs identified by practitioners. • Regional events • DfE funded.
The National Deaf Children’s Society – <i>work to increase the availability of support for deaf young children in post-14 education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping educational provision, facilitating partnership working between specialist services and providers and disseminating advice and guidance • Covers successful transitions to adulthood, joint commissioning of services and workforce development • Support is typically provided through workshops, seminars, conferences, networks of specialist and online services
The National Sensory Impairment Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NatSIP supports early years’ providers, schools and post-16 providers to improve outcomes for children and young people with sensory impairment. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ promoting effective practice and give the workforce access to quality training materials ➤ improving the specialist advice and input into SI EHC assessments and plans ➤ recognising and harnessing technology for CYP with SI to improve accessibility and outcomes.

Source: SQW research

Implications for the ETF consortium programme

34. Undertaking a needs analysis is an important element of any workforce development programme in order to prioritise effort and resource and maximise impact. In the case of the FE and skills sector and the SEND reforms, it is a complex and crowded environment, making the needs analysis even more valuable in as far as it is able to sift through a multitude of demands and requirements and provide useful interventions where they are most needed. There are two sets of implications arising from this needs analysis: those that relate to programme content; and those that relate to programme delivery.
35. On programme content, the key requirement appears to be for practical support on how to implement the SEND reforms. In general, awareness of the new duties entailed by the reforms is already high. However, with only eighteen months passed since their introduction, during which the FE and skills sector is facing many other changes, there is still a lack of experience in how to realise the aims of the reforms. While there are some examples of good practice, these are not necessarily widely known, nor is it understood how they might be adapted to suit other contexts.
36. Topics identified by the document review and stakeholder consultations that could usefully be covered by the ETF programme include:
- supporting SEND learners to progress in English and Maths
 - providing supported internships and work experience
 - delivering high quality specialist career guidance
 - supporting effective transitions
 - recording progress and achievements for individual learners
 - monitoring overall provision
 - engaging with other organisations.
37. On programme delivery, the needs analysis highlighted three elements that should be taken into account:
- support the FE and skills workforce and institutions to implement the SEND reforms in their own context
 - given the diversity of learners, staff and institutions, be creative about supporting different groups as well as realistic about what can be achieved in the timeframe
 - Generating real, widespread, sustainable change will require senior leadership engagement and organisational change, a long term challenge to which a short term programme can perhaps make a small but significant contribution.

Summary needs analysis for the ETF programme

The FE and skills sector needs to do more to:

- Understand and provide reasonable adjustments and support for SEND learners to make progress in English and Maths
- Provide the support and reasonable adjustment SEND learners need to access a route, or other pathway to employment
- Offer a 'transition year' to help prepare some SEND learners for further study or employment, including a supported internship and extended work placement.
- Provide specialist, relevant careers guidance for SEND learners
- Strengthen study programmes to set more challenging goals and provide more relevant training and support for high needs learners
- Improve its approach to recording progress and achievements for individual learners, and monitoring provision overall
- Engage more effectively with other organisations, particularly local authorities, in order to share information and deliver more coordinated, appropriate support for learners.
- Provide generalist and specialist SEND staff training.

Annex A: consultees

Ann Ruthven, Achievement for All, Development Manager

Clare Howard, Natspec, Chief Executive

Katrina O'Brien, Bedford College, Assistant Director – Foundation and Additional Support

Linda Jordan, National Development Team for Inclusion, Senior Development Advisor, Preparing for Adulthood programme, regional advisor for London

Lindsey Jane Rousseau, National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP), facilitator

Liz Maudslay, Association of Colleges (AOC), SEND Policy Manager

Mark Barnsley, Association of Colleges Eastern Region (ACER), Associate and Network Convenor

Martin McLean, The National Deaf Children's Society, Education and Training Policy Advisor (Post-14)

Michael Cotton, National Development Team for Inclusion, Associate, Preparing for Adulthood programme, regional advisor for the North East

Nigel Evans, Ofsted, Her Majesty's Inspector, Further Education and Skills

Sarah-Jane Critchley, Autism Education Trust, Programme Head

Annex B: references

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for Education, 'Post-16 skills plan', July 2016

Department for Education, 'Implementing a new 0 to 25 special needs system: further education', March 2015

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