

WHAT IS ACTIVE SUPPORT?

Active Support is a free service provided to colleges by the Further Education Commissioner and her team. Its aim is to assist in overall improvement of educational and skills provision for learners by providing access to people, resources, knowledge, and sharing effective practice.



Active Support offers a full range of guidance and advice for leaders and governors, and recognises every college is unique, with its own set of opportunities and challenges. It is also acknowledged that the FE sector has a wealth of experience at every level, which can be leveraged through collaboration and networks so that effective practices can be shared. All of this means that no college leader should feel isolated when faced with challenges, evaluating options and decision making.

"Our FE colleges offer world-class skills development, education and opportunities: they are anchors in their local communities, improving skills, economic opportunity, well being and delivering social value and progression.

College leaders regularly face challenges and strategic options to evaluate. The best way to deal with these challenges and choices is with the support, experience and help of colleagues across the sector - not in isolation.

Through my FEC team of Deputies, Advisers, National Leaders of Further Education (NLFs) and National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) we seek to support the brilliant work of the leaders and governors of Further Education and sixth form colleges."

Shelagh Legrave, FE Commissioner

The FE Commissioner is determined every effort should be made to assist college CEOs/Principals, Chairs and Governance Professionals in their leadership and governance journey. **Active Support** is a key initiative in improving quality, standards, sustainability and performance confidence across the FE sector.

JUST ONE THING

One strand of *Active Support* is called **Just One Thing** which focuses on the lessons learned by CEOs/Principals, Chairs and governance professionals when they stepped into the role - the **Just One Thing** they wished they had known when first in post. CEOs/Principals, Chairs and governance professionals from across the country were invited to CityLit in London to share on film lessons from their own leadership journeys. The **Just One Thing** videos are our first activity which we plan to build on.



Watch the **Just One Thing** videos for your own learning, but some of the nuggets for new CEOs/Principals and Chairs include:

- **Understanding** - Getting to know your college, its culture, potential weaknesses and opportunities.
- **Quality** - The reputation of a college and its ability to build links into the community are dependent on the quality of the curriculum and teaching. Understand how quality is measured, understand how quality improves and understand the accountabilities for quality across the college.
- **Finance** - The financials of a college can be complex but take the time to understand the true financial position of the college based on real-time data and recent trends. Understand if the finances have got better over time or worse. Know where your income comes from and ascertain if there are opportunities that can be explored.

- **Culture** - The culture of a college affects everyone within it and determines what is possible and the value all can glean from their efforts and achievements. Culture can be an important differentiator that limits what can be achieved or enthuses staff and students. It can propel innovation and ideas that sustain the college over the long term. Or it can have the opposite effect and be destructive.
- **Leadership** - Establish if your team (incorporating your senior leadership team and your board) has the skills and mindset that you need to take the college forward.
- **The Triumvirate** - The relationship between the CEO/Principal, Chair and Director of Governance is important to a college. When the CEO/Principal and Chair work well together, ably supported by the Director of Governance, it's felt by the whole college.
- **Be Curious** - Particularly within your local community. FE colleges are a resource and service to the local community providing education, routes to employment, and wellbeing among others. Look for opportunities to deepen and strengthen the position of the college locally through the relationships you build.
- **Support** - The leadership roles in FE do not need to be lonely ones. NLFE and NLG mentoring support is there for CEOs/Principals, Chairs and Heads of Governance at whatever stage you are on in your journey to excellence, but particularly in those first few months as you test ideas and build up your own support networks.





FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For information about the wide range of **Active Support** available, go to:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-for-colleges>

The website also details help available from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and The Education and Training Foundation (ETF).

You can get in touch with the FEC's support team by emailing:
fe.commissioner@education.gov.uk

Governing bodies seeking support from an NLFE or NLG should email:
fec.operations@education.gov.uk

Thank you to those involved in the production of the **Just One Thing** videos:
Shelagh Legrave, Frances Wadsworth, Dr Sam Parrett, Rob Lawson, Mark Malcolmson, Sandra Prail, Darrell D'Sousa, Simon Perryman, Yiannis Koursis, Rebecca Conroy, Sarah Stewart, Ellen Thinnesen, David Pearson, Pat Carvalho, Shirley Collier, Karen Dobson and Gill Worgan, Jennifer Pharo, Yana Yakovleva and our film crew led by Andrew Cameron.

We plan to populate the feleaders.co.uk website with further supportive material and guidance.

To view the Just One Thing videos go to:
www.feleaders.co.uk