Working Together

An update on the LSC strategy for working with the third sector

January 2008

This document is of interest to LSC staff, third sector organisations and sector stakeholders
The LSC and the Third Sector share a common agenda in wishing to increase learning and skills opportunities, particularly for those most disadvantaged and excluded in our society. The LSC has been working with third sector partners on this shared agenda since its inception in 2001. In 2004, we set out to strengthen that relationship through the development of a coherent national strategy. Following a substantial national consultation, ‘Working Together’ was published, setting out the LSC’s ambitions for collaboration with third sector organisations as providers, employers and sources of expertise, particularly with excluded learners.

Undeniably, this has also been a period of considerable change for both the LSC and the third sector. Against this challenging background, many positive developments at national, regional and local level have taken place under the banner of ‘Working Together’.

This leaflet celebrates these achievements and highlights initiatives which will contribute to a further strengthening of the relationship between the LSC and the third sector.

Embedding the strategy in LSC processes
One of the most important achievements has been in embedding the Working Together strategy in the business cycle and processes of the LSC. From our Statement of Priorities to our regional commissioning plans, procurement processes, and all policy documentation, the third sector is positioned as an important partner.

Commissioning and procuring provision
We are delighted to announce that third sector organisations were awarded 43 new contracts across England for delivery in 2007 and 2008, 16 of which were brand new contracts for the third sector. The value of these contracts was £7.61million. The contracts were awarded for provision for the LSC and we expect many more contracts to be awarded through our ESF provision early in 2008.

Management Information
The LSC, like many others, has needed to rethink its data capturing system to account for the third sector. We now have a system that allows us to undertake specific reports on the third sector, so that we analyse funding going to the third sector, the type of work third sector providers are undertaking and the number of contracts awarded.

Compact
The LSC is carrying out an on-going review of its processes and systems against the Compact Codes of Good Practice. The first stage has been a survey of regional funding, procurement, contracting and consultation practices. The review has identified examples of good practice together with potential for improvement. The results of this review are being considered at present. Some of the improvements can be carried through by the LSC, others will require further discussion with other stakeholders, such as DIUS.

Peer support
The LSC understand that the third sector are often in the best position to support each other and for this reason, we are funding a peer support programme for third sector organisations who wish to develop their procedure and practices to meet the financial, data and quality requirements of the LSC.

Train to Gain
We are delighted to announce that changes have been made that will allow volunteers to be fully included in the Train to Gain service. We are also working to ensure that third sector employers take advantage of the Train to Gain offer, and are aiming to work flexibly with the sector to support their needs wherever possible. A specific project to consider the best ways of engaging volunteers and the sector will be considered in 2008.

Learning Alliance
The LSC is pleased to be offering three year funding to the National Learning Alliance of third sector organisations and we look forward to working with this Alliance to ensure that we understand the needs of the sector and can work with them to deliver to those learners that the sector are most able to support. We believe this Alliance will complement our existing third sector advisory group to the LSC National Council.

Staff development programme
Our staff are the key to an effective day-to-day working relationship with Third Sector Partners. We are in the process of setting up a staff training programme to improve understanding and working practices of key LSC staff at local, regional and national level in relation to the third sector. We hope that this will provide an exciting opportunity for real knowledge transfer and interaction between third sector and LSC staff.

Longer term contracts
The LSC is very pleased to confirm that it is now in a position to respond positively to the Compact recommendation for longer-term contracts. The LSC grant from DIUS is now a three-year grant. As a result the LSC will offer longer contracts to providers, including those from the Third Sector.

Workforce Development Council
The Working Together Strategy affirmed LSC’s recognition of the role of the Third Sector as an important employer. We are pleased to be playing a central role in the review which is considering how the skills needs of the Third Sector can best be represented in the Sector Skills Council Network, possibly through a Workforce Development Council.
Across England there are many positive examples of LSC and the third sector working together for the benefit of local learners. We have highlighted a selection below, together with the contact details of the LSC regional third sector lead officer, who can provide more information if required.

**London**

London Region LSC is working with Social Enterprise London to offer Apprenticeship opportunities within local social enterprises to 15 young people. The partners anticipate that the success of this programme can be used to encourage many more social enterprises to become involved in learning and skills.

Contact: Angela.Berry@lsc.gov.uk

**East Midlands**

East Midlands LSC has allocated ESF funding to support Train to Gain in the third sector and to appoint a specialist third sector Skills Broker. Tenders were issued as part of the recent procurement round and bids are being evaluated at the moment.

Contact: Julie.Bellm@lsc.gov.uk

**South West**

SW LSC has worked with Third Sector partners to produce its own regional strategy to take forwards Working Together. It is now funding a group of Third Sector partners to test and refine detailed ideas for implementing this strategy, as well as financing a project to promote Train to Gain in the Third Sector. It is also looking to establish a regional contact group to facilitate good communications and promote joint working in the longer term.

Contact: John.Brookham@lsc.gov.uk

**North West**

NW LSC has funded a regional Third Sector Workforce & Skills Coordinator post at Voluntary Sector North West. The result has been a significant increase in support and activity around third sector workforce development including improved links with Sector Skills Councils.

Contact: Ian.Ruff@lsc.gov.uk

**East of England**

The East of England LSC has funded a post in COVER, the regional voluntary sector forum, to capacity build Third Sector organisations and to encourage formation of learning and skills consortia. They have also established a LSC/VCs regional advisory group to communicate and disseminate information to the Third Sector across the region. Six posts within the third sector have been funded to promote and raise awareness of Train to Gain in each of the LSC sub regions working closely with Train to Gain Skills brokers across the region.

Contact: Steph.Luke@lsc.gov.uk

**West Midlands**

The LSC in the West Midlands is working with third sector organisations to involve them in Train to Gain brokerage activity. Workforce development projects have been supported through ESF in the Black Country, Coventry and Warwickshire and Staffordshire.

Contact: Jerry.Conway@lsc.gov.uk

**Yorkshire & Humber**

LSC has funded the appointment of a Development Officer, Workforce and Skills based at the Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Forum for a period of 18 months to support work enabling the third sector to build partnerships with public and private sector agencies.

Contact: Mandy.Crawford-Lee@lsc.gov.uk

**South East**

The LSC recently commissioned RAISE, the regional third sector forum, to carry out research into the current and potential role of the third sector in delivering learning to local communities. Following this research, additional funding of £125,000 has been allocated to support the third sector to take a more active role in delivering learning and skills. This will include further research, events and other activities to encourage and enable third sector participation in Train to Gain, Learner Accounts (which SE is piloting) Skills for Jobs and sector brokerage preparation.

Contact: Christina.Aboukhatwa@lsc.gov.uk