

Minutes

Event:	Voluntary and Community Sector Workforce - Ambassador SSCs Chief Executive Meeting				
Date:	Monday 12 March 2007, 1.00pm - 3.30pm				
Venue:	SkillsActive offices, London				
Present:	Andrea Rowe	CEO	Skills for Care	Janet Fleming	UK Hub / NCVO
	Bansari Somani		SkillsActive	John Thorpe	SkillsActive
	Caroline Roberts		SSDA	Kate Thomas	UK Hub / WCVA
	Celia Carson		UK Hub / SCVO	Kim Harman	SkillsActive (minutes)
	David Hunter	CEO	Lifelong Learning UK	Peter Martin	CEO LANTRA
	Dick Winterton	CEO	Skills for Justice	Simon Perryman	SSDA
	Emma Skipper		Skills for Health	Sandra Bailie	UK Hub / NICVA
	Jackie Hepburn		SSDA (Scotland)	Stephen Studd	CEO SkillsActive
Attending:	Marion Lacey		Rock Solid Social		
	(Consultant)		Research		

Item	Minute	ACTION
1	Welcome and Introductions	
1.1	Welcomes and introductions were made.	
1.2	The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the continuation or close of this programme of work. Several documents were circulated in advance of the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annex 1: Round Table Briefing • Annex 2: Round Table Background • Annex 3: Memorandum of Understanding: Final Report by Rock Solid • Annex 4: Glossary • Annex 5: Schedule 2 - Link personnel • Annex 6: Schedule 3 - Schedule of Meetings • Annex 7: Schedule 4 - Key Delivery partners • Annex 8: Schedule 5 - Terms and Definitions 	
2	Background to the SkillsActive and UK Workforce Hub programme of work 2006-07	
2.1	Various members gave an overview of the background of the project.	
2.2	CR of SSDA gave some context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSDA has an existing Memorandum of Understanding with the UK Workforce Hub, linked to the programme of work that SkillsActive were acting as the lead SSC for. • In March 2006 it was felt that the MoU needed reviewing and it was decided that the future of the sector was better served directly with a link to the Skills for Business network rather than the SSDA. • Out of this discussion, higher level questions around how the network engages with the voluntary and community sector workforce were raised. • What are the next steps for this work? 	
2.3	JT gave a presentation (Annex 9) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Training Organisation had historically led on the development and review of national occupational standards, but these also need marketing and 	

promoting to the sector.

- It had been agreed that the term voluntary and community sector (VCS) should be broadened to include the voluntary and community sector workforce (VCSW) - this then covers paid and unpaid staff as well as those who work to support the voluntary sector.
- JT noted that the idea had been to align work programmes so that the Hub and network could share and benefit from each other. Meetings between the Hub and the network have been held to try and work in a joined-up way as far as possible.

2.4 ES as Chair of the project steering group gave a brief overview of the governance arrangements.

- Seven SSCs have been engaged on the steering group.
- Meetings have been held at least every quarter to share news and report against workplans.
- Several approaches to other SSCs have been made, inviting them to participate in the project.
- Creative and Cultural Skills are now a buddy with Lifelong Learning UK but for many SSCs the VCSW it is not a priority area.
- Ambassadors have limited resources for the role, with funding equivalent to 18 days activity.

3 Background to the research project to review current arrangements

3.1 General findings

ML addressed the group with some key ideas and findings.

- Leitch considers how people move into employment which will be an interesting model for the VCS workforce.
- Voluntary sector employers tend to represent their own organisation rather than thinking with a sector focus.
- Devolved administrations hold funding.
- There is currently a lot of awareness raising and consultation taking place but are the Sector Skills Agreements representative of the whole SSC footprint? ML added that lots of employers felt they had no influence and were not represented.
- There will be a new way forward with the UK Employment and Skills Commission.
- Justice and community sectors could pull together and there could be much less separatism.
- Employment progression and particularly skills passports are becoming more important.

3.2 Round table discussions

JF noted the MoU - the argument was that each SSC had funding to work across the UK, acting as one stop shop for organisations outside the network in order to promote SSCs, the Skills for Business network and NOS.

- JF added that SSCs should work with each nation through the existing VCS structure.

3.2.1 The UK Hub had begun a programme of work in 2004 and one year later the Ambassador network was introduced. This was seen as a separate work area to the main functions of the Hub:

- Leading on NOS development and review
- Influencing courses and programmes
- Accreditation of work place learning
- A centre of labour market information.

3.2.2 JF noted that the Hub, SSDA and Treasury officials from the Office of the Third Sector have met recently.

- A new working group led by the treasury and the third sector office will work out a mechanism for moving forward strategically and to work across all SSCs.
- There is recognition of the overlap within the VCS workforce.

- 3.2.3 JH asked how will other governments across the UK be engaged and is there four-nation representation on that working group?
- JF replied that there would be opportunity to feed into the membership of that working group. **Noted**
 - The group agreed that the four nations needed to be represented. **Noted**
 - Scottish Executive (Enterprise Department) needs to be engaged. A central policy on employment and skills with links to relevant departments is needed. **Noted**
 - JH added that we would want to lever additional funding rather than take it away from other groups. Careful thought needs to be given to the politics of funding.
 - SS added that Leitch and the broader changes all need to be linked in. SSDA have a UK wide responsibility and need to push for representatives from the nations.
- 3.2.4 SP stated that he would need to check the minutes of the meeting between the Hub, SSDA and Treasury, with regards to any discussion of a working group. **SP / Noted**
- SSCs have been developed in such a way that the best representation of the VCS workforce is through an SSC footprint.
 - If a new and separate body is developed, how will this interface with the existing network?
- 3.3 JH gave a Scottish perspective (see Annex 10).
The SSC VCS group in Scotland have been meeting for 15 months, sharing information but otherwise making little progress. Six months ago an action plan for Scotland was developed and a consultant engaged to consider what added value the network could have.
Some issues were identified:
- There is a mixed understanding of the SCVO role – few SSCs knew that SCVO were providing a paid-for service by the network.
 - With SSCs developing skills foresights and SSAs, the research by SCVO needed to be useful for those purposes and was not including the areas that it needed to.
 - The SfB network in Scotland were unclear what service they were receiving for the funding allocated to SCVO.
 - SCVO should have been explicit that they were working on behalf of the network, with use of the Skills for Business logos, etc.
 - Large parts of some SSCs were not covered by the VCS footprint and needed to complete their own research for those areas.
 - Nine SSCs were invited to share their SSA work or Scottish business plan, and themes for the network going forward were developed.
 - Each SSC was asked to work with SCVO to agree activity going forward.
 - JH added that she was keen to see a VCS action plan. **Noted**
- 3.4 Discussion included:
- An assumption that the issues highlighted with the Treasury are issues for SSCs.
 - What is not and cannot work with the current system, and what options can be opened to look at those issues?
 - The third sector is now an integral part of UK industry - it will fall to the sector to demonstrate that they can provide services previously delivered by the public or private sector. Resource will be needed to fulfil those services.
 - SSCs are not properly configured to deliver those services – there is overlap in SSC footprints.
 - An organisation is needed that can take a practitioner role at a national level and that can coordinate and regulate sub-sectors across each SSCs footprint.
 - A UK wide perspective is needed, to take into account national differences and to step in where there are gaps.
- A practical way of working is needed – some SSCs have very small VCS areas.

4 The way forward

- 4.1 Skills for Business priorities
DH added that the community development sector for example have lots of different standards applicable.
- 4.1.1
- DH stated that he would commit himself and Lifelong Learning UK staff to this area. **DH/Noted**
If there is a clear indication of agreement then he would be happy to support this.
 - Coherence, simplicity and an understandable MoU is needed.
- 4.2 PM noted that for LANTRA the VCS workforce was fully integrated to the SSA and LMI work.
- SMEs are hard to reach employers.
 - The value of work on NOS standards has been important and suggested a business SSC model around learning development, provision and how to reach employers
 - Recognising the skills of the sector and testing the VCS through skills passports is another way forward.
 - The challenge is in gaining funding – volunteering is rarely recognised as a sector.
 - PM added he would prefer not have an additional SSC for the VCS workforce but would like to see a single route to market that covers that part of the LANTRA footprint. **PM/Noted**
 - Lantra has a significant volunteer workforce & values the input of intermediary organisations
- 4.3 AR noted that the third sector is very much part of the Skills for Care and Development footprint.
- 90% of services in social care are provided by the private and VCS sectors.
 - Her SSC is funded by Department of Health to produce a national minimum data set for the workforce and is in discussions with the UK Hub regarding that.
 - Skills for Care have three major funding streams that all cover the VCS sector, new types of networks, resources and training to the national minimum standards.
 - Funding through local authorities is a lengthy process.
 - The Skills for Care and Development policy is UK wide.
 - AR felt that more needs to be invested into the sector. **Noted**
- 4.4 SS felt that the SkillsActive VCS workforce was slightly different – the workforce is largely organised within the existing structures of sport and the outdoors. **Noted**
- The view is that a level of competence is desired whether the role is paid or not.
 - Networks in the sector work well to include volunteers.
 - Useful surveys that drill down to county level have identified 1.9 million people that do some form of volunteering at least once a week **Noted**
- 4.5 ES fed in some points on behalf of John Rogers.
- His key questions were what is the added value of working together on VCS as a network?
 - What will the network do that will not be achieved through implementation of individual SSAs
 - If this activity cannot be clearly identified then should this strand of cross-sector activity continue next year
- 4.6 Model of delivery
SP asked what is wrong with the current arrangement that is preventing strategic work?
- What is meant by a strategic approach?
 - Does that refer to governance and values, or to management and leadership of the third sector?
 - Is there a gap in the SSA that is not covering the VCS issues properly?
 - If so, is work needed to pull that together?
- 4.7 JF stated that the Hub could not be a strategic partner if funding is only discretionary.
- The Hub does not have a strategic relationship with the SSDA or the Skills for Business network.
 - JF saw the Hub as adding value to SSCs, as they have good employer engagement.

- There are gaps in the SSA research with regards to the VCS sector,
- 4.8 DH felt that it was not appropriate to differentiate the VCS workforce as a separate sector.
- JH felt that if SSAs are not providing the evidence needed then it is dangerous to say that.
 - A core message could be docketed to each nation.
 - In Scotland, VCS support is very much a SfB network led approach and they have worked hard to come together as a network.
 - JH added that she would want to build on the strengths of the network, such as the SSAs.
- 4.8.1 • CR agreed with JH, and is working with local government to take that forward. **Noted**
- 4.9 Skills needs of the VCS workforce need to be integrated to the SSAs – a strategic approach cannot be identified until it is known what the value added needs for the VCS workforce are.
- What gaps do the SSAs have that need providing for?
 - DW agreed that a strategic view is useful. A core offering tailored to each SSC would add value to the SSC.
 - PM felt commonality of training programmes would be good. Joint work on the importance of funded programmes would be a useful political activity.
- Nations and regions context - see discussion at 3.3
- ## 5 Next Steps
- 5.1 The SfB network needs to evolve its structures to adequately cover cross sector areas.
- It could become an insular work area if only SSCs are engaged.
 - The Hub has a unique contribution for employer engagement and with an overarching perspective of the whole VCS sector.
- 5.2 Joint political pressure could be a useful tool to influence the system. **Noted**
- There is scope to speak jointly on funding regimes, training geared for employment and the fact that value of VCS training is not as appreciated as it should be.
 - NOS are an area where a relationship exists, for example with Managing Volunteers standards. The VCS does engage with other SSCs when relevant.
- 5.3 Labour Market Information:
Skills foresights have been completed, with comparative data of the old against the new included.
- JH felt there was an issue with the LMI in that the research that is carried out for the network is not suitable for all SSCs.
 - There are concerns regarding the repetition of details in questionnaires.
 - A formal agreement is needed over who designs the research, who would be responsible for completion, how it is used and how to ensure it is useful to feed into SSA work.
- 5.4 SB added that seven SSCs are engaged in LMI in Northern Ireland.
- The research will show overlaps, skill needs and development needs. SSCs can use that research in their SSAs.
 - A lot of joint work is already taking place in NI. The network sees the benefit and good practice takes place.
- 5.5 PM noted that the SfB network is always looking for a unique solution.
- The network has a way of looking at groups with common interests, for example Public Service Industries and Process Manufacturing.
 - A way in which the VCS can see the common interests is needed.
- 5.6 DW suggested a study to ensure the network is building the flexibility to meet different **Noted**

SSC needs.

- Perhaps a pause in activity at this stage is needed to study what is needed, how to make the network more effective and what SMEs need.
- Once the study is complete a solution can be designed that considers all the relevant aspects,

5.7 SS asked if the study could be done by an SSC? An established Hub exists – the benefits they can bring include:

- Links to networks
- Links to employers, jobs and organisations who fit across more than one SSC footprint
- The Hub needs the means to share the direction in the future and the pressures on the sector. Dialogue needs to be kept active.
- The network and the Hub can speak jointly to exert political pressure.
- LMI needs to be better coordinated and controlled.

5.8 Conclusions:

The group felt it was unlikely that a recommendation would be available by the end of March.

- How SSCs will relate to the new Employment and Skills Commission is a factor.
- There will not be the same relationship with the SSDA but there is opportunity to shape this relationship over the next six months,

Noted

5.9 Interim arrangements for the next six months are needed. The current MoU will continue to stand until a new arrangement is agreed.

- CR noted that she had earmarked funds but was not yet sure where this would be spent. Funds could be used to hold further debate.
- Less detail is now needed, as Rock Solid has already completed an amount of research.
- Engaging with the third sector review is necessary.
- CR added she did not want to enter another year long programme of work without a MoU agreement.
- A small amount of funds is available to further explore the issues.

Noted

Noted

5.10 The Hubs as a Sector Skills Body will need a SSC partner or buddy if they want to complete a Sector Qualifications Strategy for the VCS

- The Hub is applying for funds as an SSB in order to work on NOS.

Noted

5.11 CR noted that once minutes of the Hub, SSDA and Treasury meeting are available, any discussion on a working party could then be taken forward.

- SS noted there was the opportunity to discuss VCS at the next SSC CEO meeting. CR supported this.
- It was estimated that six months of interim arrangements is needed.
- Interim activity could look at consolidating SSA research and how the network can work on cross sectoral activity more effectively.
- SS felt that today's forum was worth repeating.

CR/Noted

CEOs

5.12 SkillsActive feel that the VCS workforce is not as big an area as for other SSCs such as in justice, community or health. SS stated that SkillsActive had no strong view on leading this work.

Noted

6 Any Other Business

6.1

There was no further business to discuss.