Minutes

Date: 15 November 2006
Subject: Advisory Group – Working Together
Location: Thistle Hotel, London
Time: 10 – 4pm

Present: Shirley Cramer, Richard Williams, Jane Slowey, Tim Ward, Robin Hodgkinson, Cheryl Turner (NIACE), Andy Shields, Lynne Bryan, John Harris

In attendance: Andrew Button, Map Analysis

LSC staff: Cheryl Turner (LSC)
Richard Healey
Julie Hobbins
Stuart Rogers

Apologies: Apologies have been received from:
Deborah Dale

ACTION MINUTES

1. The Group have asked to be kept informed about any changes to the role and functions of the Senior Policy Manager (VCS) so that they can work to ensure that this policy area is kept as a full time strategic post.

2. The Group agreed to encourage VCS members to apply to the LSC Regional Boards once they are advertised to ensure that wherever possible there is a VCS presence on these boards. Cheryl (L) will circulate details of the Board recruitment process as soon as it is known. Cheryl (L) will also draw this to the attention of the governance team, and the Director of Strategy and Communications.

3. The Group would like the minutes of these meetings to be posted on the VCS webpage, and any press work done as a result of the launch of the new Group to be sent to them and posted on the web page.
4. The Group asked Richard Williams to redraft his paper on the policy direction of the Group following comment from colleagues and redistribute to the Group. Cheryl (L) agreed to put it onto the Equality and Diversity Committee agenda, and ask that group to send it onto the National Council for information.

5. This redrafted paper would also be used by the Group as the context for its work, and should be used in any personal press work that Group members might be involved in. Once it has been through the Committee cycle, it can also be used for LSC press statements.

6. The Group wished to raise its concern about singling out the Princes Trust in the LSC Annual Statement of Priorities. Members of the Group felt it was not helpful that the LSC had singled out the Prince’s Trust when referring to the VCS’s role in tackling the NEET group. After some discussion it was agreed that Cheryl (L) would convey these concerns with Melanie Hunt stressing the fact that there are many organisations in the sector who can assist the LSC in improving reach to this group.

7. Cheryl and Cheryl agreed to write up a response to the Annual Statement of priorities for both the LSC and the VCS, particularly focuses on the notion of a demand led system, and the specialist contribution that the VCS can offer within any future system.

8. The Group asked Julie Hobbins, Head of ESF at the LSC, to respond to the ESF consultation on their behalf and propose that 1) there is an explicit reference to non accredited and progression routes in priority one of the proposed criteria for ESF 07 – 13, and 2) that the process includes more global grant arrangements which allow for more innovation and creativity, without pre determined outcomes as this has delivered some of the best projects.

9. The Group also asked Cheryl (L) and Julie to follow up their paper to the LSC Management Group which asked for a strong and robust evaluation system for ESF so that successful innovative projects can find a way of receiving mainstream funds in the future.

10. The Group also asked Julie to use RARPA as the soft outcome system for the Learner Aims Database.

11. The Group asked for the Regional Skills Boards to engage with the VCS when they identify regional priorities for ESF contracts.

12. Julie asked the Group to send her any case studies or matters of concern where ESF had not been a positive experience for the VCS / learners.

13. The ESF Consultation process should be posted on the LSC VCS web page for information.

14. The Group asked Andrew Button, who is gathering data on behalf of the LSC about the VCS and its contribution to targets, to continue with his work, and
circulate his final report to the Group for amendment and comment before it is put to the Group on January 11 2007.

15. The Group asked Richard Healey and Stuart Rogers, who are writing the LSC procurement plan, to consider the following in their proposals:

a) the inherent disadvantage to the VCS as a result of FE Colleges having statutory favour should be re engineered if the LSC is to offer a demand led system

b) the need for market development / capacity building for the sector if they are to compete on a level playing field with other providers

c) the need to overcome the disconnect between a national procurement strategy and local tendering arrangements

Richard and Stuart agreed to come back to the Group at its next meeting in January with a final version of the framework for the Group’s views.

Shirley Cramer agreed to raise the idea of setting some targets on how many VCS organisations the LSC should agree as new providers following the tendering process in 07 /08. She would raise this with both the LSC Council and Ministers for their views on whether this would be possible.

16. Cheryl (L) agreed to send an email to all the members to see if an overnight stay the night before meetings would be helpful to members, given the long day and the journeys that people were making to get to meetings.