



enhancing skills
for life and work



Good practice guide
Leading from the middle



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Information Services
Learning and Skills Network
Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS.
Tel 020 7297 9144
Fax 020 7297 9242
enquiries@LSNeducation.org.uk

Authors: Nick Barclay and Steve Bell
Editor: Patrick McNeill
Project manager: Debra Wockner
Designed by thingswedo
Cover illustrator: Keith Sparrow
Printer: Blackmore Ltd

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Some publications from the Key Skills Support Programme

An integrated approach to teaching key skills in Business Studies and Information and Communication Technology; case studies

An integrated approach to teaching key skills in Construction; case study

Effective self-assessment of key skills

Good practice guides:

- *Developing and managing portfolios*
- *Key skills and the role of the tutor*
- *Planning and delivering induction*
- *Preparing for the tests*
- *Preparing learners for the Level 3 tests: Application of Number*
- *Preparing learners for the Level 3 tests: Communication*
- *Preparing learners for the Level 3 tests: ICT*
- *Using ICT in delivering key skills*

Key skills: a handbook for coordinators

Key skills and employability through work-related learning and enterprise

Key skills practice tests (CD-ROM)

Key skills professional development: planning and delivering key skills (manual and website)

Key skills resource manual

Key skills starter pack (CD-ROM)

Level crossing: progression from Skills for Life to key skills

Paving the way 1: from key skills to functional skills

Paving the way from key skills to functional skills 2: functional skills in specialised Diplomas

Paving the way from key skills to functional skills 3: functional skills and employability

Paving the way from key skills to functional skills 4: GCE A-level reform and the Skills Agenda

Talking of number: A-level and vocational contexts (video and training pack)

Teaching and learning:

- *Application of Number*
- *Communication*
- *Improving Own Learning and Performance*
- *Information and Communication Technology*
- *Problem Solving*
- *Working With Others*

Unlocking your future (DVD and video)

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Introduction

This publication is one of a series of Good Practice Guides published by the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP). For a complete list of titles, please see the facing page.

What is the purpose of the guides?

The guides are designed to provide practical advice and guidance to teachers and trainers who deliver and assess key skills in schools, colleges, work-based learning and adult learning. Each guide can be used as an introduction, as the basis of training sessions, as a source of ideas, for reference, or as a handbook. They are based on the experience of centres that have been delivering key skills in recent years.

Who is this guide for?

This publication is aimed at middle managers in schools, colleges and other settings who have been given the responsibility for leading the transition from key skills to functional skills over the coming years. The publication aims to do three things:

- update you on some of the developments with functional skills
- provide you with some of the background theory about leading from the middle to help you to be more personally effective
- give you structured opportunities to reflect on your centre's current situation and to plan for the transition.

Sources of support and information

Functional Skills Support Programme:
www.LSNeducation.org.uk/functionalskills

DfES 14–19 website: www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19

Go to 'Curriculum and qualifications' and then 'Functional skills'.

QCA website: www.qca.org.uk/15891.html for information about the functional skills standards and the pilot.

Leading change in education

The post-16 sector is no stranger to change – it is an integral part of our landscape. But as the rate, scope, breadth and depth of change increases, so are we continually tested by new and exciting challenges. This is why ‘leadership’ rather than ‘management’ has such currency at the moment. Organisations, confronted with so much change and uncertainty, seek out leaders who will develop vision and inspire others to follow that vision. It is fast becoming recognised that, for organisations to cope with so much change and uncertainty, leadership cannot be the province of the few. Leadership should be distributed across many different roles and, in order to be effective, organisations need to ensure that this is more than just an aspiration. Middle managers are crucial to the effectiveness of organisations in carrying out the vision. But they also need to develop their own visions of how strategies can be implemented ‘on the ground’. This principle applies from the level of government policy downwards.

Government has developed its vision for 14–19 education and training and a vision of a skills agenda. Providers must now develop their own visions of how best to implement government policy for their own circumstances. They have a remit to translate and meld this vision into practice in their own diverse and often challenging contexts. This publication will provide support for leadership of the introduction of functional skills in these contexts.

Management vs leadership

Most material written on change talks about **managing** change. We prefer to talk about **leading** change. There are two reasons for this:

- firstly, because we believe that leadership is more effective when it is distributed
- secondly, because change is too significant to be merely managed.

Kotter (1999) has made a clear distinction between leadership and management. He sees management as concerned with maintaining the existing organisation (‘doing things right’) whereas leadership is more about facilitating change (‘doing the right things’).

‘Management is about complexity ... Leadership, by contrast, is about coping with change.’ Whereas managers set targets, leaders set direction and vision. While managers organise implementation, leaders mobilise support for the vision. As managers are required to control and monitor progress, leaders will be engaged in motivating and inspiring their people. Kotter concludes that ‘leadership complements management; it doesn’t replace it’.

Wicked problems and Tame problems

Another way to distinguish between leadership and management is to look at 'wicked' and 'tame' problems (Grint 2005).

Tame problems are ones where:

- there is a procedure
- they have been solved before
- there is little uncertainty.

Wicked problems, on the other hand, are ones which:

- have never been encountered before
- may not be capable of resolution
- have no clear success criteria
- entail high levels of uncertainty.

Working through a series of timetable changes is a **tame problem**.

Embedding key and functional skills into the curriculum is more of a **wicked problem**. Tame problems are the responsibility of **managers**; wicked problems are the responsibility of **leaders**.

Leaders, Kotter argues, set a direction and develop strategies to move in that direction. They will get people committed and establish groups to ensure that the new direction is communicated. They will motivate and inspire staff to get on board. They will convey the vision in ways that will excite colleagues. They will get colleagues involved in determining how to shape the vision and so give them some control. They will coach and provide support and feedback to colleagues undertaking the transition, and they will recognise and reward success. Kotter concludes that **managerial work, in times of change, is increasingly a leadership task**.

Learning the lessons from introducing key skills

Key skills, in their current form, were first piloted in 1997 and introduced on a large scale in 2000. Many lessons have been learnt from that pilot and in the following years where key skills have been successfully embedded across a whole range of settings. While there are some distinct differences between functional skills and key skills, many of the same solutions will apply in the transition to functional skills.

In this section, we will look at two case studies of how key skills have been embedded at different centres. At the end of the section there is an activity which will allow you to review your own centre's progress with key skills and use that as a springboard to implement functional skills.

Case study | Shrewsbury College

At Shrewsbury College success rates for key skills have moved from an average of 14% to 52% in two years. In some areas of the college they are performing at 85%. Abi Smith is the Head of School for Learning Services at Shrewsbury. She has been involved in supporting the major changes that were made in the way key skills are delivered in the college.

The previous poor success rates triggered the change. In the old arrangements, key skills had been delivered by members of the teaching staff, some of whom were short of hours. In the new system, a key skills coordinator was introduced as a literacy and numeracy expert in each department. These coordinators became part of the departmental teaching teams and set about contextualising key skills within the curriculum.

The vocational teaching staff are now starting to recognise the contribution that key skills can make to learners' performance on their main programmes, and, as a consequence, on their achievement and retention rates. They are committed to supporting the development of literacy and numeracy skills within the vocational courses.

Initially, Abi confirms, these innovations were treated warily. Vocational staff found that they had to improve their own skills. The change represented an upheaval, but senior managers and the principal fully endorsed the change by championing success rates and *Skills for Life* as significant objectives for the college.

The need for upskilling was recognised and pursued. The emphasis was placed on enhanced professionalism and the argument made that the vocational/academic divide was no longer appropriate for an institution committed to equipping itself to meet the government's skills agenda. Both vocational and functional skills are essential to the learner: one set of skills cannot develop without the other.

There is a recognition that these changes have relocated the role and responsibilities of teachers as professionals.

Abi confirms the importance of what she calls a 'whole organisation approach'. The buy-in of the senior management team (SMT) and principal is important. She also sees these changes underpinning a change in the kind of FE college that Shrewsbury is. This is a recognition of the strategic dimensions to change and the extent to which colleges that do well are those that stay focused on an initiative, raise its profile and see it through, no matter how uncomfortable and painful it may get.

What were the key factors that led to this success at Shrewsbury?

- Poor performance was identified and acted upon.
- People were recruited who were enthusiastic about the project.
- Their enthusiasm was transferred to vocational staff whose initial scepticism was overcome through the knowledge and expertise of the key skills team.
- Treating the change as a strategic one has meant that the calibre of teaching in the college has been enhanced.
- Senior managers, including the principal, were openly supportive and ensured that the change was sustained.

Case study | Colchester Institute

In mid-2004, Colchester Institute was achieving a 3% success rate for key skills. In January 2007 it stood at 50%. How did this come about?

The answer is by a process of organisational, group and individual change. Key skills are now not only embedded in the curriculum, they are also embedded in the college infrastructure.

Caroline Fritz, the Learning Skills Manager at Colchester, reports that the inspection of 2003 triggered a restructure of how key skills were delivered. There had been a history, as in many colleges, of seeing key skills as something separate. There had been an instrumental attitude towards them; that is to say they were seen as a product requiring portfolio completion rather than an integral part of a learner's experience. They were not valued as an intrinsic learning experience.

In the aftermath of the inspection the Key Skills Unit was set up as a centre of expertise which, together with significant backing from senior managers, set about, in Caroline's words, 'spraying key skills across the curriculum'. Teaching and learning became a central focus and there was a shift away from perceiving key skills as an isolated product to redefining them as an essential element in every learner's programme.

The Key Skills Unit performs a vital role in the college and it has impacted on staff development (which was initially mandatory), on teaching and learning observation, on the recruitment of new teachers, and on the appraisal of existing staff. In addition, the change has contributed to raising awareness of the importance and significance of the key skills data across the college by making it part of the self-assessment process, and it has promoted the design of new teaching materials.

Of course, these changes were not without their problems. Caroline identifies the anxiety that change can promote for people – the unfamiliarity, the personal challenges, the 'it might all change again next week' syndrome. She says that buy-in (both upwards and downwards) can take time and patience as people adjust and regroup.

Key skills now enjoy institutional status at Colchester. They are coming to be seen as a central part of the curriculum that makes a major contribution to enhancing the learning and employability of learners and to on-programme performance; both learners and tutors see the value of contextualising key skills within the vocational portfolio. Caroline says that, as a result of these developments over the last two years, the institution is ready to take on the introduction of functional skills when they arrive.

What were the key factors that led to this success at Colchester?

- The profile of key skills was raised across the college.
- This was done through establishing a Unit within the college that held a strategic brief to drive through the change.
- The Unit had the overt backing of senior managers.
- The Unit was able to design a programme of training and development which was sustained over an extended period of time.
- People began to see the value of incorporating key skills into the curriculum and were prepared to respond to the change.

Activity 1. Reviewing your current position: learning lessons from key skills

If your centre has no experience of key skills, the implementation of functional skills will allow you to start with a 'clean slate'. However, there will be lessons to learn from others' experience of implementing key skills since 2000.

If your centre already has some experience of key skills, the change to functional skills gives an ideal opportunity to review your current position and think about how best to introduce functional skills. This could lead to anything from:

- **evolution** – small modifications and improvements to your current practice to
- **revolution** – a complete re-think and a fresh start.

Experience of the phased implementation of key skills from 1997 to 2000 identified 10 'critical success factors', which have been confirmed over and over again since 2000. These are:

1. Promoting a positive agenda
2. Implementing an effective curriculum model
3. Establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities
4. Coordinating activity within teams and across the centre
5. Delivering effective teaching and learning
6. Establishing clear assessment procedures
7. Using resources efficiently and effectively
8. Embedding quality assurance
9. Delivering appropriate staff development
10. Reviewing and planning ahead.

The purpose of this activity is to review your centre's current performance in key skills using the 10 critical success factors and to ask what are the strengths and weaknesses of your existing provision. This will lead on to you considering how best to approach the transition to functional skills.

For each critical success factor, decide whether your centre is 'doing well', 'doing okay', or 'not doing well', and add any comments. We have included some questions as examples of criteria you might use when making your decision.

Table 1. Reviewing current performance in key skills

Critical success factor	Doing well	Doing okay	Not doing well	Comments
1. Promoting a positive agenda				
Does a member of the SMT/ leadership team have overall responsibility for key skills? Are all staff kept informed about key skill developments?				
2. Implementing an effective curriculum model				
Have we explained the model to all staff? Does our model deliver both the development and the assessment of key skills?				
3. Establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities				
Have we documented roles and responsibilities in respect of key skills? Have we allocated time to meetings for all staff involved in the delivery and assessment of the programme?				
4. Coordinating activity within teams and across the centre				
Do we have key skills coordinator/s? Have we given the coordinator/s the time and authority they need?				
5. Delivering effective teaching and learning				
Do our induction programmes include initial and diagnostic assessment for key skills? Are all staff using varied teaching and learning strategies?				
6. Establishing clear assessment procedures				
Have we trained staff so that they are confident and competent to assess? Do we have a verification/moderation system that ensures standards across the centre?				

7. Using resources efficiently and effectively				
Have we enough ICT to deliver and support key skills? Have we budgeted for additional tutorial support for portfolio management?				
8. Embedding quality assurance				
Who has responsibility for setting, monitoring and achieving key skill targets? Does the system for monitoring key skills provide us with the information we need?				
9. Delivering appropriate staff development				
Have we audited staff training needs? Have we considered the cost and impact of different staff development models? Are we using accredited training programmes?				
10. Reviewing and planning ahead				
Do we have self-assessment arrangements in place? Do we have meetings devoted to forward planning?				

What does the result of this activity tell you?

If you scored mostly 'Doing wells' then it is likely that you have a curriculum model, expertise and management systems in place that can be modified fairly straightforwardly to make the transition to functional skills.

If you scored several 'Doing okays' then it is likely that there will be areas of weakness in your key skills provision that can be addressed as you move towards functional skills.

If you scored mostly 'Not doing wells' then you have a good opportunity to rethink your approach and put new systems and structures in place.

The activities in the rest of this publication will help guide you in developing your strategy for managing the change to functional skills.

Looking at functional skills and thinking about the transition

What are functional skills?

The origins of functional skills lie in the Tomlinson report on 14–19 reform (DfES 2004) and in the government's response, in the *14–19 education and skills* White Paper (DfES 2005a). Tomlinson argued that it was possible for young people to achieve grade C in GCSE English and Mathematics without having a satisfactory standard of literacy or numeracy. In its response, the government promised a 'sharper focus on the basics' and to ensure that learners have a sound grounding in 'functional skills'. Teachers in all areas of post-16 provision will be familiar with the need for some learners to strengthen these skills to underpin successful achievement in their main programmes of study.

QCA defines functional skills as:

'those core elements of English, maths and ICT that provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills, and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.'

14–19 education and skills: implementation plan (DfES 2005b)

Functional skills qualifications are being piloted in English, mathematics and ICT from Entry level to Level 2. Level 3 standards are due to be developed during 2007

The intention is that, in due course, functional skills qualifications will provide a single ladder of achievement from Entry to Level 3 that is available to all learners in all sectors.

Why are functional skills needed?

'Employers and educators have identified these skills as vital for enabling young people and adults to have the practical skills to succeed in further learning, employment and life in modern society.'

'Functional' skills – your questions answered (DfES 2006a)

The introduction of functional skills into the 14–19 curriculum for all learners is being driven by a number of social, educational and economic concerns.

- Only 45% of school leavers achieve five A*–C GCSEs including English and maths. The 'need to give every child a good command of English and maths' is seen 'as the way to overcome economic and social disadvantage and make equality of opportunity a reality' for every child.

Higher standards, better schools for all (DfES 2005c)

- Without functional skills, pupils would find it 'almost impossible to succeed' because of the difficulty they would have in accessing the secondary curriculum.

2020 vision (the 'Gilbert Review') (DfES 2006b)

- Basic skill levels of those leaving school and seeking employment are inadequate.

Working on the three Rs (CBI 2006)

Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and the ability to apply them, are also critical to successful progression post-19. Higher education institutions highlight the lack of these skills among school leavers. This has implications for retention and achievement on degree-level courses.

For the UK to remain economically competitive, the knowledge and skills base of the population must increase. Low post-16 participation rates mean that learners are not staying in learning to achieve the Level 2 (GCSE A*–C) benchmark that will lead them into employability.

The Leitch Review (2006) set challenging targets to meet this skills gap, including:

- 95% of adults to achieve functional literacy and numeracy by 2020.

The development of functional skills at 14–19 will make a major contribution to meeting these targets.

Functional skills are therefore:

- central to the delivery of the 14–19 and skills strategies
- crucial to the personal development of all learners aged 14 and above
- needed for degree-level study
- a platform for the development of employability skills
- fundamental to tackling the skills gap in England.

How do functional skills fit with Key stage 3 and Key stage 4?

The introduction of functional skills into the 14–19 curriculum is part of a wider review of the secondary curriculum.

Key stage 3

QCA is currently reviewing what pupils learn at Key stage 3 by revising the National Curriculum programmes of study in order to provide:

- greater flexibility
- improved coherence
- increased personalisation.

One of the aims of the revised curriculum is to develop successful learners who possess ‘the essential learning skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology’.

Individuals at any age who possess these skills will be able to participate and progress in education, training and employment as well as develop and secure the broader range of aptitudes, attitudes and behaviours that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and work.

www.qca.org.uk/secondarycurriculumreview/lenses/skills/functional-skills/index.htm

Level 1 functional skills will be embedded in the programmes of study for English, mathematics and ICT at Key stage 3.

Key stage 4

Functional skills will enrich and strengthen GCSE English, Mathematics and ICT at Key stage 4 and give learners the skills they need to access the Key stage 4 curriculum. The programmes of study for English, mathematics and ICT will embed the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to develop functional skills at Level 2 in Key stage 4.

While delivery of the underpinning knowledge and understanding is likely to remain the responsibility of specialist GCSE teachers, functional skills will only become transferable when they are embedded across the curriculum. All staff will need to raise awareness of the relevance of these skills and support learners in applying them in their subject areas.

Every Child Matters (DfES 2003) includes outcomes that require schools and other providers to focus on employability. These skills are developed at Key stage 4 through work-related learning and enterprise education. Functional English, mathematics and ICT will provide learners with a platform on which to develop these wider employability skills.

How are the functional skills qualifications being developed?

Standards for functional skills from Entry level to Level 2 have been developed by QCA. They correspond to aspects of the key skills and *Skills for Life* standards, and to the National Curriculum.

Following an extensive consultation process in 2005–2006, small-scale trials and further discussions were carried out in 2006–2007. The resulting standards will be piloted by the awarding bodies in about 1000 centres for three years from autumn 2007, together with approaches to assessment and qualification design.

The draft standards focus on:

- process, not just knowledge
- application of skills in purposeful contexts
- the ladder of progression, with each level incorporating and building on the level/s below.

Level 3 standards are due to follow in 2007. These will be of particular interest in further education and school sixth forms, where learners may opt to take functional skills at Level 3 to extend their competence and help prepare for higher education and/or employment.

Standards are, of course, only the first stage in developing qualifications. During the three-year pilot, QCA will work with the awarding bodies to develop the qualifications. A range of agencies will provide guidance and support material on teaching and learning, delivery and assessment.

The Functional Skills Support Programme (FSSP)

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has charged the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and the Secondary National Strategy (SNS) with leading work to design and develop a programme of support for the introduction of functional skills.

The initial focus of the programme will be on preparing and supporting the schools, colleges and other providers that are participating in the functional skills pilot.

The QIA and SNS support programme will include:

- development and publication of support materials
- a training and network programme, including customised training and support at a regional and local level
- a national functional skills team including regional advisers for English, mathematics and ICT.

For further information about the programme, see www.LSNeducation.org.uk/functionalskills

How will functional skills fit with other qualifications?

Functional skills qualifications will be:

- **available as free-standing qualifications for learners aged 14 and over**
- **linked to GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT**

Various models of delivery of functional skills with GCSEs have been discussed, ranging from a qualification with two separate units to full integration. The models will be piloted from September 2007. The expectation is that, to achieve a grade C or above from 2010 onwards, candidates must achieve the relevant functional skill at Level 2.

- **a mandatory component of Diplomas**

All Diplomas, at all levels, will include 'generic learning' – the broad skills and knowledge needed for learning, employment and personal development. The functional skills are a mandatory part of generic learning. Generic learning will also include the development of personal, learning and thinking skills such as the ability to work cooperatively with others, to investigate, and to reflect on learning.

- **an integral part of the extended project**

The extended project, to be introduced from September 2008 alongside revised A-levels and the advanced Diploma, will give learners the opportunity to complete an extended piece of work that requires a high degree of planning, preparation, research and autonomous working. The underpinning skills required are closely linked to functional skills.

Apprenticeships

Although final decisions have not yet been made about the role of functional skills in apprenticeships, the intention is that they will replace key skills Communication, Application of Number and ICT at Levels 1 and 2.

How will functional skills be assessed?

This will be a crucial decision since the assessment regime will influence:

- models of delivery
- resource allocation
- approaches to teaching and learning
- learner motivation and engagement
- continuing professional development (CPD).

As functional skills qualifications will be available both as stand-alone qualifications and as part of other qualifications, the assessment methodology will need to be fit for purpose across a wide range of learners in a wide range of contexts. It may be that no one methodology will be appropriate to all settings.

During the consultation, discussion focused on whether assessment should be based on:

- a test
- a set task – which could be controlled, supervised, timed or delivered more flexibly
- a portfolio.

Feedback has been mixed but, overall, practitioners stated that:

- the assessment regime should not compromise the teaching and development of functional skills in contexts that are meaningful for learners
- assessment should provide evidence of both competence and application
- a single form of assessment should be avoided.

The awarding bodies have trialled a range of assessment models from September 2006. To further refine these assessment models, what is learned from the trials will inform certificated pilots that will run for three years from September 2007 (ie, candidates in these pilots can be awarded a functional skills certificate).

When will functional skills be introduced?

Start date	
Autumn 2006	Small-scale trials of draft functional skills standards and assessment models
September 2007	Three-year pilot (in approximately 1000 centres) of functional English, mathematics and ICT in GCSE and other contexts, including stand-alone.
September 2008	All three functional skills trialled within the first tranche of Diplomas (construction, creative and media, engineering, society health and development, ICT).
September 2010	Functional English, mathematics and ICT available nationally, including with GCSEs.

For more information about functional skills, see www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19. Go to 'Curriculum and qualifications' and then 'Functional skills'. For information about the functional skills standards and the pilot, see the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/15891.html

Activity 2. Identifying some potential issues with functional skills

The purpose of this activity is to reflect on some of the key issues that might arise in the transition to functional skills. Some issues will be common to all centres (eg curriculum models, thinking about the learner journey), some will be specific to different sectors (eg pre- and post-16 in schools, colleges, work-based learning, adult *Skills for Life* contexts), and some will be unique to each centre (eg local issues, relationships within the centre, relationships with external partners).

Four key issues for every centre to consider are discussed below.

- Curriculum models and their impact on teaching and learning
- Building capacity
- The learner journey, including initial assessment
- Data management.

But this is not an exhaustive list. You will also find a spider diagram on pages 20–21 that starts with these four issues. You may wish to add your own ideas and centre-specific issues.

Curriculum models

Table 2 gives some examples of different curriculum models and their potential applications in different contexts.

The curriculum model you will employ to deliver functional skills will vary depending on the context of delivery and the needs of your learners. Depending on the size and scope of your centre, you may have several curriculum models in operation throughout the centre. Experience from key skills suggests that most centres applied a version of the 'Combined' model and this is likely to be a common model for functional skills. However, an important difference from key skills is the link between functional skills and GCSE Maths, English and ICT, which makes the 'GCSE route' model an attractive one for schools and for post-16 institutions where GCSE resits are common.

Choosing an appropriate curriculum model/s is important because it impacts on so many other institutional decisions such as staff training and allocation of resources and timetabling, among others.

Table 2. Curriculum models

Delivery model	Examples
<p>The GCSE route. FS will be part of the new GCSE qualification structure. Learners will not be able to pass their GCSEs (grades A*–C) in English, maths or ICT without also demonstrating their competence in FS at Level 2. In this model, FS are delivered primarily by the English/ Maths/ ICT GCSE team through learning experiences embedded into the GCSE curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ GCSE course has FS learning and assessment opportunities embedded. ■ Learners are assessed for FS, routinely, as part of their GCSE programme.
<p>Fully integrated. FS are integrated within all post-16 courses of study. Learners take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities for FS work, covering all the requirements of the FS unit(s). The learner, in the course of their study, fills any gaps in FS underpinning knowledge independently. The learner takes full responsibility for developing a portfolio of evidence or preparing for any external assessment to accredit their FS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learners follow an individual learning programme (ILP) of FS. ■ Learners' progress in FS is tracked and monitored on a regular basis. ■ Learners' FS are accredited through an internally verified and externally moderated portfolio of evidence and/or through external assessment. ■ Learners aim to achieve FS qualifications.
<p>Discrete. FS are delivered and assessed in parallel with another course of study or via a separate taught programme of FS sessions. Where FS are taught in parallel with the main course of study, they may reflect outside interests or talents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FS are front-loaded during an induction period. ■ FS sessions are timetabled discretely on a daily, weekly or 'unit' basis. ■ Learners develop FS through additional learning support. ■ FS are part of informal learning (eg using FS to achieve Duke of Edinburgh's Award) or enrichment activities (such as using FS for cross-peer mentoring). ■ Learners aim to achieve FS qualifications.
<p>Combined. Aspects of the fully integrated and Discrete models are combined to provide a 'best fit' model for providers and learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FS 'classes' are timetabled to provide opportunities to learn and practise and guidance for learners to complete FS assignments to generate evidence for FS qualifications. Assignments are contextualised. ■ FS contact hours are timetabled to fill gaps identified through initial screening. ■ FS tutorials are timetabled to support targets identified by the learner.
<p>Embedded but not accredited. The learner picks up generic skills in the context of their main learning. FS are developed within the context of the overall learning programme through naturally occurring circumstances. There is no additional teaching or assessment of progress in FS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The course has FS opportunities signposted in the schemes of work and lesson plans. ■ FS are highlighted in coursework, with opportunities provided for learners to practise and apply their FS. ■ Learners do not achieve FS qualifications.
<p>Skills for Life. This is a specific model for adult learners wishing to raise their literacy, numeracy or ICT skills. FS are delivered in an intense, discrete delivery model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FS are delivered in the traditional adult literacy, numeracy or ICT context. ■ Usually very small classes, high staff: learner ratio, one-to-one support. ■ Often delivered in community contexts (adult learning centres, community centres, libraries etc). ■ Focus on Entry level and Level 1.

Potential application	Strengths and weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong potential in schools and other contexts where focus is on GCSE outcomes. In any case, learners will not be able to pass their GCSEs without also demonstrating competence in FS, so strong incentive to provide opportunities to learn, practise, develop and assess FS through this route. ■ GCSE resit courses in FE or adult learning contexts. ■ As a continuation, for adult learners, from <i>Skills for Life</i> learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengths: FS are embedded naturally into the GCSE framework; delivery is by English, maths or ICT specialists; management of data and learning is comparatively straightforward; since FS is a compulsory requirement to pass the GCSE, learners will not 'resist' FS. ■ Weaknesses: limited opportunity to transfer skills into other contexts through different subjects; FS becomes the sole responsibility of the English/maths/ICT teams; expectations of FS attainment are limited to Level 2.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Potentially wide application across a range of subjects and contexts (eg A-levels, Diplomas, vocational qualifications, work-based routes). ■ The model assumes some additional learning time is incorporated into the main programme to allow learners to learn, practise and develop their FS. ■ Subjects will need to map FS learning and assessment opportunities into their programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengths: FS are learnt and practised in context; not seen as stand-alone skills without real-life application; promotes a range of learning styles across subjects. ■ Weaknesses: requires learners to be autonomous and extremely self-directed; possibility of lack of ownership by staff and/or learner; possibility of not really learning the underpinning skills; difficult to track and monitor; increases day-to-day demands on subject staff; some subjects may carry more responsibility for integrating FS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FS skills sessions are a discrete, timetabled entity. ■ Learners could be streamed into classes pitched at the different levels or in mixed-level classes with highly differentiated teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengths: FS teaching and assessment comparatively easy to manage; delivery can be by specialist teachers. ■ Weaknesses: limited opportunity to transfer skills into other contexts through different subjects; learners may not see the relevance of FS, which may affect retention and achievement; FS become the sole responsibility of the FS delivery team; comparatively expensive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application across a range of contexts depending on the mix of integrated and discrete delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengths: FS are seen, by learners and staff, to underpin the curriculum; skills are transferred; maximises naturally occurring opportunities for development and assessment; FS 'experts' can work with learners and staff. ■ Weaknesses: mapping and tracking may be complex; some subjects may carry more responsibility for integrating FS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In contexts where FS are learnt, practised and developed but not accredited (eg non-accredited courses, National Curriculum Key stage 1, 2 and 3). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengths: identifies where underpinning skills are being learnt and developed; may build capacity in learner and staff for later accreditation of FS; inexpensive since no additional time for discrete FS delivery or assessment. ■ Weaknesses: FS are not accredited; possibility that underpinning skills are not really learnt.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In traditional <i>Skills for Life</i> contexts (eg community education, some learners with SpLD). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengths: effective, well-proven model specifically for adults and other identified learners. ■ Weaknesses: very expensive to deliver.

Building capacity

Another factor to consider is how you build capacity in your centre. Building capacity refers to a variety of different factors, including:

- training or updating specialist staff to deliver functional skills
- training or updating ‘generalists’ who might be integrating functional skills into their subject or vocational programmes
- ensuring you have enough physical or timetabling space to accommodate functional skills classes
- ensuring your data-management systems can accommodate functional skills
- setting up and resourcing an initial assessment programme (paper or IT-based?).

Depending on your experience as a centre, this may be a matter of updating and revising from your key skills experience. Alternatively, you may be starting from scratch. Remember to access support from agencies such as the Functional Skills Support Programme, awarding bodies, local authority advisers etc.

The learner journey, including initial assessment

When thinking about building capacity, considering the ‘learner journey’ is often a good place to start. From the perspective of the learner, what are the processes that need to happen for a successful functional skills outcome? It’s possible to break these processes down into four stages: arrival at the centre, during the learning programme, accreditation and progression.

- **Arrival at the centre.** If the centre is a school, where there is long experience and a bank of existing knowledge about the learner, there may be no need to carry out an initial assessment to determine the right level of learning. If the learner is new to the centre (eg a college or training provider), you will need to ensure that they are assessed so that they are placed on the right level of functional skills programme. Once this is determined, how will this information be recorded? How will the learner be formally ‘enrolled’ onto a functional skills programme?
- **During the learning programme.** How will the learner’s progress in functional skills be monitored during the learning programme? Will there be opportunities to change to a different level (up or down) if appropriate? Will the learner have opportunities to learn, practise and develop the skills before being expected to demonstrate them in a formal assessment? How will learners (and perhaps their parents) be informed of progress in functional skills?
- **Accreditation.** At the time of writing, the method of formal assessment for accreditation of functional skills is still being piloted but, whatever the method turns out to be, it will need to be managed. How will the learner be registered with an awarding body? Who will determine that the learner is ready for the assessment? Who will manage the assessment process?
- **Progression.** Once the learner has successfully achieved a level of functional skills, what are the arrangements to progress them to the next level?

Data management

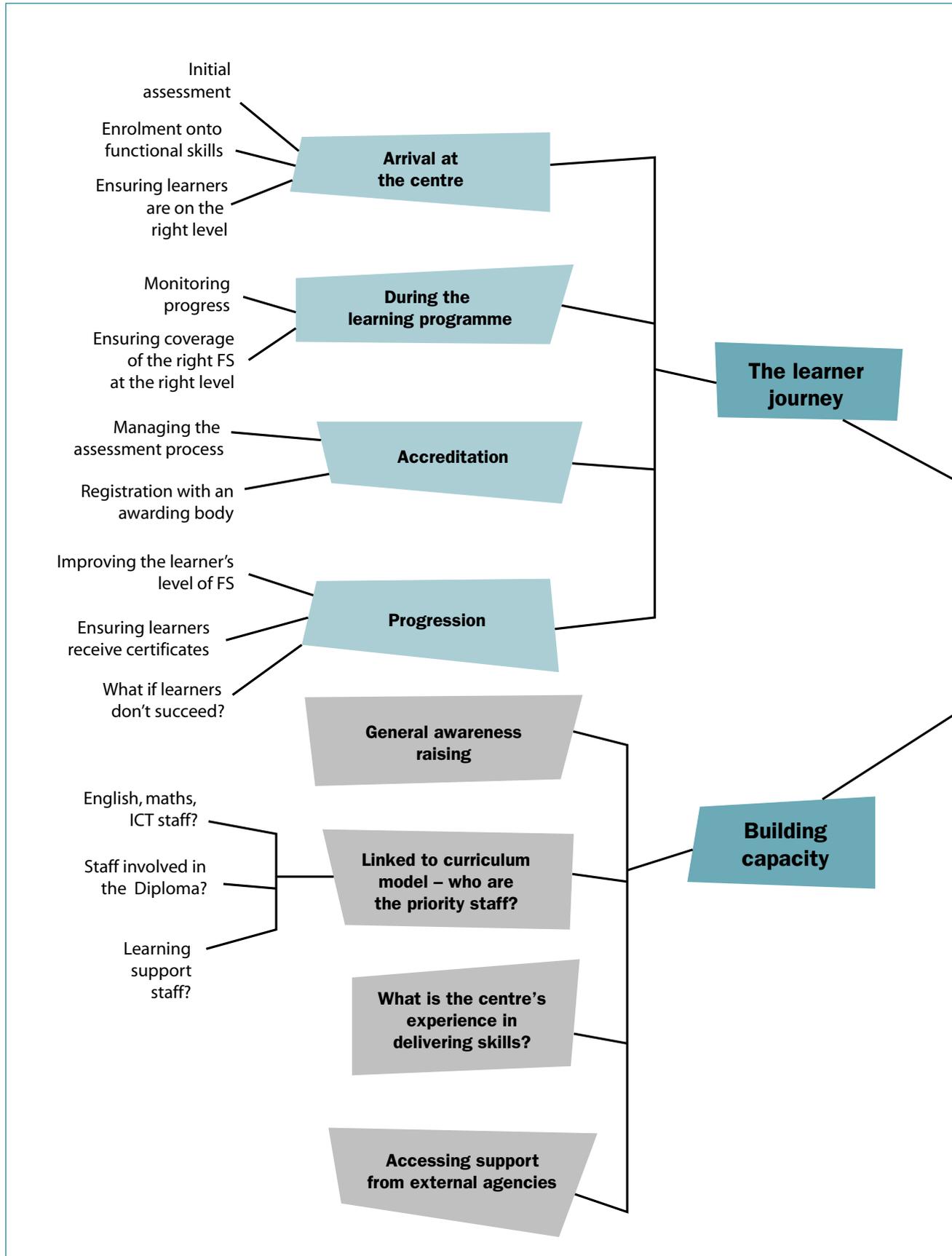
Experience from key skills indicates that data management is a major coordination issue and it is likely that it will be in the transition to functional skills, especially for new centres. Although there are only three functional skills (English, maths and ICT), they each have five levels (Entry level 1 to Level 2) and will have six once the Level 3 standards have been approved. So, in effect, there are $3 \times 6 = 18$ possible functional skills and levels to consider.

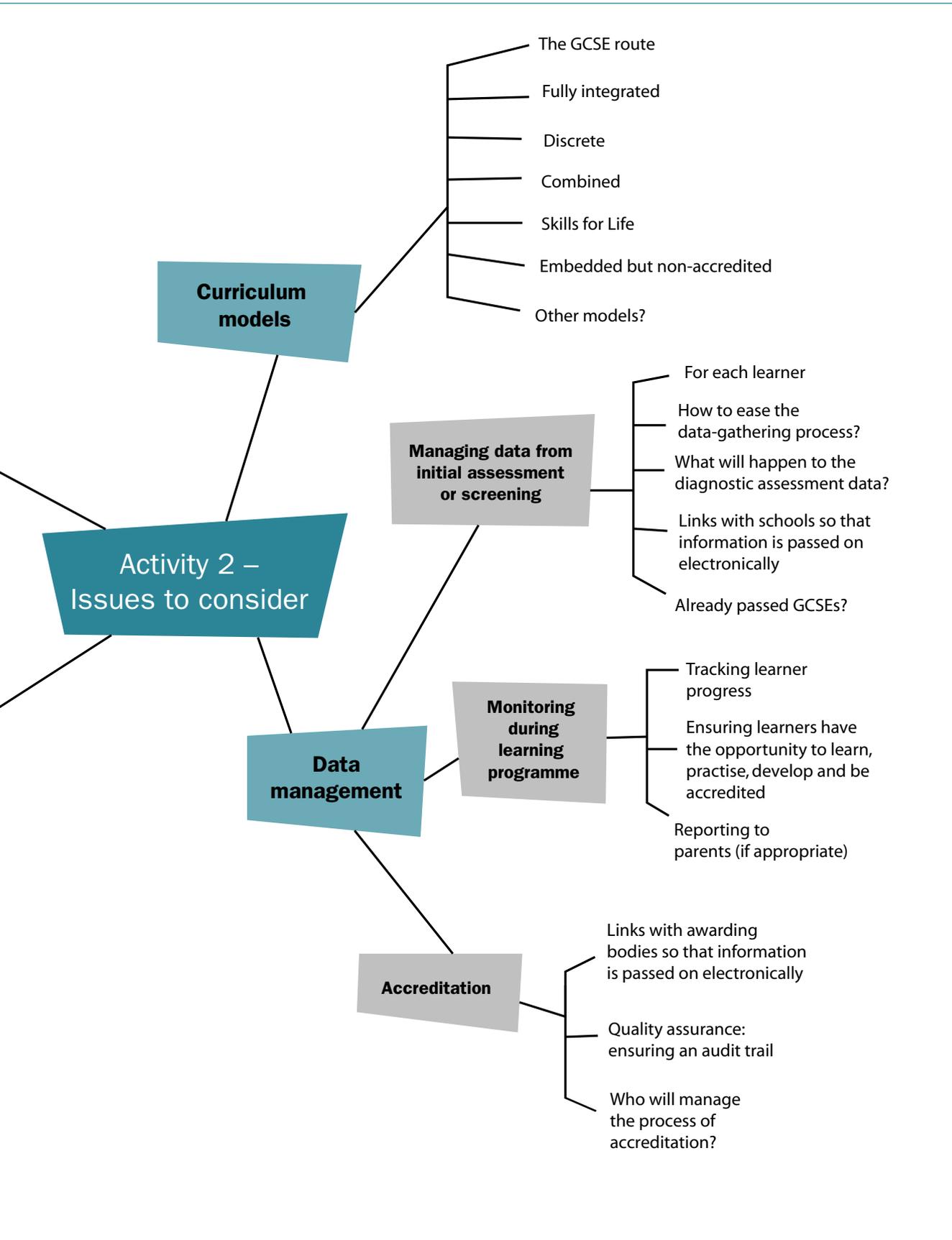
Again, each centre with its unique setting will need to approach data management differently but, when planning your data-management strategy, it is worth considering the following.

- **Communication with feeder institutions.** If your learners come to you from feeder schools or other partners where they may have completed functional skills, it may be more efficient for you to communicate directly with the schools to get information about the whole cohort of learners rather than rely on individual learners reporting their previous functional skills attainments.
- **Enrolment.** Typically, learners need to be enrolled at a centre as soon as they arrive (even if that is moving from Year 11 to Year 12 in a school). The enrolment process usually includes the courses a learner will be studying. It is important not to forget enrolment for functional skills but, at this point, you may not know at which level a learner needs to be enrolled. This will only be properly determined after initial assessment. So it is important to have an enrolment mechanism which allows for the learner's level of functional skills to be adjusted.
- **Initial assessment.** There are potentially many forms of initial assessment (IA) for functional skills, many of which will be based on experience with key skills. In all cases, it is important that the information coming out of the IA is fed back into the data-management process, so that the learner is enrolled on the level at which they should be studying, and so that teaching staff and the learners themselves are aware of their correct level of study.
- **Monitoring progress.** Clearly, monitoring learners' progress is vital to good teaching and learning. How will progress in functional skills be monitored? This could include progress in learning the underpinning skills, or readiness to sit an external assessment. How much of this information do you want to record centrally? How much do you, as a coordinator, need to know?
- **Assessment for accreditation.** How will learners be registered with an awarding body? How will learners be entered for any external tests or internal portfolio moderations (at the right level)? How will the outcomes of the assessment be communicated from the awarding body to the centre, and from the centre to teaching staff and to learners? How will resits or resubmissions be organised?

Although it may not be possible at this stage to answer all these data-management questions, it is important to consider them. It's also important not to be daunted by them and, particularly, not to allow them to dominate your curriculum decisions.

Figure 1. Issues for centres – What else do you need to consider?





Skills for leading from the middle

This section looks at some of the research into change management and attempts to draw out some of the important skills and qualities that effective leaders of change demonstrate. The section is broken down into five parts:

- key leadership messages from the case studies
- change: what are the challenges?
- being political
- getting buy-in
- using influence.

Key leadership messages from the case studies

Our two case studies (pages 5–6) show that the key skills coordinators were clear about focus and direction. In both cases, they:

- communicated and provided support for their vision
- inspired staff to follow them
- identified those who would commit early and who would become their ‘champions’ as the changes were rolled out
- showed infectious commitment to the project and spent a lot of time providing different types of support for colleagues.

In summary, they were proactively leading, rather than reactively managing.

Another key message to emerge from these case studies is the importance of buy-in from senior management. Without support and commitment from the leadership/senior management team (SMT), change is unlikely to succeed. So the other key dimension to change is the importance of getting buy-in from as many stakeholders as possible, particularly those in positions of power and influence.

Shrewsbury used a ‘whole-college approach’ to embedding key skills, which meant that everyone became involved and the outcomes were seen as impacting on everyone. At Colchester there was a collective acknowledgment that what they were doing was redefining the learner experience by shaping a curriculum to reflect more accurately the holistic skills requirement of the British economy.

Change: what are the challenges?

Studies of change have identified that, where the change process has failed to deliver, the causes can often be attributed to one or more of the following reasons:

- too much complacency and too little ownership or buy-in
- absence of a strong team that will lead and influence the change, secure the resources and provide vision
- politics and emotions are ignored
- no recognition that enthusiasm will wane unless improvements are seen fairly quickly.

You can overcome these challenges by employing the following strategies.

Table 3. Challenges and strategies

Challenge	Strategy
<p>Too much complacency and too little ownership or buy-in</p>	<p>Establish a sense of urgency and be political</p> <p>We often think we have assessed the change situation correctly. We have done our research, considered all the advantages and disadvantages, and secured the resources required. All that is left is to tell the people affected. The word ‘tell’ is crucial here: people will engage with you more willingly if they feel that they have been part of the decision to initiate change. If they feel it has been imposed on them, they will not feel they have ownership. They will see it as your agenda rather than their own and will be less likely to see it in a positive light.</p>
<p>Absence of a strong team that will lead and influence the change, secure the resources and provide vision</p>	<p>Mobilise a team who will provide high-profile vision and direction</p> <p>You will very quickly exhaust your own energy and resources if you do not have the support of others. Having established the support and cooperation of the SMT, develop a committed group of people who agree and believe in your vision for change. This team will help drive the change and reduce the chances of your burning out.</p>
<p>Politics and emotions are ignored</p>	<p>Acknowledge that many people will feel threatened and that working with them will be very challenging at times</p> <p>Acknowledge that not everyone will agree with your vision and may passively or actively oppose your attempts to make change happen. As a leader you need to strike a balance between accepting their resistance as ‘part of the job’ and working on changing their attitudes by providing support and reassurance.</p>
<p>No recognition that enthusiasm will wane unless improvements are seen fairly quickly</p>	<p>Think about short-term as well as long-term wins</p> <p>It might be tempting to think you have achieved everything ahead of a full consolidation of the initiative. If you broadcast this it can induce complacency, a slowing of momentum, and a loss of interest at a critical stage. You should plan for some short-term wins that provide everybody with some tangible evidence of the eventual long-term rewards. Remember to celebrate these successes.</p>

Being political

Being political in this sense is about being aware of the impact of change on the power of individuals and groups within the institution. Everybody in an organisation will have their own values, preferences and priorities. This means that there will be a range of responses to what you are trying to achieve. Any change will represent an opportunity for some to gain power, and for others to see their own power base eroded.

When thinking about the politics of your own organisation and what potential effects the transition to functional skills might have, you might find it useful to ask yourself these questions.

- Who will be supportive?
- Whose cooperation is essential for the change to succeed?
- Whose cooperation is not essential for the change to succeed?
- Which groups may feel threatened by this change?
- Is opposition from some of these groups potentially more damaging to your plans than opposition from other groups?

One of the techniques for analysing political forces within an organisation is a *force field analysis*.

Managing change: force field analysis

Force field analysis is a management technique that will help you and your team to:

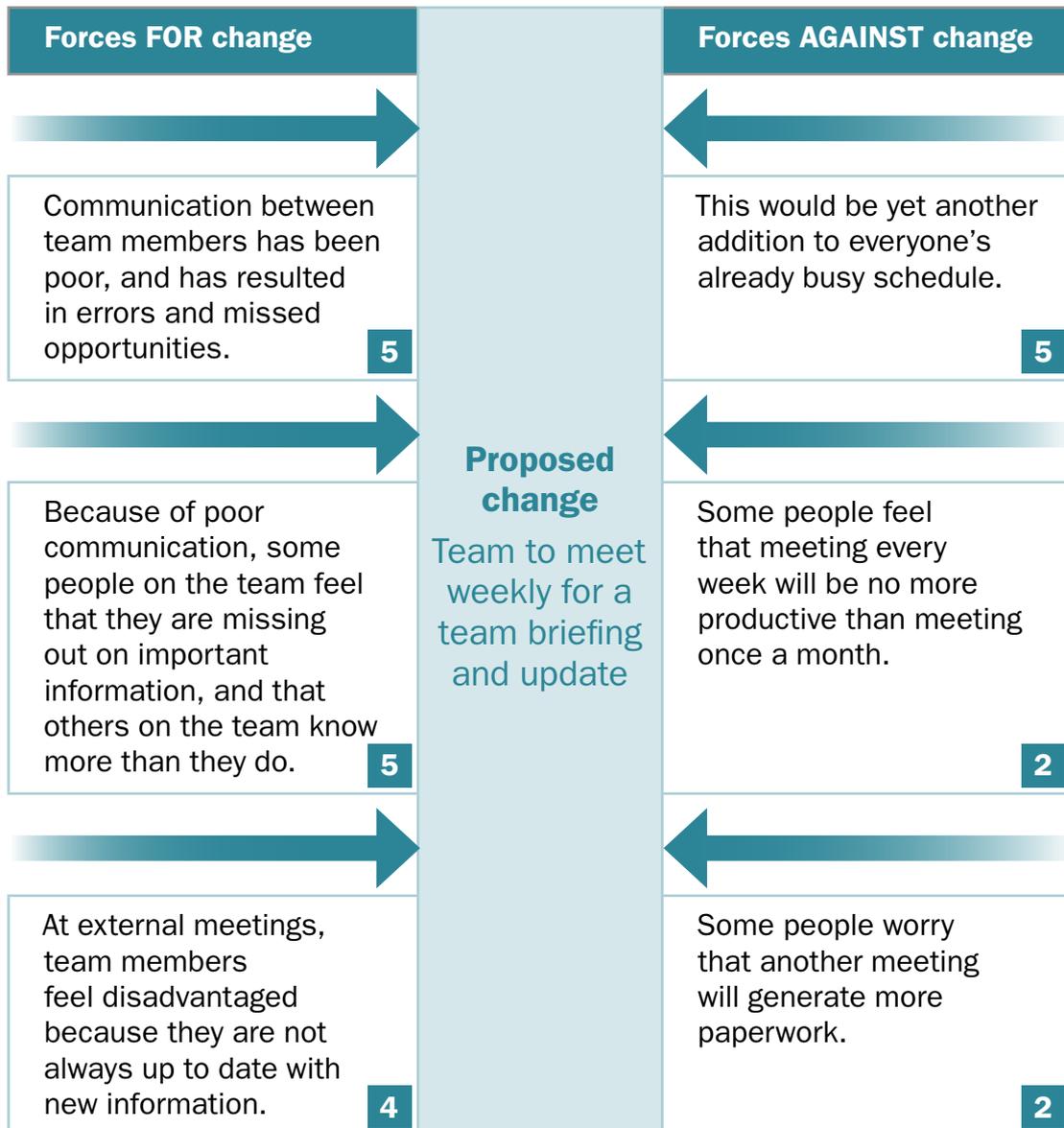
- analyse complex and difficult situations
- identify the positive forces that will help you to change a difficult situation; these are the helpful or driving forces
- identify the negative forces that will prevent you from changing a difficult situation; these are the unhelpful or restraining forces
- weigh up the pros and cons of any proposed action
- increase the driving forces and decrease the restraining forces inherent in any change.

Force field analysis in action

Figure 2 is an example of a force field analysis which was carried out to identify the forces for and against organising a weekly meeting for the key skills team, instead of the existing monthly meeting.

When the plan was proposed, the coordinator and some members of the team thought a weekly meeting was a good idea, while others believed it was unnecessary. A force field analysis identified the forces for and against the proposal. As each force was identified, it was assigned a weighting from 1 to 5, with 5 as the most important.

Figure 2. Force field analysis (example)



The total weighting of the forces for change is 14; the weighting of the forces against change is 9. The analysis, therefore, shows that the forces in favour of change are greater than the forces against change.

In this case, it appears that setting up a weekly meeting would be a good decision. The analysis, however, alerted the key skills coordinator to the concerns of some members of the team, to which the coordinator should be sensitive.

Conversely, if the forces against the change had been stronger, and yet the coordinator was in favour of a weekly meeting, the analysis makes it possible to identify, discuss, and work out how to reduce the forces against.

The value of force field analysis is, therefore, that it brings all the factors into the open, where they can be discussed. This process can inform the decision about whether or how to make a change; the decision remains the responsibility of the coordinator and the team.

Managing change: planning sheet

The planning sheet in Figure 3 will help you to carry out a force field analysis, either on your own or with your team. If you decide to use this management technique with your team, follow these steps.

Preparation

1. Invite everyone in the team to participate.
2. Book a quiet space where you and the team can work without interruptions.
3. Photocopy Figure 2 (on page 25), making sure there is a copy for everyone attending the meeting.
4. Photocopy Figure 3 (on page 27), making a copy for everyone at the meeting.
5. Explain the current situation, external change, problem or difficulty that the team is facing and that requires changes to be made.
6. Hand out the copies of Figure 2 and talk through the example.
7. Hand out the copies of Figure 3.
8. Divide the team into pairs.
9. Ask each pair to brainstorm as many driving and restraining forces as they can think of, giving a weighting (1 to 5) to each force.
10. Ask each pair to report back.
11. Note all the driving and restraining forces on a flip-chart version of Figure 3.
12. With the team, go through each force and, for each one, discuss what action you can take to increase or maximise the driving forces and to minimise or eliminate the restraining forces.
13. Agree what changes should be made.
14. Discuss with the team the practical steps you can take to make the agreed changes, and put them into a sensible sequence.
15. Identify the resources you will need.
16. Delegate tasks and actions.

Alternatively, if you prefer, simply photocopy Figure 3, ask everyone in the team to complete it, and collate the results.

Figure 3. Force field analysis planning sheet

The current situation or problem:		
Driving, helpful, positive forces	Proposed change/ solution	Restraining, unhelpful, negative forces
		
<p>Give each force a weighting from 1 to 5, with 5 as the most important. Calculate the balance for and against the proposed change/solution.</p>		
Decision:		
Action needed:		
Resources needed:		

How could you use the outcomes of your force field analysis?

- You might be looking to both decrease the strength of the restraining forces and increase the strength of the driving forces.
- Or you might want to concentrate on pushing those driving forces. The arguments may be so obvious that you couldn't lose if you sought to emphasise, for example, a poor inspection report, and the endangered reputation of the school/ college.
- Thirdly, you might consider decreasing the strength of the restraining forces by addressing some of the reservations and ignorance that appear to be there.

Which strategy would you adopt? Interestingly, the research suggests that, where change is brought about by increasing the forces pushing for it (eg improved quality for the learner), this will lead to an increase in tension. If this tension rises above a certain level, it may be accompanied by high aggressiveness, especially towards the source of the increased pressure for change (ie you), high emotionality, and low levels of constructive behaviour. On the other hand, where change is brought about by diminishing the forces that oppose or resist change, the secondary effect will be a state of relatively low tension.

The lesson here is that to storm into change, with all guns blazing and brimming with enthusiasm, is likely to inflame the situation rather than get people on your side. Take a long hard look at your restraining forces and think about how you might be able to diminish their strength.

Getting buy-in

One writer on change (Rogers 2003), identifies three distinct groups:

- the **early adopters** who welcome change and are easily convinced of its value
- the **middle majority** who look for a lead from their peers before they make up their mind on the change
- the **laggards** who are the most reluctant/resistant to change.

Rogers reckons the early adopters and laggards each represent about one sixth of the population affected by the change, while the middle majority make up the other two thirds.

From this you can see how important it is to establish a momentum for change with the early adopters – this was something that was clearly in evidence in our case studies. To obtain buy-in from the early adopters:

- make them your team
- ask them for ideas about both the what and the how
- test out some of your ideas on them to get immediate feedback
- ask them how best to market the change in the wider community of your centre
- give them some of the responsibility for implementing the change; don't let it be identified only with you
- provide them with the facilities to develop a coaching and mentoring facility that they can deliver themselves.

Similarly, you will need to think about how to respond to the laggards. They are capable of undermining the whole process. What strategies can you use to minimise resistance from the laggards?

- Try to empathise with their concerns. If you can see their point of view you will be able to have a more productive dialogue with them.
- Research why they have reservations. For example, they may be apprehensive about their own literacy or numeracy capability. In this case, try to reduce their concerns and support their particular needs, for example through CPD.
- You might be able to reframe the change for them. For example, an emphasis on overall improved provider performance might reduce concerns about the provider's current market position and the possible threat of redundancy.
- Be attentive towards them and listen carefully to what they say. Focus on trying to reach a mutual understanding of the situation by finding something you can all agree on.
- Finally, you need to acknowledge that, sometimes, none of these strategies will work. Remember that, for some, internalising these issues can take some time. It might be worth returning to the issues at another time.

Even within your SMT, there are likely to be early adopters, a middle majority and laggards. Getting buy-in from the SMT is likely to be one of your first challenges. Making your case to senior management will require some detailed background research. One way to approach this is to produce and present a paper that could include the following:

- data on current performance in the relevant areas of the curriculum over the last three years
- details of the research that identifies the advantages to be gained through:
 - embedding skills development within the curriculum
 - moving from key skills to functional skills
- your vision to improve the quality of the learning experience for the learner
- the disadvantages of doing nothing
- a proposed plan of how you might take the initiative forward
- the impact on the bottom line – how will your proposed changes affect (hopefully positively) your organisation's finances? Will improved attainment lead to increased revenue?
- other external forces, eg how will change positively impact on inspection grades and reports?

Inside the back cover of this publication, you will find a booklet for you to give to your senior manager. It is intended to alert them to the need to plan for the transition to functional skills and to support middle managers in leading the change.

Using influence

It is not uncommon for those leading cross-curricular programmes from the middle to be faced with ‘the coordinator’s dilemma’: responsibility without authority. Often the coordinator or middle manager caught in the dilemma will be responsible if things go wrong (or at least will be perceived to be responsible), without having the formal line-management authority to compel staff to carry out their requests. Typically, the coordinator is managing staff across the normal power structures of the institution, with the associated risk of cutting across the authority of other managers. For example, you call a meeting for all functional skills staff on Tuesday evening but, since functional skills staff also ‘belong’ to another department, which also has a meeting on Tuesday evening, whose meeting do the staff go to?

So the leadership required here relies less on traditional formal authority and coercion and more on informal influencing strategies to motivate and inspire. The skill of persuasion is vital to those leading change from the middle. Communicating clearly with colleagues is part of this process so that everyone is aware of your purposes and intentions, and the risk of your accidentally ‘treading on the toes’ of colleagues is reduced.

Your tactics will be those of empowering, coaching and facilitating to achieve greater flexibility and internal motivation from staff. This is the modern language of leadership – that of developing a responsible followership that, ultimately, enables you to lead more effectively.

Although this may be the modern language of leadership, it is worth remembering that these ideas have been around for a long time:

*A leader is best when people barely know he exists
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him
Worst of all when people despise him.*

*But of a good leader, who talks little,
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled
They will all say, ‘We did this ourselves’.*

Lao-Tsu: 4th Century BC

Identifying opportunities and threats

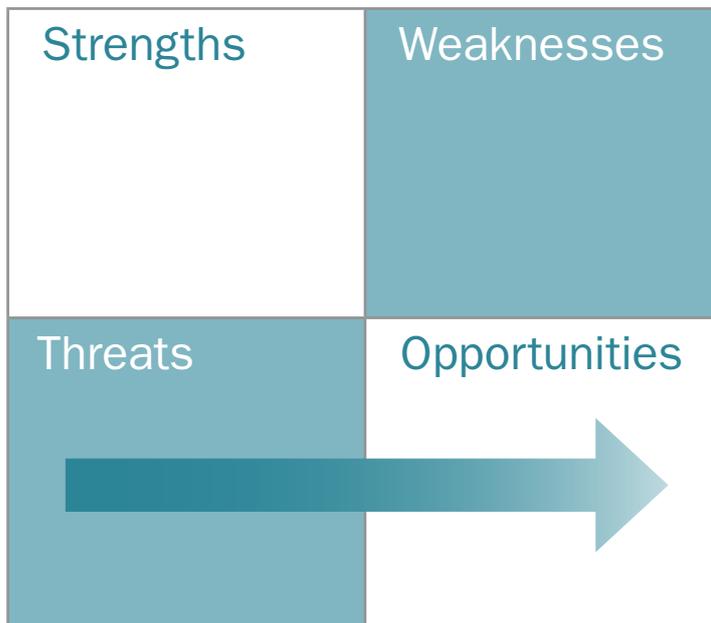
Activity 3. Opportunities and threats

A **SWOT analysis** is a tried and tested method of analysing a problem from several perspectives: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. In Activity 1 (page 7), we looked at the strengths and weaknesses of your current key skills provision as a basis for planning for the implementation of functional skills. In this activity we are going to focus on the Opportunities and Threats part of the SWOT analysis and consider some of the wider issues that might impact on your centre.

Using a SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is usually presented in a grid with four quarters, one for each element. Having listed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, it is often apparent that threats and opportunities are closely linked: what is a threat now could also be an opportunity if handled correctly. The next stage of the process is to work out how to turn threats into opportunities.

Figure 4. The SWOT grid: turning threats into opportunities



Identifying Opportunities and Threats

Of course, each centre is unique and will have its own unique threats and opportunities. Listed on page 32 are some factors that will probably apply across most centres and that you might like to consider as threats or opportunities. Since threats and opportunities are often two sides of the same coin, you will need to make your own judgement as to whether each factor is, in fact, relevant to your centre and whether it is a threat or an opportunity.

- **Diplomas** – The new Diplomas will require learners to achieve all three functional skills at a minimum of Level 1 for the Diploma at Level 1, and Level 2 for the Diploma at Levels 2 and 3. Functional skills will be assessed as discrete units within the Diplomas but the qualification specifications will indicate ‘best-fit’ opportunities to develop and apply these skills in sector-relevant contexts. How well are your Diploma teams planning for the integration of functional skills into their programmes?
- **Ofsted** – In due course, the inspection process will include aspects of functional skills. Centres with existing good practice for key skills will need to demonstrate that they have moved efficiently towards functional skills; centres that are new to functional skills will need to demonstrate clear policies and plans to show how they will be managing the implementation.
- **Links with partner institutions** – The functional skills developments are in tandem with other developments which will require closer collaboration between schools, colleges and other providers. For example:
 - Diplomas will be delivered collaboratively between schools, colleges and other providers. How will these collaborations be led? What will your centre’s role be in these?
 - If your centre already has experience and good practice with key skills, is there an opportunity for you to lead on staff development for functional skills in consortium with other local providers?
 - Data management between schools, colleges and other providers, and even within centres, is likely to be an issue. What arrangements can you make to ensure that data about learners (eg their GCSE and functional skills attainments) is passed on efficiently from one centre to another, or within a centre, to ensure that the learner is not repeating work or studying at the wrong level? This might form part of a more sophisticated transition policy between schools and colleges (increasingly important if learners are to be ‘shared’ between centres).
 - Employers – Functional skills are an employer-driven qualification, with employers and government regularly citing the importance of skills to the workforce (eg Leitch Review (2006); *Working on the three Rs* (CBI 2006)). But how well do your local employers recognise functional skills? How can you make them more aware of the benefits of functional skills to them and so increase the value of functional skills to your leavers?
- **GCSEs** – As we have seen, functional skills will be linked to GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT. The expectation is that, to achieve a grade C or above from 2010 onwards, candidates must demonstrate attainment of the relevant functional skill at Level 2. Depending on the assessment model that is eventually decided, functional skills within GCSEs may have a great impact on your GCSE English, Mathematics and ICT programmes. How well prepared are your GCSE teams for the change to functional skills? Another aspect to consider is the impact that functional skills could have on the pass rate for GCSEs at grade C. When passing a GCSE at grade C or higher is conditional on attaining a functional skill at Level 2, poor functional skills attainment will lead to poor GCSE pass rates.

- **Functional skills in Level 3 programmes** – It is anticipated that, from September 2008, all Level 3 learners will undertake an extended project. The extended project is being developed with two main aims: to widen the Level 3 curriculum, including at AS and A-level; and to develop learners’ skills as independent learners and self-managers. The extended project might be an ideal opportunity to enable learners to develop and practise (and possibly be assessed for) their functional skills at Levels 2 or 3.
- **Classroom practice: teaching and learning** – Experience from key skills suggests that a skills-based approach to learning can be motivating for many learners and liberating for many teachers, with an emphasis being placed on the learner to move towards self-directed learning and application of skills. However, some teachers may see a skills-based approach as a threat to their normal teaching practice. How will functional skills be perceived in your centre? What might be the implications for teaching and learning? How can you find out about and access any training and CPD that will be offered?

These are just some examples of opportunities or threats potentially facing your centre. Use the grid below to identify these and other threats and opportunities. You might want to use some of the issues you identified in Activities 1 and 2. In each case, use the third column to begin to identify how you can turn a threat into an opportunity. An example has been completed for you

Table 4. Threats and opportunities

Threats	Opportunities	Threats → Opportunities
<i>GCSE pass rates may be affected by poor functional skills attainments.</i>		<i>Prioritise training for GCSE English, Maths and ICT departments. Keep up to date with developments in how FS will be assessed through GCSEs. Ensure parents and learners understand importance of FS to GCSE attainment.</i>

Action planning

Activity 4. Action planning

By completing the activities in this publication, you will have had a chance to:

- review your current position with key skills (Activity 1)
- identify some of the issues that might affect your centre (Activity 2)
- consider opportunities and threats (Activity 3).

This final activity will help you to develop an action plan and set targets for the short, medium and long term.

Some questions to help you develop your action plan

Use the questions below to help guide you through the action-planning process:

- 1. From Activity 1, is your centre already experienced with key skills? If 'no', go to question 4;. If 'yes', go to question 2.**
- 2. Are you doing well? If 'no', go to question 3. If 'yes', your plan should be about an evolutionary approach to functional skills that draws on the good practice you already have and uses this opportunity to improve any areas of weakness. Your plan might focus on:**
 - ensuring the leadership team/SMT are appraised of developments and that you have their continued support
 - updating staff with news and developments about functional skills
 - clarifying roles and responsibilities
 - updating teaching and learning resources
 - refining your curriculum model/s (are you using the right model in each programme?)
 - reviewing your initial assessment tools (if you use them)
 - considering the impact of functional skills on GCSE provision
 - ensuring a good flow of data within the centre and between partner institutions
 - considering your centre's potential role in leading and guiding functional skills developments in your area (eg through consortia, providing training to partner institutions, through the Diploma routes).

3. If you're not doing well, your plan should consider whether it may be worth starting from scratch (revolution). Have a close look at the 10 critical success factors underpinning key skills (see Activity 1 pages 7–9). Your plan might focus on:

- winning the support of the leadership team/SMT
- developing a management and coordination structure for functional skills with clear roles and responsibilities
- updating and winning support of staff
- gaining access to support from external agencies (eg awarding bodies, local authority, Functional Skills Support Programme) or local partner institutions
- developing curriculum model/s for the programme areas where you will be delivering functional skills
- considering or reconsidering your initial assessment tools
- considering how you will manage the data accompanying functional skills.

4. If your centre is new to key skills and functional skills, your plan should take account of the 10 critical success factors underpinning key skills (see Activity 1 pages 7–9). Your plan might focus on:

- gaining access to support from external agencies (eg awarding bodies, local authority, Functional Skills Support Programme) or local partner institutions
- winning the support of the leadership team/SMT
- developing a clear policy and direction for how you want your centre to progress with functional skills.

When you know your direction, you might consider:

- identifying key staff who are best placed to work on the development
- what kind of management and coordination structure needs to be set up for functional skills with clear roles and responsibilities
- which curriculum model/s best suit your programmes
- what resources or teaching materials you need to purchase or develop
- what, if any, initial assessment mechanism you will use.

Some hints on action planning

When developing an action plan, here are some points to bear in mind.

- Recognise the specific strengths and weaknesses identified through the process of self-assessment.
- Identify what needs to be done; how it needs to be done; by whom it needs to be done; when it needs to be done by. Use SMART targets:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Realistic
 - Time-related.
- Allocate responsibility for each action to a named person.
- Set specific dates (milestones) when progress should be reviewed.
- Agree monitoring arrangements.
- Outcomes need to be measured to see whether or not targets have, in fact, been achieved.
- Refine the plan to take account of your new position and begin the cycle again.
- You may need to produce different action plans for short-, medium- and long-term targets, and of course these action plans may interlink and overlap.

Figure 5. Action plan

Title					
Overall aim					
Development period		Start date	Finish date		
No.	Outcome (SMART target)	Activities to achieve outcome	Who is involved?	Milestones/ deadline	Who is monitoring?

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2 Useful addresses

AoC (Association of Colleges)

5th Floor
Centre Point
103 New Oxford Street
London
WC1A 1RG
Tel 020 7827 4600
www.aoc.co.uk

AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance)

Devas Street
Manchester M15 6EX
Tel 0161 953 1180
Publications 0870 410 1036
www.aqa.org.uk

ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network)

Wainbrook House
Hudds Vale Road
St George
Bristol BS5 7HY
Tel 0117 941 1126
www.asdan.co.uk

BSA (Basic Skills Agency)

Commonwealth House
1–19 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1NU
Tel 020 7405 4017
Publications 0870 600 2400
www.basic-skills.co.uk

CCEA (Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment)

29 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG
Tel 028 9026 1200
www.ccea.org.uk

CfBT (Centre for British Teachers)

60 Queens Road
Reading RG1 4BS
Tel 0118 902 1000
www.cfbt.com

City & Guilds

1 Giltspur Street
London EC1A 9DD
Tel 020 7294 2468
www.city-and-guilds.co.uk
www.key-skills.org

DELLS (Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills)

Castle Buildings
Womanby Street
Cardiff CF10 1SX
Tel 029 2037 5400
www.ccw.org.uk

DfES

(Department for Education and Skills)
Functional Skills Policy Team
Room E3b
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 3781
Publications 0845 602 2260

DfES (Department for Education and Skills)

Key Skills Policy Team
Room E3c
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 3759
Publications 0845 602 2260
www.dfes.gov.uk/keyskills

Edexcel

One90 High Holborn
London WC1V 7BH
Tel 0870 240 9800
Publications 01623 467 467
www.edexcel.org.uk

Functional Skills Support Programme

Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS
Helpline 0870 872 8081
functionalskills@LSNeducation.org.uk
www.LSNeducation.org.uk/functionalskills

Key Skills Support Programme

Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS
Helpline 0870 872 8081
kssp@LSNeducation.org.uk
www.keyskillssupport.net

Learning for Work

The Cottage Office
Eightlands Road
Dewsbury
West Yorkshire WF13 6PF
0870 758 1411
mail@lfw.org.uk

LSC (Learning and Skills Council)

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Tel 0845 019 4170
www.lsc.gov.uk

LSN (Learning and Skills Network)

Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS
Tel 020 7297 9000
Information Services
020 7297 9144
enquiries@LSNeducation.org.uk
www.LSNeducation.org.uk

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)

Coventry Office
Progress House
Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8JQ
Tel 024 7647 0033
Publications 0870 770 6622
www.ocr.org.uk

Ofsted

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
Tel 08456 40 40 45
Publications 0700 263 7833
www.ofsted.gov.uk

QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)

83 Piccadilly
London W1J 8QA
Tel 020 7509 5555
Publications 01787 884 444
www.qca.org.uk/keyskills

QIA (Quality Improvement Agency)

Friars House
Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE
Enquiries 0870 211 3434
www.qia.org.uk

UCAS (Universities and College Admissions Service)

Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham GL52 3LZ
Tel 01242 222 444
Publications 01242 544 610
www.ucas.ac.uk

About this publication

This publication is aimed at middle managers in schools, colleges and other settings who have been given the responsibility for leading the transition from key skills to functional skills over the coming years. It provides an update on some of the developments with functional skills, explains some of the theory about leading from the middle, and gives practical advice on how to plan for the transition.

About KSSP

LSN, in partnership with Learning for Work, supports the delivery and implementation of key skills within schools, colleges, work-based learning and adult learning providers. We do this by providing advice, training, information and resources to learners, teachers, trainers and managers. For more information, visit www.keyskillssupport.net or call the helpline on 0870 872 8081.

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