

Employer Responsiveness resource pack

Introduction

Feedback and more information

We hope you find our range of resources practical and informative. Feel free to print and distribute them within your organisation.

Please note that these materials are constantly evolving and should be considered a draft rather than a final product. The Development Programme aims to build on experiences with providers and in turn update materials so that they are relevant and accurate. We welcome your feedback about these resources and will ensure all suggestions are considered for future material updates. Please send your comments to [<traintogain@LSNeducation.org.uk>](mailto:traintogain@LSNeducation.org.uk) or contact us on 0845 071 0800.

If you have useful materials that you would like to share please send these into the same e-mail address.

About the resource pack

Responding to the needs of employers is now acknowledged as a central purpose of post-16 education and training. Over the past five years there has been an increasing emphasis on the role of skills, learning and workforce development in securing improved economic productivity.

This resource pack provides support for some of the most critical issues emerging from the delivery of responsive provision. It draws on the experience of participants in the Development Programme, their work colleagues and the organisations delivering the Programme.

It will be useful to individuals, teams and organisations that want to make their products and services more focused on employers' needs, particularly those who are new to employer responsiveness. Those with more experience or who are working towards the New Standard for Employer Responsiveness and Vocational Excellence [<www.newstandard.co.uk>](http://www.newstandard.co.uk) could use the resource pack to reflect on and review current practice, and how this could be extended and improved.

The pack provides ideas and suggestions for post-16 education and training providers on how to improve their responsiveness to employers. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to practices and procedures in delivering employer-facing services but a reflection of work in progress.

Background and context

A low-skilled workforce could have dire effects on the economy and on the prosperity of the country. The Leitch Review (2006) *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world-class skills* investigated the UK's long-term skills needs and predicted that even if targets current at the time of the report were met, the country's skills base would still lag behind that of many comparable countries by 2020.

For more information about the Leitch Review see the website at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/leitch_review/review_leitch_index.cfm.

Providers are being encouraged to play an increasingly important part in helping people become more employable and in developing the skills and knowledge of those already in work to meet new demands. Working with employers they can:

- identify the skills that businesses need now and are likely to need in the future
- use this information to shape the training and related services that they offer.

Many providers already see employers as valuable customers, and have systems and people in place to identify and meet their needs. For others, placing an emphasis on meeting the needs of employers rather than individual learners is a challenging concept.

The Train to Gain service

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Train to Gain service aims to help businesses get the training they need to succeed. It offers skills advice to match business needs with further education (FE) and training providers.

Train to Gain service training and advice is designed to be:

- flexible
- responsive
- provided at a time and place to suit businesses.

The Train to Gain service aims to encourage all businesses and individuals to realise the benefits that learning and skills can bring and to enable many more adults to achieve a first full Level 2 qualification and to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills. It is also anticipated that the service will encourage the take-up of further training, funded by employers, at higher levels and in more specific skills.

The Train to Gain service therefore marks a significant shift in the way learning and skills are funded and delivered and the scale of the change could appear quite daunting to people unused to working in this way.

This Employer Responsiveness resource pack is intended to support providers in bringing about this change. It provides materials, activities and examples that may be of use to a wide range of staff, especially those who are new to working with employers.

For more information about the Train to Gain service see the website at www.traintogain.gov.uk.

Developing the Train to Gain service

Since 2006 QIA's Development Programme for the Train to Gain service has offered support and guidance to help providers become more responsive to employers.

The Development Programme is designed to:

- encourage the development of an employer-led culture in the colleges and work-based learning providers in the FE system that provide training and related services to employers
- help providers develop appropriate business processes to focus their services on the needs of employers
- promote a strategic approach across the organisation to the development of a high-quality, responsive service for employers.

For more information about the Train to Gain Development Programme see the website at www.qiaemployerled.org.uk.

Overview of the pack

Using A framework to measure and improve employer responsiveness

www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23562.aspx

Module 1: Working with employers as customers

www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23558.aspx

Module 2: Developing flexible delivery

www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23559.aspx

Module 3: Developing responsive people and organisations

www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23560.aspx

Module 4: Partnership building for responsiveness

www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23561.aspx

Glossary

www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23563.aspx

The Development Programme has produced a framework to measure and improve employer responsiveness (and an accompanying method for self-assessment and development-planning. This has been drawn from research into effective practice and from a range of quality standards relating to responsive provision. It provides a comprehensive picture of what responsiveness entails and enables providers to conduct an end-to-end review of business processes and produce development plans for improvement in line with their strategic and business plans.

The framework also includes advice on:

- how to conduct the self-assessment process
- what constitutes evidence
- how to produce a development plan.

Download *A framework to measure and improve employer responsiveness* from

www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23564.aspx.

The framework and quality indicators continue to be developed in line with our deepening understanding of effective practice in employer responsiveness and will evolve to take account of developments such as the New Standard for Employer Responsiveness and Vocational Excellence <www.newstandard.co.uk>.

Many providers have already been involved in taking forward the Train to Gain service and working on Improvement Projects (2006–07) in:

- developing flexible delivery for the Train to Gain service
- working with employers as customers.

Each Improvement Project reviewed a specific aspect of responsive provision using quality indicators describing features of effective practice that were produced using a similar approach to the framework. They then implemented a development plan to improve this provision.

For details of the 10 topic areas download [Improvement Project topic areas](http://www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23466.aspx) from <www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23466.aspx>.

For details of the quality indicators relating to the 10 topic areas download *Flexible delivery and working with employers – quality criteria from the Year 1 Improvement Projects* from <www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-22900.aspx>.

For more information about the Improvement Projects see <www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/casestudies/>.

Key target audience

There are many likely users of these resources, as the frameworks can be used to assess and improve the quality of provision in relation to whole organisations or specific aspects of provision. They could be of use to senior managers wishing to bring about wholesale change and, in the case of the Improvement Project materials, to individual practitioners wanting to improve their own practice.

Module 1 Working with employers as customers

This module is for those who are working directly with employers and want to create a professional interface between employers and providers. It will help shift the focus from what the organisation thinks it should provide to providing what the employer needs.

The module includes materials on:

- an approach to selling based on identifying the issues, concerns and needs of potential customers and offering a tailor-made service in response
- the skills needed to sell products and services to employers
- managing the sales process
- managing key accounts
- using labour market information effectively to inform your marketing strategy
- managing the relationship with customers through use of appropriate software, service-level agreements and customer care.

This module will help people new to selling training and related services to adopt an approach that responds to employers' needs. More experienced practitioners may find this module helpful in focusing on identifying and then meeting employers' needs, rather than trying to interest employers in your organisation's training programmes.

Key target audience

This module should be of interest to providers that want to instil an employer-facing ethos across their organisation and staff who are new to employer-facing work. Specific aspects of this module should particularly interest staff concerned with:

- developing a culture based on an employer-facing ethos
- ensuring that staff are trained in customer care
- implementing the systems and procedures needed to support employer-facing delivery
- sales and business development staff who come into direct contact with employers
- assessors, trainers and others who work on employers' premises.

Download [Module 1: Working with employers as customers](http://www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23558.aspx) from www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23558.aspx.

Module 2 Developing flexible delivery

This module is designed to help those involved in the design and delivery of training. It explores the concept of flexible delivery, offers advice in selected key areas and records some of the experiences and learning of practitioners involved in Improvement Projects.

The content includes:

- an exploration of what flexible delivery looks like from your and your customers' points of view
- ways of conducting initial assessments and drawing up individual learning plans that take into account adult learners' life and work experiences
- ways of building a learning and training programme based on the outcomes of initial assessments
- ways of designing flexible means of delivering learning opportunities.

Key target audience

Managers, teachers and assessors may find this useful. Specific sections will be of particular interest to those who:

- are in direct contact with the learner, whether as teacher, trainer, tutor or assessor
- Skills for Life coordinators and vocational teachers
- staff involved in marketing provision and coordinating the efforts of Skills for Life and vocational teams – managers as well as practitioners
- trainers, assessors and people who negotiate the overall plan for delivery with employers.

Download [Module 2: Developing flexible delivery](http://www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23559.aspx) from www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23559.aspx.

Module 3

Developing responsive people and organisations

This module is for those who make decisions about the structure of their organisation and the way individuals and departments work together. It offers advice and strategies to help build an organisation that is responsive to the day-to-day demands of employers.

The content includes tools for:

- assessing your organisation's responsiveness and understanding the environment in which you operate
- developing a culture of responsiveness
- evaluating the impact of training.

Key target audience

This module is designed to help those who have a leadership role in their team or unit or in the organisation as a whole.

Download [Module 3: Developing responsive people and organisations](http://www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23560.aspx) from www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23560.aspx.

Module 4

Partnership building for responsiveness

This module is for those responsible for ensuring that the whole organisation responds to employer demands. The focus here is on working with other providers to deliver the Train to Gain service and other employer-facing work.

The content covers:

- the rationale for working in partnerships
- building and maintaining effective partnerships.

Key target audience

This module is written for providers who are part of a consortium but who may be looking for guidance in making partnership working more successful whether as a lead partner or contractor.

Download [Module 4: Partnership building for responsiveness](http://www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23561.aspx) from www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23561.aspx.

Where to start?

You are likely to find the resource pack most useful if you have a clear idea of how employer-responsive provision currently operates in your team or organisation. It may therefore be helpful to use one of the tools described in [Using A framework to measure and improve employer responsiveness](#) <www.qiaemployerled.org.uk/search/Resource-23562.aspx> to review your provision to establish priorities for development. This will enable you and your colleagues to find the resources most helpful to you.

There are also many more tools, exemplar materials and case studies on developing effective practice available on the rest of the site <www.qiaemployerled.org.uk>, together with information about e-forum discussion groups.

New information and tools that you can adapt for your own use will be added to this site periodically, so come back from time to time to keep up to date with emerging practice in employer responsiveness.

Feedback and more information

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