



# LSC and our engagement with the Third Sector

June 2007

This document is of interest to LSC staff, third sector organisations and sector stakeholders

## Introduction

The Office for the Third Sector published "Partners in Public Service delivery" in November 2006, an action plan for ensuring the Government's commitment to working with the third sector in delivering high quality, relevant public services. In this action plan, the Government set out four key areas where action needs to be taken to ensure an effective relationship with the third sector: Commissioning, Procurement, Learning and Accountability.

Following the publication of the action plan and to ensure these four key areas are implemented to best effect, the LSC has analysed the way in which we do business with both this sector, and other providers within the FE system. This paper gives you a flavour of what we have been working on.

## Commissioning

The LSC cycle of commissioning starts with a statement of our priorities. In this statement, we now make specific mention of the third sector and any commitments about our work with this sector for the forthcoming year. When we then go on to draw up our regional commissioning plans, each region is asked to comment on the intelligence gathered from the third sector about needs in particular areas that impact on our targets and priorities. There is a regional LSC champion working specifically on engagement with this sector and our partnership teams at local level include the third sector in their partnership engagement. Our commissioning plans reflect what learning and skills services we want to buy and, where it is appropriate, we will specify who we think might be able to support us in delivering this service. The third sector is a key service deliverer in some of our specified services. We also encourage the third sector to get involved in our briefings and meetings to gather information about the design of these services.

## Procurement

Our commissioning plans act as the guide for what we wish to buy at national, regional and local level. We procure at regional level and our arrangements for buying services have been carefully considered so that they include third sector organisations and do not inherently disadvantage any smaller, locally based organizations. We strive to award contracts that reflect the need of the services such as contracting smaller, community based services to smaller community based organisations wherever this is possible. We have also designed our tendering process so that it is accessible to new providers from the third sector, by asking for evidence of a track record in delivering of services that are similar to ours.

## Learning

### Provider

Many of the new services that the LSC wishes to procure need to be innovative. The LSC is committed to working with the third sector to understand the sector's way of delivering these services and include these ideas in any specifications for provision. The LSC has set up an advisory group to its National Council, made up of third sector leaders in the learning and skills arena, and this group suggests ways in which the third sector could contribute to the LSC's targets and priorities. The LSC also actively supports third sector consortia, and infrastructure bodies dealing with third sector learning and skills to ensure that wherever possible, learning can be transferred from one agency to another.

### Employer

The LSC recognise the value of a professional third sector. We will continue to support initiatives that enable staff within the sector to access the relevant skills for their development.

## Accountability

The LSC is committed to ensuring that the services it offers are accountable to learners, local communities and employers, and one of the ways that we can hear about the views of these groups is through the third sector. The LSC consults with the third sector on the issues that may affect them and their client groups. The LSC actively supported the development of third sector consortia to help the third sector to compete for contracts, share good practice, and understands the needs and aspirations of the Government in its agenda for learning and skills. The LSC also encouraged its own staff to learn more about the third sector and how the sector can help to shape our services to best meet the needs of our learners.

The LSC is committed to working with this key sector to ensure that as a public body responsible for the engagement of learners, employers and local communities in the delivery of learning and skills to create economic and personal success for all, we work with all of the agencies who can support our purpose.

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