

# Call 20 Deliver a workforce that works for children: confident, skilled and values-driven

By Simon Massey and Liz Green



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**"Sixty-five per cent of children may end up in jobs that don't exist today – but people skills will always be needed"**

"...the right to an education which develops their personality, respect for their rights and the environment..."

– Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Read more about supporting young people in our future economy > [Call 11, page 26](#)

Childcare, youth work, teaching, social work, family learning... The children's sector covers such a range of specialisms and ways of working, it can be a daunting task to establish how it should be best equipped to meet the ever-changing needs of children and families.

Despite this, here are seven common aims that, if achieved, we believe would result in an effective workforce:

Ensure that children's sector professions are seen as attractive, meaningful and rewarding.

Recruit people of all ages and backgrounds, who are passionate about their work, to ensure we have a diversity which represents the world we live in.

Invest in and prioritise induction, on-going supervision and the development of the workforce – nationally, locally and organisation by organisation.

Ensure learning and development opportunities provide the right balance of knowledge, skills and experience, and are accessible for all.

Create specific leadership development opportunities at all levels to ensure quality, confidence and continuity.

Embed some consistent approaches such as the Common Core, which describe the skills, knowledge, understanding and values everyone should have if they work with children and their families, while also being open to trying new approaches.

Connect the workforce – share learning and skills at all levels, see what works and gain from multidisciplinary learning.

## Embrace digital, protect 'soft' skills

We must make use of digital advancements. The provision of online learning opportunities is just one example. But we also need to think further ahead.

The World Economic Forum report, *The Future of Jobs* (2016), said that 65% of primary school children will end up in jobs that don't exist today, something that makes longer-term planning challenging. Luckily for us in the

children's sector, PricewaterhouseCooper's (PWC) report, *How will automation impact jobs?* (2018), emphasised that 'people skills' will always be required. To take one example, by the mid-2030s, a much higher level of manufacturing jobs will be affected than those in education, health and social work.

## Develop leadership at all levels

Children in Scotland is increasingly looking to the future from a longer-term, strategic perspective. We ask the question 'what do we need to have in place to best meet the needs of children and improve their lives?'

From autumn 2018, we will be testing two exciting new projects which could help shape the workforce and bolster partnership working:

A collective leadership programme involving all the components of the system around the child across all sectors, focusing on building leadership capacity. The intention is to add value to existing sector-specific programmes, enabling us to take a collective approach to improving outcomes.

A specific learning and development pathway that will provide Pupil Support Assistants with the knowledge and skills they need to undertake their vital role in our children's learning settings – celebrating their achievements and supporting their professional development.

We also champion the participation of children and young people by making full use of the contribution of our advisory group, Changing our World, recruiting young people to our Board and, in partnership with others, providing young person-led projects such as FMQT: Next Generation. We are particularly keen to offer leadership opportunities for young people and want to see their experiences embedded in the workforce in a meaningful way.

## What works? Share it

YouthLink Scotland develops the workforce by providing a range of activities, including our practice development offer, listening to our members' experiences and connecting people via our networks. Our guidance, training and resources address sector priorities such as digital, equalities and health. Scotland's Youth



Work Outcomes (and accompanying indicators) are designed as a quality improvement and evaluation resource for the workforce to use.

The Youth Work Training Forum, supported by YouthLink Scotland, is developing a National Youth Work Induction Checklist to be used across youth work settings in the statutory and voluntary sectors. This will ensure that new entrants to the sector have an agreed grounding in the values, principles and skills for youth work and an understanding of young people's realities.

As we develop our new strategic plan, we will gather the views of members and young people to understand how we can best support the growth of a confident, skilled and well-led workforce.

### Adapt, collaborate – and listen

YouthLink Scotland and Children in Scotland feel that there is a real opportunity to embed the views and experiences of children and young people in the development of an effective workforce – either as service users or those delivering services. This is central to building the workforce of the future.

All organisations can create meaningful participation work and bolster young people's leadership skills by:

- Asking and listening to children's views of what they need from their workforce.

- Facilitating young people's involvement in governance in delivery and training organisations in a meaningful, non-tokenistic way.

- Engaging with the younger workforce: organisations have a role supporting them into the sector and learning from them.

An effective workforce for the future relies on providing the right leadership opportunities now. These should be embedded at all levels of development, from induction through to the role of sector leaders, and post-retirement. Those new to the children's sector, whatever their age, should have the chance to develop their leadership skills. These early career moments are extremely formative and can be built on progressively.

We need 21st century leaders: people who can be adaptable, collaborative, listening, democratic citizens, who use technology, are problem-solvers and can enable others to grow and shine.

### Work hand in hand

Scotland's children deserve the best possible workforce able to meet their needs. Scotland's children's workforce deserves the best possible support and learning opportunities. Achieving both of these is not necessarily easy, but they do go hand-in-hand.

We need to draw on shared principles, use the learning from the work described above, listen to young people and those working with them, and collaborate. The reward will be an evidence-based approach to workforce development, and a confident, skilled, values-driven workforce. Working together, we can ensure all children in Scotland have an equal chance to flourish.



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