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A Strategy for the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Learning and Skills Council

Working Together



Learning+Skills Council



Learning+Skills Council

A Strategy for the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Learning and Skills Council

Summary

This document sets out the strategy that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) intends to adopt with its partners in the voluntary and community sector (VCS). It explains in detail the 'ways of working' that the two bodies will adopt in order to achieve their shared aims. The document looks at the VCS as a provider, employer and source of expertise. It also sets out recommended practices for the LSC National Office and local LSCs for working with members of the VCS. It ends with an implementation schedule and a list of references and sources.

This document is of interest to the full range of individuals and organisations that are interested in, or involved with, voluntary and community sector engagement with adult learning.

May 2004

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Executive Summary

Section 1: Aims and Context of the Strategy

This section sets out the aims of the strategy and outlines the wider policy context for relations between the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the voluntary and community sector (VCS). Their shared goals for learning, particularly in relation to widening participation, provide the strategy's underlying rationale. The section ends with proposals for benchmarking and planning, LSC capacity-development and evaluation of the strategy's impact.

Section 2: The Voluntary and Community Sector as a Provider of Learning Opportunities

The role of the VCS as learning provider is probably its most significant relationship with the LSC. Scope for flexibility in LSC funding and contracting, including access to mainstream funding, is considered in the light of recent good practice guidance. Issues of sustainability, risk management and quality are covered, and the case made for investment in VCS capacity to enhance its contribution to LSC business. The section explores the potential of VCS intermediary bodies to help both the LSC and sector organisations.

Section 3: The Voluntary and Community Sector as an Employer

With significant numbers of paid and unpaid staff, VCS workforce development offers mutual benefits for the LSC and the sector, achieving corporate targets as well as building the capacity of key providers and partners. This section outlines

priorities for skills development, drawing on the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation's Skills Strategy, and, acknowledging the appetite for staff development within the sector, describes barriers and ways of overcoming them.

Section 4: The Voluntary and Community Sector as a Source of Expertise and Channel for Communication

VCS expertise can support the LSC's strategic planning, particularly in relation to widening participation in learning. The section acknowledges the case for investment in this as in other types of consultancy advice. VCS organisations, including those not primarily focused on learning delivery, offer the LSC a means of communication with learners and potential learners that the LSC finds hard to reach.

Section 5: Communication and Working Relationships

This section examines some practical issues that can cause problems with communication between the LSC and VCS organisations. Clarity of role and expectation is important here. Language can also be a barrier, and ICT another. Agreed compacts and protocols are a proven way of establishing ground rules that enable positive relationships to flourish.

Section 6: Implementation Plan

This section sets out the actions that will be taken to implement the strategy, with timings and main responsibilities.

Foreword

The voluntary and community sector is vital to the LSC's mission to meet the education and training needs of individuals, communities and employers. The knowledge, creativity and sensitivity it can bring to the widening participation agenda in particular is enormously valuable. Both economic and social objectives are met by opening up learning to people who have not reaped its benefits before, by building skills and confidence, and helping them succeed and move on.

The consultation on the draft strategy confirmed that our analysis of the current state of play between the LSC and sector was broadly right. Though obstacles and misunderstandings remain on both sides, there is a growing appreciation of shared aims, and the mutual benefits resulting from positive working relationships. There are imaginative examples of pioneering ways of working with others to emulate. But what people want to see now is action to take this consensus forward.

This strategy focuses on next steps – some quick and practical, some longer-term – that both the LSC and the voluntary and community sector can take to remove barriers, build capacity on both sides and embed good practice into everyday business. These are crystallised in an implementation plan, which assigns target dates and responsibilities to key partners. We are committing pump-priming support for this programme of development over the next year, with the clear aim of making effective engagement with the voluntary and community sector the norm in all our areas of work.

Both the LSC and the sector strive to put the individual at the heart of what they do and to deliver the highest quality of service for the people they work for. This strategy opens up new ways to enhance the services we provide to learners and potential learners at all levels: I hope everyone will seize their chances and make the most of the opportunities it offers.



Mark Haysom
Chief Executive, Learning and Skills Council



Section 1



Section 1: Aims and Context of the Strategy

Aims

¹ Through this strategy, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) aims to:

- create a step-change in its relations with voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in order to maximise the contribution they can make to the accessibility, range and quality of education and training provision for individuals, employers and the wider community
- open up access to mainstream LSC funding for more VCS organisations
- establish a principle of partnership and mutual benefit in all relationships between the VCS and the LSC, acknowledging that the two bodies share many objectives for the provision of better learning and skills-orientated services to more and different people
- extend best practice throughout the LSC and the sector, building on existing hard work and achievements on both sides so that organisations learn from the experience of their peers
- create a framework of minimum expectations and useful ideas to be interpreted and implemented jointly by the LSC and the sector regionally and locally
- make clear, internally and to external partners, the LSC's full commitment to implementing the principles of the *Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England* (ACU, 1998) and the recommendations of the Treasury's *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery* (HM Treasury, 2002).

Methodology

² A steering group convened by the LSC oversaw the production of **Working Together**. This group included members of the voluntary and community sector, key government departments and other stakeholders. The steering group was supported by a reference group of VCS practitioners in post-16 learning. Membership of the groups is listed at Annex A. Local LSC and VCS views on priorities were gathered through a mapping exercise in late summer 2003.

³ Public consultation on the draft strategy ran from 24 December 2003 to 23 March 2004. Comments were invited through formal consultation events, organisations' own discussions (supported by LSC funding) or in writing. In total, 2,350 participants responded to consultation events, and a further 174 written responses were received.

⁴ This final version of the strategy is intended as a forward-looking agenda for action. A summary of the responses to consultation will be published as a companion document. This will recap the key issues, point up changes made as a result of views expressed, and feature further illustrations of effective practice.

Context – why have a strategy?

Voluntary and community organisations make a major and literally incalculable contribution to the development of society and to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the nation. They act as pathfinders for the involvement of users in the design and delivery of services and often act as advocates for those who otherwise have no voice. In doing so they promote both equality and diversity. They help to alleviate poverty, improve the quality of life and involve the socially excluded. The voluntary and community sector also makes an important direct economic contribution to the nation.

Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England, Home Office Active Community Unit, 1998 (“the Compact”)

5 The *Compact* and, more recently the *Cross Cutting Review* (HM Treasury, 2002) heralded a change of approach across central, regional and local Government to relationships with the voluntary and community sector.

6 The LSC is committed to a national strategy that underpins and enhances its own engagement with the sector. It recognises the contribution the VCS makes in helping to meet the needs of many of the learners the LSC serves and seeks to serve. Moreover, it recognises there is still unexplored potential within the sector which could usefully be developed. The sector’s strengths in reaching people who are disadvantaged, and who are not undertaking learning through formal institutions and statutory agencies, make it a key partner at local, regional and national levels. Given the central place of learning in individual and community development and well-being, the VCS regards the LSC as an important partner in helping it achieve its own broad aims of social inclusion, equity and enhanced life chances.

7 The LSC sees a clear interdependence between this strategy and its strategy on widening adult participation in learning (LSC, 2003a), currently being implemented. To reach people who do not traditionally engage in learning, it is essential to build on the work of VCS organisations that operate effectively among disadvantaged and isolated communities. Moreover, it is crucial that these organisations are robust and secure, not least so that learners and the LSC can count on them. The LSC’s strategy (LSC, 2003b) on equality and diversity, currently under revision, dovetails with these two strategies: equality is a key concern and an area of expertise and good practice for the VCS.

8 The need to work effectively and productively with the sector is reinforced in key policy documents on post-16 education and training that shape the LSC’s work, specifically *Skills for Life* (DfES, 2001), *Success for All* (DfES, 2002) and, most recently, *Skills for the 21st Century – Realising Our Potential* (DfES, 2003). With activities ranging from outreach, through information, advice and guidance (IAG) and ‘first steps’ learning, to qualification-based skills provision, the VCS is a key contributor to high-quality learning at all levels. The VCS can help the LSC achieve its objectives and key targets, such as those for 16-18 participation, adult literacy, numeracy and language and achievement at Level 2.

9 The LSC’s remit on post-16 learning delineates both the extent and the limit of its interest in the sector. The range of common concerns shared by the VCS and LSC within these parameters is illustrated in the final draft *Regional Compact on Learning and Skills* drawn up by local LSCs and the regional VCS network in the South East, as shown in the extract below.

Widening participation

- *Raise demand and widen participation in learning within communities served by voluntary and community organisations (VCOs).*
- *Make special efforts to engage and meet the needs of disengaged or under-represented learners and socially excluded groups, including those with literacy and numeracy needs.*
- *Extend learner aspirations, choice and opportunities for progression at all levels of education and training.*

Workforce development

- *Raise demand for learning within the VCS, meeting the needs of individual staff, volunteers and trustees and VCOs as employers.*
- *Support the development of skills in VCOs needed in enhancing their organisational effectiveness, including as partners in public service delivery.*

Improving quality and responsiveness of provision

- *Ensure that the provision of learning, skills and related information, advice and guidance meets current needs and future priorities for all learners, potential learners, VCOs as employers and communities.*
- *Improve the quality of formal and informal learning opportunities, tailored to the needs of individual learners.*
- *Ensure equality and diversity are embedded throughout all strategies and provision.*

10 The LSC’s approach throughout its strategy is founded on this principle of mutuality. Good practice developed by local LSC and VCS colleagues illustrates the effectiveness of this principle in action: the LSC wants to see such pioneering work embedded consistently across the country as organisations learn from each other.

11

The VCS's relationship with the LSC falls into three broad categories:

- as providers of education and training services
- as a major group of employers
- as a source of expertise and a channel for communication.

12

This strategy considers each of these in Sections 2 to 4. Section 5 covers generic issues of relationships and communication between the VCS and the LSC.

13

Some recurring themes emerge across different sections of the strategy. These are:

- the need for capacity-building for the VCS and the LSC, to develop understanding of each other's viewpoints, and skills and knowledge for more effective working
- the role and potential of VCS networks, consortia and other intermediaries
- the importance of clear, agreed expectations of roles, relationships and working practices.

Defining the sector

14

The term 'voluntary and community sector' embraces a diverse and complex range of organisations, from the traditional model of the charitable trust, through national businesses run by professional staff, to informal community-level organisations concerned with single issues. Faith-based groups are achieving greater

recognition, and social enterprises (businesses with social objectives whose surpluses are returned to the organisation or community) are becoming increasingly prominent as reflected in the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) document 'Social Enterprise: a strategy for success' (DTI, 2002).

15

While recognising this diversity, for brevity this document uses 'voluntary and community sector' (VCS) throughout, unless a point relates only to one particular type of organisation. The strategy aims for a breadth and flexibility that covers all types and sizes of organisations in the sector, and acknowledges that it would be counter-productive to jeopardise the characteristics that account for the VCS's success with marginalised and excluded groups.

16

The 'client-centred' ethos of the VCS chimes with the LSC's mission to put the learner first. At their best, organisations within the sector are practical, responsive, accountable, creative and resourceful, working to the highest standards. The independence of the sector is a central concern for those working in it and many are conscious of a tension between this and a reliance on funding from bodies such as the LSC. Impartiality is felt to be a crucial factor in retaining the trust of excluded individuals and groups that other organisations fail to reach. The LSC sees the value of 'critical friends' and well-argued alternative viewpoints.

Key facts about the voluntary and community sector

- There are over 150,000 registered charities in the UK, plus 300,000 unregistered not-for-profit groups and many social enterprises.
- The VCS makes an estimated £7.2 billion contribution to gross domestic product (GDP).
- The annual income in 2002 was £20.8 billion gross.
- Around 90 per cent of annual income in 2002 was accounted for by the 10 per cent largest charities (earning over £100,000 a year).
- Around 33 per cent of income comes from government sources.
- There are significantly lower levels of funding to black and minority ethnic-led VCS organisations.
- There are approximately 569,000 employees in the VCS, equivalent to 471,000 full-time jobs and 2 per cent of the UK workforce.
- There are approximately 11 million unpaid workers (the equivalent to 1.3 million full-time jobs).
- 25 per cent of VCS organisations have no paid staff.
- Around one-third of organisations have fewer than 10 staff.
- 70 per cent of the sector operates at a local level.

Source VSNTO, 2004

Implementing the strategy

17

The consultation consistently emphasised the importance of action to put the strategy into practice. Proposals are included throughout this document. The implementation plan in Section 6 summarises the main blocks of activity, with timescales, target dates and key contributors.

18

Compiling this strategy highlighted the unevenness of approach in different LSC areas, with many examples of good practice coming to light but also instances where relationships are scant or unsatisfactory. The reshaping of LSC structures and staffing provides timely opportunities to achieve equity and consistency across the country, and embed a wider cultural change within the LSC so that effective working practices survive changes in personnel.

LSC regional structures

19

The LSC has an ideal opportunity to embed best practice in its new regional structures and processes as they develop. LSC Regional Directors will look to replicate excellence in one area across their patch, as well as comparing notes with their peers. The emerging regional dimension in the LSC parallels regional VCS networks that have generally begun to make an impact on learning and skills, building expertise in areas such as Regional Skills Partnerships, and developing regional compacts. They also have useful links with strategic bodies such as Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Government Offices, with which the LSC also works closely.

LSC staff development

20

To achieve the desired step-change in relations between the LSC and the VCS, it is important that everyone understands how work within the VCS contributes to the LSC's objectives. The LSC acknowledges the need to address its own capacity to work effectively with the VCS, building confidence to let organisations get on with the job and being receptive to the new ideas the VCS can bring. As LSC staffing changes and new ways of working are introduced, the relevant skills could be designed into job descriptions and staff development programmes.

21

A supporting package of staff development activity and resources will be developed and rolled out, aimed primarily at local LSC staff but likely to involve joint activity with the VCS too, through visits, secondments and job-shadowing, for example. The VCS has expertise in both planning and delivery, and the development programme will draw on this and on local LSC experience.

Benchmarking and action planning

22

A joint assessment of the current state of LSC and VCS engagement should form the basis for action. Benchmarking exercises undertaken by local LSCs such as LSC London East have established a minimum level of expectation in terms of coverage and process (LSC-funded but

VCS-led). The LSC will draw on these to create a framework for use by all local offices which have yet to undertake an equivalent study. Local LSCs will be encouraged to agree a joint programme of development activity with VCS partners, to be included in local business plans and rolled forward annually. This will combine measures in the national strategy implementation plan and local priorities.

Measuring success

23

Benchmarks and action plans form the basis of the LSC's preferred approach to assessing the impact of the strategy. Using these to measure progress over time is more flexible than pre-set destinations or quantitative targets set nationally. These would be difficult to calculate and prone to unforeseen adverse effects

24

The strategy steering group will become an implementation group, with refreshed membership and revised terms of reference. It will monitor progress for at least the first year, reporting back to the LSC National Council. Similar groups will be encouraged at regional or sub-regional level, to evaluate the effectiveness of activity agreed for that patch and to take forward further planning.

25

Building on the transparency of the strategy consultation exercise, a series of public 'taking stock' events is planned to enable the VCS and the LSC to review progress together.

Summary of key actions

26

The LSC proposes to:

- develop a model framework for defining and benchmarking LSC engagement with the sector, and measuring progress
- ensure that every local office that has not already done so conducts a benchmarking exercise, using the model framework
- include actions emerging from benchmarking in its annual planning processes at every level, and to report on progress
- develop and roll out a package of staff development activity and resources to support implementation, aimed primarily at LSC staff
- evaluate the impact of this strategy through national, regional and sub-regional implementation groups, and public 'taking stock' events.



Section 2

Section 2: The Voluntary and Community Sector as a Provider of Learning Opportunities

The LSC will also consider whether there are private, voluntary and community providers who are not currently supported through public funds, but who could make a distinctive and high-quality contribution to the range of opportunities in the area. The LSC will seek to build the capacity of such providers to attract hard-to-reach learners.

21st Century Skills: Realising our potential, DfES 2003a

Developing the role of provider

27

The role of learning provider is probably the most significant aspect of engagement between the LSC and the VCS. Applied to the VCS, the term covers a broad scope of involvement, from organisations focused on learning, to those that combine it with other activities, as well as those providing complementary services such as IAG. Successful approaches to the sector encompass this diversity and do not rely on a 'one size fits all' solution, as the many emerging examples of effective LSC and VCS engagement show.

28

The LSC's Widening Participation Strategy notes that the VCS is particularly good at:

- establishing trusting relationships with excluded and disadvantaged communities and individuals
- developing provision in direct response to needs identified by communities and

individuals themselves, growing out of learners' experiences and offered in ways and settings with which people feel comfortable

- developing informal learning opportunities, whether explicitly identified or embedded in other activities
- responding quickly to changes in demand and using resources creatively
- working holistically across boundaries to maximise ideas, skills and resources.

29

These strengths are also seen as essential to delivering the LSC's equality and diversity objectives. The LSC's most recent consultation on equality and diversity commits the LSC to 'encouraging and promoting inter-community working and building partnerships with the voluntary and community sector, particularly for the purposes of communication with learners and planning provision appropriately' (LSC, 2003, paragraph 16c).



30

Involving the VCS in a more systematic way in the teaching and support of adult literacy, numeracy and language could enhance the LSC's effectiveness within the *Skills for Life* Strategy. The Basic Skills in Local Communities programme, for example, revealed untapped VCS potential to offer both discrete and embedded literacy, numeracy and language provision for adults. Similarly, the success of Link-Up projects (jointly funded by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, the Active Community Unit and the LSC) demonstrated the VCS's success in recruiting and training volunteers to support adults in their learning.

31

However, the LSC also values the sector's broader contribution to learning, delivering high-quality accredited programmes that improve skills, qualifications and employability. Aligned to this is the potential to offer coherent, accessible progression routes, particularly for more excluded learners, from informal and first-rung provision to advanced vocational programmes. The LSC would like to see this developed further through local planning processes.

32

VCS providers' role in widening access to e-learning is ripe for further development. The LSC will explore ways of maximising the possibilities offered by local ICT infrastructures, including exploring the possibility of extending the National Learning Network to VCS providers.

Funding

33

VCS providers draw primarily on Local Intervention and Development (LID) and Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) funds, and the Adult and Community Learning and Work Based Learning funding streams. Some also access mainstream further education budgets. Additionally, the sector is often involved with the LSC through European Social Fund co-financing arrangements.

Mainstream budgets

34

The LSC acknowledges that its funding relationship with the VCS still focuses on short-term budgets, often with an emphasis on innovation. While this can produce excellent results, it works against longer-term stability and strategic planning in the sector, sustainability for work of proven quality, and coherent progression routes within the VCS and beyond, all of which the LSC wants to encourage. Opening up access to mainstream funding for VCS providers, including those not previously funded by the LSC, is seen as key to addressing this major issue.

35

However the LSC expects that VCS providers will also continue to play a key role in pioneering cutting-edge learning supported from project funding, and in future wants to see this work recognised in local planning processes.

New providers

36

21st Century Skills (DfES, 2003a) raises the possibility of drawing more VCS providers into the scope of LSC funding and offers the suggestion of capacity-building investment. The LSC's Widening Participation Strategy echoes this commitment: *We will also develop capacity in new providers where there are gaps in provision, and where there is evidence that a new approach is required. This development is particularly likely to relate to voluntary sector providers.*

Successful Participation for All, LSC 2003a

37

The LSC acknowledges concerns about variable approaches across the country to enlisting new providers. Proposals on communication, capacity-building and VCS involvement in planning should help achieve greater consistency. However, the LSC is anxious to avoid unrealistic expectations: VCS organisations need to bear in mind the limits on LSC resourcing and capacity.

Review of funding arrangements

38

Sector relationships with funders have been the subject of several recent government reviews, all producing practical guidance. This includes the funding compact with the VCS (ACU, 2000), *Guidance to Funders* (HM Treasury, 2003a) and *Getting Better Delivery* (DfES, 2003b). This last item was compiled jointly with the LSC to inform work with learning providers. The LSC will review its arrangements and practices against their recommendations, covering issues such as upfront payments, balance of risk, cost recovery, use of profile funding and longer-term funding relationships.

Risk management

39

The LSC understands that unpredictability is inherent in work with excluded and disadvantaged people. Staff are encouraged to take a flexible view of outcomes and achievement in these circumstances. This strategy sends the clear message that taking a calculated risk can be the right way to proceed to achieve LSC objectives.

40

The LSC realises that risks can include difficulties for VCS providers and service users, such as the impact of short-term funding on organisational stability. This can apply across all programmes, not just the most innovative. The LSC will review its practices against the outcomes of *Balancing the Risk Project* (Home Office Civil Renewal Unit, 2003a, 2003b), co-sponsored by the LSC, DfES and other government departments, in order to ensure that risks and responsibility for their management are shared fairly with VCS providers.

Full-cost recovery

41

The Treasury's *Cross Cutting Review* (HM Treasury, 2002) made clear the legitimacy of VCS providers' inclusion of relevant overhead costs in applications for public funding. Other types of provider such as colleges are likely to have access to separate funding sources to cover some overheads, making VCS bids appear more expensive at first sight. Price differences can also arise from the higher cost of meeting the needs of more disadvantaged learners. The proposed review of LSC and VCS funding and contracting will take account of these issues.

42

The LSC recognises that the VCS also incurs costs through activities in support of learning such as advocacy of community needs, learning promotion, networking and providing advice. Where it sees a benefit from these, it will seek to support them, either directly or as part of future capacity-building activity (see also paragraphs 51 to 56).

Contracting

43

VCS providers commonly mix and match funding sources from both inside and outside the LSC. This can involve satisfying different contractual requirements, including those issuing from different parts of one local LSC, even for relatively small sums. The LSC intends to rationalise these arrangements as far as possible to minimise effort for both sides. The proposed review of LSC and VCS funding practices will take account of such issues as:

- contracting delays that reduce time for delivery
- direct contracting with VCS providers
- unsatisfactory sub-contracting and franchising arrangements
- 'reverse franchising', in which VCS bodies hold funds and buy provision from mainstream providers
- proportionate, fit-for-purpose contractual requirements.

Contracting for multi-site organisations

44

Where VCS organisations operate across more than one area, contracts are usually made separately with each of the local LSCs involved. The LSC has been piloting 'lead local LSC' arrangements with a small number of national work based learning providers. This has enabled providers to deal with a single local office acting on behalf of several offices. The pilots are currently under review, and the outcomes implemented from 2004/05.

45

However, the LSC recognises that lead local LSCs may not address fully the scale and complexity of business with national VCS organisations. The current reshaping of LSC structures offers an opportunity to move towards a single contracting point at national level for national, multi-site, multi-contract VCS providers. This accords with the commitment in the LSC's Remit Letter (DfEE, 2000 paragraph 20) 'to ensure that large national organisations and employers are able to liaise with the Council at a single national point'.

Consortia and other intermediaries

46

VCS consortia arrangements are becoming more prevalent, as increasing numbers of local LSCs build positive and proactive relations with them. Consortia differ considerably in their stages of development, composition, status, degree of formality, roles and ways of functioning. Some choose a different term for themselves, such as a 'learning forum'.

47

Depending on their chosen remit, consortia offer a range of potential benefits to the LSC and to VCS providers. For the former, they can offer a single contracting and reporting point, a swift and sensitive means of communication with diffuse VCS organisations, a vehicle for supporting capacity-building and a coordinated VCS voice. Some local agreements have seen consortia assuming responsibility for some aspects of monitoring and quality assurance, successfully supporting local LSC capacity in this area.

48

For the VCS, consortia can shield smaller organisations from bureaucracy, simplify bidding and funding routes, facilitate the sharing of information, ideas and skills, and support curriculum development and information management. They can help with quality assurance and staff training, undertake needs analyses, and provide a strategic voice in developments affecting the sector locally, regionally and nationally.

49

The LSC understands that consortia are independent bodies. Their effectiveness depends on their transparency and inclusiveness, on adding value to existing infrastructure and on providing value for money to members and funders. The LSC will work with relevant VCS bodies to explore common standards for local consortia arrangements. This will develop fit-for-purpose support for services in post-16 learning and skills, incorporating the ongoing work of the Home Office Active Communities Unit (ACU) on VCS infrastructure.

50

Although consortia clearly serve a number of useful functions, the LSC remains open to VCS providers that either cannot, or choose not, to join them. It also recognises the valuable role in learning and skills played by other infrastructure bodies such as Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs), regional VCS networks and national umbrella organisations. The LSC will consolidate its links with them.



Capacity-building for the voluntary and community sector

51

The LSC recognises that some VCS organisations (both individual and infrastructure bodies) need investment to build their capacity to work with LSC systems and standards. VCS capacity-building requirements vary enormously, and thinking in this area must take account of the diverse nature and roles of sector organisations.

52

The LSC understands that whilst one-off injections of capacity-building funding make a significant and valuable difference, they are not sufficient for sustained development, as the Treasury's *Cross Cutting Review* (HM Treasury, 2002) noted. Accordingly, the LSC will look to secure sustained resources for this purpose. Inclusion of core costs in funding agreements and greater access to mainstream funding should also help in the longer term. With the long-term sustainability of VCS capacity in mind, the LSC will prioritise investment in the development of better fund-raising and financial planning skills in the sector where it supports post-16 education and training.

53

LSC interventions in this area need to be aligned with the outcomes of ACU-led reviews of VCS infrastructure and community capacity-building (ACU, 2003b), and with the outcomes of funding from HM Treasury's *Futurebuilders* (HM Treasury, 2003b) and the ACU's *VCS Capacity Building and Infrastructure National Exemplars* (ACU, 2003c). The LSC's contribution will maintain a clear focus on delivering services for learning and skills.

54

Some interventions are relatively cost-neutral. Cross-sector collaboration and partnerships can help bridge capacity gaps, encouraging the exchange of ideas, skills, resources and practice. The LSC acknowledges its potential to foster better engagement between VCS providers and those in the public and private sectors.

55

The LSC will explore with other stakeholders the scope for development of a national programme of quality improvement support, taking into account the Quality Improvement Support Programme for local authority-secured adult and community learning, and other quality systems used by the VCS, such as the Charter Mark, Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO) and Quality First. The ACU's work to consolidate and simplify the range of performance improvement tools available to the VCS will also have a role to play.

56

Capacity among black and minority ethnic VCS organisations and infrastructure is particularly under-resourced. Home Office research shows that black and minority ethnic VCS bodies experience a disproportionately large funding shortfall, a legacy of under-investment, greater reliance on grants covering delivery but not core costs, and less involvement with supporting umbrella bodies. In this context the LSC will consult with the sector to explore ways of addressing these problems as they affect the capacity of black- and minority ethnic-led VCS organisations, and organisations working on behalf of people with disabilities, involved in post-16 learning. (Home Office 2003c) (Local Government Association 2002)

Summary of key actions

57

The LSC proposes to:

- explore ways of maximising the VCS contribution to e-learning including the possibility of extending the National Learning Network to VCS providers
- review LSC contracting, reporting and funding arrangements against the Treasury *Guidance to Funders* (HM Treasury 2003a), the DfES *Getting Better Delivery* (DfES, 2003b), the Government's revised *Compact on Funding* (ACU, 2000a), and the outcomes of the *Balancing the of Risk Project* (Home Office Civil Renewal Unit, 2003a, 2003b)
- roll out lead local LSC arrangements as appropriate and explore setting up a single contracting point in the LSC for national multi-site, multi-contract VCS providers at national level
- explore, with the sector, common standards for consortia and develop fit-for-purpose support
- work with the VCS to develop a strategic approach to capacity-building for sector providers, taking account of the particular needs of black- and minority ethnic-led VCS organisations
- explore options for a VCS quality support programme aimed at VCS providers, in the context of existing measures such as the Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programme, Consortia+ and ACU activity.



Section 3



Section 3: The Voluntary and Community Sector as an Employer

The effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector is heavily dependent on it having paid and volunteer workers (including trustees) with the right skills to fulfill their responsibilities. There is a need for investment at a national, regional and local level to support existing good practice, build on what already exists and to extend the benefits more widely across the country.

A Skills Strategy for the Voluntary and Community Sector, VSNT0, 2004

Characteristics and current issues

58 The voluntary and community sector is a significant employer. General charities employ over half a million workers, equivalent to 471,000 full-time jobs, or 2 per cent of the total UK workforce and larger than the agricultural, textile or car manufacturing industries. The sector contributes around £7.2 billion to the UK's GDP (VSNT0, 2004).

59 Additionally, VCS organisations draw on some 3 million unpaid workers. Their work is estimated to be equivalent to another 1.3 million full-time jobs, with a financial value of over £15 billion (£8.1 billion in direct service delivery) (VSNT0, 2004). Volunteering is essential to the nature and functioning of the sector, and also helps people develop skills, find paid work and progress to further learning and training.

60 Employment patterns have a significant impact on training and development. The sector relies more heavily on part-time employees than either the public or private sectors. Small workplaces (one to ten employees) account for 33.7 per cent of VCS employees, proportionally greater than in the private and public sectors. Most staff work in organisations employing under 25 people, and fewer than 25 per cent of sector organisations employ any paid staff at all (VSNT0, 2004).

61 In contrast to the UK workforce as a whole, people from black and minority ethnic communities are well represented, as are workers with a disability or long-term health problem. Two-thirds of the workforce is female. The workforce is relatively highly qualified, with more graduates (25 per cent) than either the public or private sectors (VSNT0, 2004).

62

Given its diversity, VCS workforce development presents significant opportunities for widening participation, promoting equality, and progression to qualification-based programmes. Developing the workforce also builds the sector's capacity for delivering high-quality learning. Directly and indirectly, therefore, VCS staff development can boost the achievement of targets for literacy, numeracy and language and Level 2 qualifications, among others.

63

Approaches to workforce development must accommodate the wide range of needs and capacity arising from a sector ranging from the international 'household name' charities with thousands of paid staff through to small community-based organisations with none (approximately 70 per cent of the sector operates at this local level).

64

The prevailing culture in large parts of the VCS values a skilled and well-motivated workforce, with some 70 per cent of organisations in the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Almanac (NCVO 2004) (predominantly the bigger, established bodies) having formal policies to encourage staff training and over 90 per cent having staff development budgets.

65

However, a range of difficulties hampers the efforts of smaller, local organisations in particular. Most significant is the reliance on short-term, discretionary funding which works against longer-term planning. Besides the employment patterns outlined above, other practical problems

include cover for workers undertaking training and inadequate advice and guidance. Similar concerns are often raised by small and medium-sized firms in the private sector, and cross-sector links should be encouraged.

Priorities for voluntary and community sector skills development

66

The interdependence between the sector and the LSC in pursuit of shared aims for learning and skills means the LSC has a strong interest in developing the capacity of sector staff, including volunteers. Workforce development planning at national, regional and local levels should reflect their training needs, and recognise training for unpaid staff as eligible for workforce development funding.

67

The LSC has worked closely with the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation (VSNTO) on its *Skills Strategy for the Voluntary and Community Sector* (VSNTO, 2004). It will remain involved during the strategy's implementation. This is a generic strategy for the development of staff in all types of organisations. Taken as a whole, the skill needs identified align with the primary skills gaps identified by employers. These are: management skills, general communication skills, computer literacy and personal skills. Although these clearly have a direct bearing on the capacity of staff and volunteers to engage successfully with adult learning and learners, the LSC wants to ensure that its own implementation and interpretation includes a strong focus on the delivery of learning and skills.

68

In the first instance, this means developing the skills of teachers, tutors and trainers, though the sector's role in supporting, advising and guiding learners makes it important also to include outreach and IAG activities. The LSC's work on VCS skills development will align with that of other stakeholders such as the Further Education National Training organisation (FENTO), VSNTO and the Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council.

69

More widely, the sector's scale means that skill development and accreditation across the full range of sector services can make a significant impact on LSC workforce development activity. A regional approach to VCS workforce development has attractions, ensuring consistency, enabling economies of scale. It matches the VCS regional infrastructure and will link with Government Office and RDA interests in skills development and the VCS. Consolidating progression routes, career planning and continuing professional development will increase the retention of skilled staff within the sector, creating a virtuous circle of investment, sustained development and high-quality service delivery.

70

Action to build on emerging examples of good practice in workforce development will need to be taken forward within the framework of the outcomes of the ACU reviews of VCS infrastructure and community capacity-building. Close liaison between the LSC and the VSNTO will extend to implementing the proposals in the VSNTO skills strategy, including the agreement to establish a UK workforce development hub for the VCS. This would encompass the full range of training and development as well as personnel management.

Summary of key actions

71

The LSC proposes to:

- ensure that local workforce development plans support the agreed needs of all VCS staff, paid and unpaid, and are set in the context of the VSNTO skills strategy and appropriate occupational standards
- explore a range of practical ways of reducing barriers to VCS workforce development, such as 'backfilling', and access to IAG
- encourage cross-sector clusters among small and medium-sized VCS and private sector organisations
- continue to work with the VSNTO at national level on the implementation of its skills strategy, ensuring it meets the needs of the learning and skills sector in particular.



Section 4



Section 4: The Voluntary and Community Sector as a Source of Expertise and Channel for Communication

Each LSC will decide with its local partners – including Local Education Authorities, colleges, community and voluntary groups – the priorities for spending those funds in order to maximise the civic, social and cultural gain for the area. In many cases there will also be money available from European Funds, neighbourhood renewal programmes, voluntary funds and other sources. The LSC is well placed to broker with its partners how those various funds can help achieve a coherent range of opportunities.

21st Century Skills: Realising our potential, DfES, 2003a

72

The VCS has a great deal to offer the LSC in terms of knowledge and expertise to inform local planning and funding decisions, and as a means of gathering and disseminating news and information among individuals and communities whom the LSC has found hard to reach. The fact that many VCS organisations combine learning with other social objectives such as housing, health or community development means they can help the LSC see its work in a wider context, mirroring the outlook of learners.

73

As many local LSCs are aware, more effective consultation with the VCS, and enhanced communication with its client groups, can help to ensure that local LSC plans reflect the needs and preferences of a wider range of learners. Part of the step-change to which this strategy aspires means facilitating a more active role for the VCS in LSC strategic thinking and objective-setting.

Ways of securing voluntary and community sector expertise

74

The LSC currently benefits from VCS advice at national level through representation on its National Council and various working groups and, at local level, on local councils. Individual VCS representatives' degree of accountability to their VCS 'constituency' is unclear, however, and an agreed statement of the expectations of these roles would provide transparency for the VCS and add to the authority of the roles with the LSC.

75

At present the sector's role in review and planning is not consistent across the country, as different approaches to strategic area reviews (StARs) illustrate. Local LSCs are urged to involve the VCS in subsequent StAR-related activity (through membership of reference groups, for example) and any future strategic review processes to

ensure they reflect the perspectives of the VCS and its service users. In return the sector needs to offer representatives who are knowledgeable about, and committed to, the StAR process.

76

Local and regional VCS support bodies – from long-established organisations such as the Councils for Voluntary Service to sub-regional and regional networks and forums of more recent origin – can provide the LSC with effective, efficient access to an informed, coordinated sector view. Many have developed a specific focus on learning and skills and/or workforce development. They can add value to LSC thinking by giving a voice to fresh ideas from beyond the current provider base, and linking learning and skills to related fields such as regeneration, healthcare or the arts.

77

In turn, infrastructure bodies can enhance the effectiveness of individual VCS organisations by acting as an information filter and interpreter of high-level policies. This will enable members to focus on delivering their core activities while building the perspective that keeps them in line with wider strategic developments.

78

The VCS forums may overlap with the role of Learning Partnerships and they will almost certainly share similar concerns. However, the voluntary and community sector is likely to offer unique attributes, such as:

- a voice on sector-specific issues in all the roles and forms of engagement with the LSC covered in this strategy

- wider links to areas of activity that border on learning and reflect the full content of learners' and potential learners' lives
- a focus on addressing disadvantage and widening participation
- established links among marginalised communities.

79

Another way in which the VCS could apply its expertise for the overall improvement of learning and skills provision would be to advise providers from other sectors on activities and approaches in areas where it leads the field (such as outreach). The LSC could play a useful role in brokering mutually beneficial contacts between different sectors.

Supporting voluntary and community sector expertise

80

To make the most of VCS expertise and knowledge, the LSC acknowledges it may need to invest resources in building the capacity of infrastructure or individual organisations, especially if they are new to this role. The LSC recognises that, as it would expect to pay for expertise commissioned from consultants, a similar principle should be considered in dealings with the VCS. An alternative or additional approach would be to offer "backfill" arrangements to cover for staff involved in consultation and advisory activity, as already happens in some cases when VCS staff undertake training.

81

Some Community Empowerment Networks (CENs), established and funded under the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, offer a useful illustration of the mutual benefits of investing in VCS capacity for representation, advice and communication – in this case, as members of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). Some local LSCs too are already seeing the returns from investment in VCS capacity in this area in the form of more accessible, coherent and authoritative intelligence.

82

The cost benefits of working through 'second tier' organisations are highlighted in the ACU-led review on voluntary and community sector infrastructure. The LSC will draw on this to develop, with the VCS, a common framework of expectation of, and support for, VCS intermediaries.

Two-way communication through the voluntary and community sector

83

To pursue its statutory duty to promote engagement in learning, and to achieve its aims for widening participation, the LSC must make the most of VCS links with people who do not traditionally participate in education and training. Straightforward advertising and promotion does not work with all prospective learners, particularly those who are disengaged and less confident.

84

Through established networks, VCS organisations reach a wide range of disadvantaged and excluded communities, and are well placed to act as champions of learning and to enable people to

learn in ways that suit them. The LSC sees the value of supporting this kind of outreach activity, whether or not organisations' core business is learning, to target people who could subsequently progress to learning provision in the VCS or elsewhere.

85

VCS-facilitated networks also offer the LSC great potential for a dialogue with learners and potential learners to involve them actively in research and promotion. There are good examples of VCS organisations training individuals and groups in survey techniques and advocacy skills so they can gather information or act as learning champions among their peers.

Summary of key actions

86

The LSC proposes to:

- promote the agreement of statements of expectations of VCS representatives on LSC boards and groups, locally, regionally and nationally
- review and encourage VCS involvement in follow-up activity to StARs and subsequent local StAR processes
- emphasise in operational guidance the need to draw on VCS expertise to meet corporate aims and targets, highlighting the contributions of different VCS organisations, and embedding the principle of paying for VCS consultancy
- develop a common framework for expectations of, and support for, VCS intermediaries (including black and minority ethnic infrastructure organisations), based on the ACU cost benefit analysis.



Section 5

Section 5: Communication and Working Relationships

Many of the barriers that voluntary and community sector organisations face are the consequence of a lack of understanding of the sector by people in government. There is considerable scope to build on current initiatives and for the public sector and the voluntary and community sector to work together to achieve necessary change.

Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery, HM Treasury 2002

Making things clearer

87 Effective two-way communication between the VCS and the LSC underpins the success of every aspect of this strategy. Without the understanding of alternative viewpoints that it brings, the cultural change that everyone seeks will not happen. Though there is a growing body of good practice for others to emulate, currently the extent and nature of LSC and VCS links are extremely varied across the country. Here too, a more consistent approach is needed to clarify and confirm a notion of minimum expectations on both sides.

88 VCS organisations have reported difficulties finding the right contact within the LSC, locally and nationally. A publicly accessible list of key LSC staff at national, local and regional levels would help everyone (from the VCS and elsewhere) to find the right contact within the organisation and save LSC staff time in dealing with matters not relevant to their job.

89 There is also widespread support for an identified person in each local LSC office who has sufficient seniority and breadth of knowledge about LSC business to link with the sector, act as its adviser and champion, take decisions and make commitments on behalf of the office as a whole, as well as ensuing effective internal communication among colleagues. Where compacts or protocols are agreed (see paragraphs 93 to 94 below), this person would be responsible for ensuring compliance. Good practice needs to be built into systems so that good relations are not vulnerable to personal priorities or staff turnover.

90 In their turn, VCS organisations can help the LSC by clearly identifying relevant contacts, along with their roles. The LSC will want to be certain that these roles are well-connected, transparent and accountable to their 'constituency'. When working with second tier bodies, it may be necessary to deal with more than one to ensure all aspects of the VCS are reached. Both the

LSC and intermediary bodies will need to be on the lookout for gaps and under-representation, and be prepared to find alternative means of communication. For example, grassroots community groups, particularly from the black and minority ethnic and faith sectors, may be less likely to be part of an established infrastructure, or where such infrastructure exists, it may be especially low on capacity and resources.

91

Alternative approaches that are proving successful in different regions are for local LSCs to fund an LSC liaison post within the VCS, or for the regional VCS forum to include a post specialising in learning and skills.

92

Reciprocal membership of boards or management committees is an effective way to develop mutual understanding, build capacity and influence organisations at their heart. It is important that new insights gained are communicated through the home organisation and acted on. It is likely too that some LSC staff will be involved with VCS organisations as volunteers in their own time. They should be encouraged to use their experiences to influence the LSC's approach.

Compacts and protocols

93

In pursuit of transparency and mutual understanding in contracting relationships and beyond, many local LSCs have signed up to local or regional compacts with VCS organisations in their areas. These are local applications of the principles, standards and practices in the jointly developed national compact between Government and the VCS. The LSC has already signed up to the principles of the national compact, which brings with it a useful body of services to support participating organisations. This includes codes of practice on areas such as funding and consultation, websites and an arbitration service. Consistent adoption of local or regional compacts and a commitment to compact principles and good practice should be extended to become the norm across the LSC.

94

As a first step towards a formal compact, short-term protocols could be agreed to cover mutual expectations in areas of immediate practical concern that can be easily and quickly remedied. For example, timescales for consultations or tendering exercises could be revised to accommodate the VCS's inclusive ways of working and its reliance on part-time and volunteer staff. Protocols can build confidence on both sides through quick wins but are not a final destination. The inclusion of a target date for a more formal compact will reinforce the idea that the purpose is to pave the way rather than to be an end in itself.

'Quick wins'

95

Some relatively simple practical changes can help ease communication.

- An agreed glossary of common terms can overcome the alienating effects of jargon.
- The LSC's national and local websites could be made more accessible, based on what the VCS would find most helpful.
- When important news is posted on its websites, the LSC is committed to a proactive approach to alert people to its existence, working through intermediary bodies when appropriate to cascade information quickly.
- Mindful that some VCS organisations do not have Internet access, the LSC will look to umbrella bodies and intermediaries to advise on alternative approaches, or to disseminate information themselves.
- Drawing on equality and diversity expertise, VCS bodies can advise on when and how to make information available in languages other than English, and in forms accessible to people with disabilities.

Summary of key actions

96

The LSC proposes to:

- identify a named senior person for each local LSC to act as primary contact for the VCS, either as a member of LSC staff or as a LSC-funded, VCS-based post, and to communicate the role clearly to the sector and to LSC staff
- promote compact principles, codes of practice and support arrangements, and encourage agreement of local or regional compacts by all local offices
- work with sector representatives, locally and nationally, to review communication channels to ensure that, as a minimum, they reflect compact principles and the good practice cited in this strategy.

Section 6



Section 6: Implementation Plan

Table 1 Implementation plan for the VCS Strategy

Key Role or Section			
Aims and context of the VCS Strategy.			
Proposed Action	Milestone	Date	Owner and Partner(s)
Publicising and disseminating the VCS Strategy.	LSC launches and publicises the VCS Strategy at national level.	June 2004	LSC National Office VCS Strategy Steering Group
	LSC launches and promotes companion document of consultation evidence and case studies to build awareness.	July 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSC representatives VCS
	Regional and/or local LSCs involve partners in active dissemination of the VCS Strategy and 'evidence' document.	July 2004	Local and regional LSCs VCS
Benchmarking and monitoring engagement between LSC and VCS.	LSC agrees model for benchmarking exercise – including definition of 'engagement' with the VCS.	September 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSC representatives VCS representatives
	All local LSCs complete benchmarking exercise in accordance with agreed model.	January 2004	Local LSCs (lead) VCS
	LSC at all levels includes actions resulting from benchmarking in business plans, reporting on impact and rolling forward actions annually.	March 2005 and annually thereafter	National, regional and local LSC (lead) VCS

Proposed Action	Milestone	Date	Owner and Partner(s)
LSC capacity-building.	LSC agrees priorities and approaches and commissions development of activities and resources.	October 2004 onwards	LSC National Office (lead) VCS Local and regional LSC representatives
	Opportunities rolled out to all staff.	October 2004 onwards	National, regional and local LSC representatives VCS
Evaluate impact.	LSC reviews membership and terms of reference to turn VCS Strategy Steering Group into Implementation Group.	May 2004	LSC National Office
	Implementation Group reviews first cycle of LSC benchmarking, planning and reporting.	March 2005	Implementation Group (lead) LSC National Office
	LSC organises public 'taking stock' events.	May 2005	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSC representatives VCS

Key Role or Section			
The voluntary and community sector as a provider of learning opportunities.			
Proposed Action	Milestone	Date	Owner and Partner(s)
'Lead local LSC' and national contracting arrangements.	LSC and VCS review outcomes of 'lead local LSC' pilots.	September 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSC representatives VCS
	LSC and VCS revisit national contracting arrangements in the light of 'lead local LSC' review.	September 2004	LSC National Office (lead) National, multi-contract VCS organisations Local and regional LSC representatives
	Recommended actions rolled out.	April 2005	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSC representatives VCS
Contracting, reporting and funding.	LSC reviews arrangements against government guidance. Review considers other rationalisations of contracting and reporting arrangements and access to funding information.	July 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSC National, local and regional VCS Black-and minority ethnic-led VCS organisations
	Issue planning guidance.	November 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Regional and local LSC VCS
	Revised arrangements rolled out.	October 2004 onwards	

Proposed Action	Milestone	Date	Owner and Partner(s)
VCS capacity-building.	LSC identifies and promotes existing capacity-building funding sources relating to post-16 learning.	October 2004	LSC National Office
	VCS and LSC review needs, resources and provision, and agree development priorities, resources and timetable for action. Review includes focus on black and minority ethnic VCS needs.	July 2004 – October 2004	LSC National Office (lead) National VCS Regional and local LSC and VCS Black- and minority ethnic-led VCS bodies
Quality.	LSC and VCS agree approach to quality support programme for VCS providers (VCSQSP), in the context of existing quality measures and support.	September 2004	LSC National Office (lead) DfES Regional and local LSC VCS Local Authorities; Learning and Skills Development Agency, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
		October 2004	LSC National Office (lead)
		September 2004 onwards	National, regional and local LSC VCS
	LSC and VCS agree resources for VCSQSP.		
	VCSQSP rolled out.		

Proposed Action	Milestone	Date	Owner and Partner(s)
Common standards and support for VCS consortia.	LSC and VCS agree common standards and fit-for-purpose support aligned to ACU infrastructure review.	September 2004	LSC National Office (lead) ACU Local and regional LSC VCS consortia Consortia+
	LSC and VCS agree timetable and resources for consortia, forum and network support.	September 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Regional and local LSC ACU, DfES, RDAs; Learning Partnerships
	Support rolled out.	October 2004 onwards.	LSC National Office (lead) ACU Local and regional LSC VCS consortia Consortia+
The VCS and e-learning.	LSC explores the possibility of extending the National Learning Network to VCS providers.	July 2004	LSC National Office (lead) UK Online, BECTA, NIACE
	VCS leads exploration of further role of e-learning in VCS provision.	September 2004	VCS networks and umbrella bodies LSC nationally, regionally and locally UK Online, BECTA, NIACE

Key Role or Section			
The voluntary and community sector as an employer.			
Proposed Action	Milestone	Date	Owner and Partner(s)
VCS needs in local workforce development plans, in the context of VSNT0 skills strategy.	LSC agrees mechanisms for identifying and incorporating VCS workforce development needs in local planning.	July 2004	LSC National Office and VSNT0 (lead) Local and regional LSCs RDAs Learning Partnerships
	Agreed arrangements rolled out and reviewed periodically.	September 2004 onwards	LSC National Office and VSNT0 (lead) Local and regional LSC and VCS RDAs Learning Partnerships
Reducing practical barriers to VCS workforce development.	LSC and VCS promote best practice (including 'backfilling' and access to IAG) and incorporate into planning processes.	July 2004 onwards	National, regional and local LSCs and VCS organisations
	LSC agrees and promotes good practice in cross-sector small- and medium organisation 'clusters' approach.	July 2004 onwards	LSC and VCS, regionally and nationally
Implementation of VSNT0 national skills strategy.	LSC and VSNT0 maintain focus on learning and skills sector in further joint work.	Ongoing	LSC National Office and VSNT0 Regional and local LSC and VCS

Key Role or Section			
The Voluntary and Community Sector as a source of expertise and channel for communication.			
Proposed Action	Milestone	Date	Owner and Partner(s)
VCS contribution to planning.	LSC and VCS promote agreement of 'statements of expectations' of VCS representatives on LSC boards and groups.	October 2004	LSC and VCS, locally, regionally or nationally, as appropriate
	LSC encourages VCS involvement in StARs follow-up activity and subsequent strategic reviews.	October 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSCs
	LSC operational guidance highlights potential VCS contributions to local and regional planning.	October 2004. As soon as possible, or whenever LSC operational guidance is issued	LSC National Office
Support for VCS intermediaries and infrastructure.	LSC and VCS agree and promote common framework for expectation of, and support for, VCS infrastructure organisations.	November 2004	Local and regional LSCs VCS infrastructure organisations
	LSC and VCS agree regional and local implementation action.	November 2004 onwards	

Key Role or Section			
Communication and working relationships.			
Proposed Action	Milestone	Date	Owner and Partner(s)
LSC and VCS compact.	All local LSCs encouraged to agree regional or local compacts with VCS.	March 2005	Local and regional LSCs VCS
LSC and VCS communication.	LSC agrees core common role of VCS contact in local offices.	August 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSC representatives VCS representatives
	All local LSCs identify and publicise named contact.	October 2004	Local LSCs
	LSC and VCS review communication channels to ensure they reflect strategy good practice including compact principles.	December 2004	LSC National Office (lead) Local and regional LSC and VCS
	LSC and VCS implement agreed action.	January 2004 onwards	Local, regional and national LSC and VCS



Annex A: Membership of the Strategy Steering Group and Practitioner Reference Group

Steering Group

Shirley Cramer (Chair)	The Dyslexia Institute and LSC National Council
Jon Gamble	LSC National Office
Margaret Bennett	Department for Education and Skills
Peter Brown	St John Ambulance
Mary Conneely	LSC London East
Janet Fleming	Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation
Bob Fryer	LSC National Council
Julia Grant	Surrey Community Action
Craig Harris	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Ben Kernighan	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Dianne Leyland	National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service
Amobi Modu	Active Community Unit, Home Office
Mae Parreno	The Bay Tree Centre
Anna Reisenberger	Refugee Council
Helen Robinson	The Salvation Army
Sir Tom Shebbeare and Leslie Morphy	The Prince's Trust
Alan Tuckett	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
Alex Williams	City of Manchester Stadium

Practitioner Reference Group

Lynne Bryan	National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service
Sara Gowen	Federation for Community Development Learning
John Harris	Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Forum
Allison Lovegrove	Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations
Tim Ward	The Learning Curve, Wiltshire
Tracey White	Citizens Advice, St Asaph

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www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_ccr/spend_ccr_voluntary/spend_ccr_voluntary.cfm

Home Office Active Community Unit (ACU)
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/active/

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
www.lsc.gov.uk

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/asp/search/ncvo/main.aspx?siteID=1

Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation (VSNT0)
www.voluntarysectorskills.org.uk/Homepage.asp?NodeID=21130

Annex C: Abbreviations

Abbreviations

ABSSU	Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
ACLF	Adult and Community Learning Fund
ACU	Active Communities Unit (Home Office)
CENs	Community Empowerment Networks
CVS	Councils for Voluntary Service
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment (now the Department for Education and Skills)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry
ESF	European Social Fund
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IAG	information, advice and guidance
ICT	information and communications technology
LEA	Local Education Authority
LIDF	Local Intervention and Development Fund
LLSSC	Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSPs	Local Strategic Partnerships
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NIACE	The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
NLDCF	Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund
NLN	National Learning Network
PQASSO	Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations
QSP	Quality Support Programme
RDA	Regional Development Agency
StAR	Strategic Area Review
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
VCO	Voluntary and Community Organisation
VSNTO	Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation
WBL	Work Based Learning
WEA	Workers' Educational Association

