

Raising our game: Our Annual Statement of Priorities



Leading learning and skills

How the third sector can contribute

2 January 2007

Introduction

Raising our game, the LSC's Annual Statement of Priorities (ASP) sets out the key tasks and objectives of the LSC for 2007/08, including investment plans covering that period.

The third sector's potential contribution to implementing the ASP can be grouped under four headings:

- as a provider of learning and skills;
- as an employer;
- as a source of expertise; and
- as a champion or "voice" for specific learner groups.

This report provides a brief overview of how these four areas can be aligned with specific priorities within the ASP and offers recommendations for maximising the third sector contribution.

Third sector as a provider of learning and skills

ASP	Third sector contribution
A <i>"We want to use our investment in learning and skills to support the Games to deliver a model of social inclusion" (p.5)</i>	Third sector organisations have a wealth of experience in encouraging, supporting and training volunteers, including those from the most disadvantaged areas. This capability is essential to recruiting and training sufficient volunteers for the Olympics programme, and to achieving the key objective of offering training for employment, particularly to more excluded learners, through this

	means.
<p>B <i>“[We are] aiming for 90% participation of young people in learning by 2015” (p.7)”</i></p> <p><i>“[We are] increasing the range of high quality courses below Level 2.... ensuring that learning programmes are personalised to meet individual needs (p.7)”</i></p> <p><i>“Young people not in education, employment or training still account for around 11 per cent nationally. This is a priority group of individuals for us.” (p. 8)</i></p>	<p>Third sector providers are experienced at working with young people from across a broad social spectrum. However, they are exceptionally skilled at engaging those who are least likely to access learning. From small community groups through to large national organisations, third sector bodies have substantial experience of developing tailored provision capable of bringing the most excluded young people, such as ex-offenders, those with mental health issues, and the homeless, into learning through pre E2E and foundation learning provision.</p>
<p>C <i>“Research tells us that the main factor in most learners ’choice of place to study is proximity.” (p.4)</i></p> <p><i>[We will] increase the number of opportunities for learners to choose to study locally”(p.8)</i></p>	<p>Third sector organisations work at all levels – international, national and regional - but the vast majority build links within local communities. This ability to understand and meet the most complex, specific and localised learning needs and aspirations is fundamental to the sector’s distinctive offer to the LSC.</p>
<p>D <i>“We will also ensure that the needs of children in care and young people up to the age of 25 making the transition from care are taken into account in developing and delivering local learning opportunities.” (p.8)</i></p>	<p>Specialist third sector providers already work with children in care, and those making the transition from care, and are experienced at developing effective, holistic approaches to service delivery. This includes offering both embedded and explicit learning opportunities.</p>
<p>E <i>“For adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, we will focus our investment to enable learners to participate as fully as they can in their communities. (p.11)</i></p>	<p>The LSC works with a number of specialist third sector providers that offer learning opportunities with and for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. This includes provision focused on building the skills needed for independent living, employment and assimilation into mainstream society.</p>
<p>F <i>“We have a clear focus on addressing low skills and reducing</i></p>	<p>Third sector organisations engage those furthest away from the job</p>

<p><i>skills gaps. Low skilled individuals who are not working are a priority for us.</i> (p.10)”</p>	<p>market through supported volunteering experiences, enabling them to grow in confidence and re skill themselves. This includes providing appropriate information, advice and guidance, and training in specific occupational and generic employability skills.</p>
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Third sector as an employer

ASP	Third sector contribution
<p>G <i>Putting employers centre stage is imperative for us. Investment in Train to Gain will increase by 62 per cent to £460 million for 2007-08”</i> (p.9)</p>	<p>The third sector is a substantial and increasingly significant employer. With an estimated increase of 45,000 employees since 2000, the sector now accounts for at least 2.2 per cent of the national paid workforce. Volunteering is also growing. A minimum of 13.2 million people formally volunteer at least once a month – equivalent to 1.1 million full-time workers. The LSC’s focus on employers was affirmed by the Leitch Review which identified ‘hard to reach’ employers as a priority for Train to Gain. Many third sector bodies, due to their scale and financial constraints, would fall within that category.</p>
<p>H <i>“We have an important job to do in helping socially and economically disadvantaged people to gain sustainable employment. Learning opportunities and qualifications can do much to narrow the gap between the most deprived communities and their neighbours.”</i> (p.16)</p>	<p>The third sector responds to the learning needs of the most disadvantaged communities as a provider, a location for volunteering, and, perhaps less obviously, as an employer. Although the sector is experiencing a steady rise in the number of full-time workers, the most rapid growth is amongst part-timers, particularly women. This presents challenges but also opportunities to link third sector workforce development strategies with efforts to extend job opportunities amongst the most economically disadvantaged. This profile also aligns well with the predicted labour market needs of the country over the next decade.</p>

<p>I [We will] <i>increase the number of opportunities for Skills for Life, Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications</i>” (p.10)</p>	<p>The third sector provides many opportunities for its paid and unpaid workers to access non-accredited, accredited and qualification-based learning, sometimes in one location, as part of workforce development strategies. These are supported by the UK Workforce Hub, regional skills co-ordinators, sub-regional learning and skills consortia, and numerous sector-based training providers. Opportunities for specialist skills development are increasing, for example, through the Third Sector Leadership Centre and the SKILD programme. Accredited Skills for Life provision is also offered through many third sector organisations.</p>
<p>J <i>“We will work closely with Sector Skills Councils and only commission qualifications that employers want as set out in Sector Skills Agreements.”</i> (p.10)</p>	<p>The third sector has a footprint in 13 of the 27 Sector Skills Councils. Through the UK Workforce Hub, the LSC is actively seeking the support of all 13 in prioritising third sector workforce development issues.</p>

Third sector as a source of expertise

ASP	Third sector contribution
<p>K [We will] <i>use local borough and local area intelligence to understand who and where the [young people not in education, employment or training] are and their particular needs and aspirations</i> (p.8)”</p>	<p>See B above..</p>
<p>L <i>“The public sector, which employs about a quarter of the nation’s workforce, remains a priority for us. We will: continue to work with the public sector to improve its skills base so that it delivers public services more efficiently and plays an active role in upskilling the wider workforce..”</i> (p.10)</p>	<p>More efficient public service delivery is increasingly associated with achieving a good fit between provision and service user needs. This has proved particularly challenging in relation to more disadvantaged communities. Third sector organisations can offer training and staff development in relevant skills and knowledge, for example, community consultation approaches, and how to adapt</p>

	commissioning and procurement processes so they are fit for purpose. They can also advise about the learning and other needs of particular communities, and barriers to access.
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Third sector as champion or ‘voice’ for learners

ASP	Third sector contribution
<p>M [We will] <i>intervene directly by securing provision to meet the needs of those least able to articulate them, to protect vulnerable learners and to ensure equality of opportunity..</i>” (p.12)</p> <p>[We will] <i>listen more to learners....at local regional and national level</i>” (p.14)</p> <p>“</p>	<p>Third sector organisations are skilled at consulting with, and listening to, more marginalised and disengaged communities and groups in order to identify their needs and aspirations, including what would motivate them to learn. In addition to enabling such communities to speak for themselves, certain sector bodies are qualified by expertise and experience to act as a champion or ‘voice’ for those least able to get their views heard. The information generated through these processes is critical to ensuring that targeted and niche provision is effective.</p>

Recommendations

The following actions are recommended as a means of securing greater third sector involvement in the implementation of the ASP.

1. A national market mapping exercise should be undertaken to identify those third sector organisations that are able to provide learning opportunities in priority areas, and contribute expertise to LSC planning processes.
2. Engagement with third sector providers should take place at an early stage in the commissioning process to ensure that tendering arrangements are fit for purpose and will not inhibit the development of necessary specialist provision.
3. Steps should be taken to ensure that LSC management information systems are capable of delivering robust data on third sector provision and funding, including information outside the main frame, such as funding through ESF co-financing and sub-contracting arrangements.

4. Better progression data on third sector provision is needed in order to identify how these providers contribute to effective pathways from pre-entry and Level 1 provision to Level 2 and beyond.
5. Third sector engagement in local partnerships to deliver PCDL, 14 - 19 provision, and adult learning should be a requirement for those arrangements, and incorporated in any performance review processes.
6. Steps should be taken to ensure that third sector skills needs are met through the expanding Train to Gain programme. This should include ensuring that existing and future brokers are alert to third sector employers' needs, and that sector organisations have proper access to future mechanisms to expand the base of brokers and training providers.
7. Sector Skills Councils should be asked to ensure that third sector workforce development issues are included in their plans.
8. Active consideration should be given to developing the supply of third sector providers in niche areas and to ensuring they are able to compete alongside other providers in tendering arrangements.
9. LSC performance should be monitored annually against these recommendations.

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