



Careers in the third sector

Transcript of a speech by Phil Hope MP, Minister for the Third Sector, to the exhibitors of the Forum3 recruitment exhibition, 12 October 2007.

Thank you very much indeed, Debbie [Hockham, Director of Forum3]. I'm absolutely delighted to be with you this morning.

Thank you very much for inviting me. I've not been to this amazing building before and I've not been to the Forum3 exhibition before, so really pleased to be here. I'm really looking forward to walking around and meeting you at the stalls and just seeing how things are going.

And whether it's to employers to show them what's going on, whether it's to people who want to make a career change, whether it's to attract new people into the sector, Forum3, this exhibition, these opportunities are absolutely vital. And whether people want to be volunteers, whether to get a job, whether to become a trustee, to come here, look around and see what's available and make those connections is really great.

I actually used to work in the third sector which is why I look so tired and haggard. No, it's because I was delivering thousands of leaflets at the weekend, somewhat unnecessarily as we now know. But anyway.

I used to work for the third sector. I used to work at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, and I'll be going to visit their stall. And then I worked at the National Youth Bureau, what's now the National Youth Agency. And I'm a Labour and Co-operative MP, so I'll be visiting the Co-ops stall as well when I get round later on.

I was also a former Skills Minister. Before I became the Minister for the Third Sector, I was Skills Minister for the Government, so I'm very well aware in that role I used to have, of the importance of having fresh people coming into organisations, of being able to recruit people with experience, to make your organisations successful.

And what's really important, and I just want to say this to you because you are the third sector – and I know we've got public sector organisations here as well – but to the third sector bodies that are here: the kind of difference that you make in terms of the value-driven organisations that you are; the way that you operate at a local level, at a national level, making a difference to people's lives, is absolutely essential to what we're trying to do as Government.

And I know what a rewarding place it can be to work in the third sector, how dynamic it is, how enterprising it is, how innovative it is – the difference that you make.

As people come in and say “what’s it like to work for you?” I think you’ve got a really good sell, if I can put it that way, to encourage people to come and take part.

Interestingly, there are some 608,000 people in the workforce of the third sector, and on top of that over 450,000 people who work in the social enterprise sector. That’s over 2% of the UK workforce.

That’s a big chunk of the economy that’s making a difference. And on top of that of course there are millions, I think over 20 million people who are involved as volunteers, in one way or another, with your and other organisations.

So I reckon the third sector is a sector to be reckoned with.

And I’d like to see, certainly, that the third sector is an equal to the first and second sectors, to the public and the private sectors.

What I’d like to see is more people join the third sector. And frankly what you’re doing – not just at this exhibition but everyday of the week, in your drive, in your publicity, in what you’re doing – is helping us to get the sector bigger, and thriving and more successful.

We went round and consulted third sector organisations about what you want to see us do over the next few years and we published that report, Gordon Brown in fact published that report, in July.

And frankly it’s my job description of the task that we want to get on with: about campaigning and advocacy, about transforming public services, about strengthening local communities, about promoting social enterprise, about creating an environment in which you, the third sector, can flourish and be successful.

I said I was a Skills Minister. I’ve brought some of those ideas with me into this job as Minister for the Third Sector.

I’m now working with my colleagues in what is now known as DIUS – the new Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills – to work up a skills package for the sector.

And that involves not just England, but working with Devolved Administrations in Scotland, in Wales, in Northern Ireland and other partners to see whether or not we can develop a Skills Workforce Development Council for the third sector. And I’ll let you know how that goes.

It’s going to cover paid staff and I hope it will cover volunteer skills as well.

And I also just wanted to say to you here, there is cash out there already for skills for the third sector.

The Learning and Skills Council, that I used to be responsible for, we launched a programme called Train to Gain. If you haven't heard about Train to Gain, find out about Train to Gain.

It's a brokerage service. A business broker will come to see you, do a training needs analysis, look at the skills needs you have, look at where you want to take your organisation, look at the gaps and then provide you with access to funding and good quality training providers to provide you with a skills strategy directly tailored and suited to your needs.

So at the moment the Train to Gain budget is there. I want to make sure that as well as the public and private sector getting hold of that cash, the third sector dips into that cash as well.

So if there's nothing you take away from this, go and annoy the Learning and Skills Council, find yourself a training broker and get hold of that Train to Gain resource.

Just lastly, and sorry if I've gone on a bit too long, I'm thrilled by the fact that I've got this job because the third sector is a value-driven sector.

You attract people who have got passion, who have got commitment, who have got drive, to make a difference to people's lives, not just in this country. I think there are many international organisations here as well. I hope you have a successful couple of days as you attract people in.

I understand some 15,000 visitors possibly. That's a great opportunity for you as third sector organisations to attract more people into the sector.

So I hope you have a couple of good days and good luck everybody.

Thank you very much.

(Ends)