

The logo for EDuce Ltd features the company name in a bold, dark red serif font. A stylized, curved red shape, resembling a swoosh or a partial arrow, is positioned behind the text, starting from the left and curving upwards and to the right behind the letters 'uce' and 'Ltd'.

EDuce Ltd

**Benchmarking Voluntary
and Community Sector
Involvement with the
Learning and Skills
Council 2005**

***Report to RAISE
and the South East Learning and
Skills Councils***

October 2005

Benchmarking Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement with the Learning and Skills Council 2005

Report to RAISE and the South East Learning and Skills Councils

Contents

	<i>page</i>
1 Summary	1
2 Project Objectives and Approach	7
3 Policy Context	9
4 Benchmarking Findings	18
5 Conclusions	39
 <i>Appendices</i>	
A Checklist for LLSC Interviews	45
B Questionnaire: Benchmarking Involvement with the LSC	48
C Survey Respondent Characteristics	52
D LSC Benchmarking Data	55

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank very much:

- all the LLSC voluntary sector leads (Berkshire: Jon Thompson; Kent & Medway: Viv Foulds; Hampshire and Isle of Wight: Stephanie Semmence; Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire: Colin Downing; Surrey: Norma Landgraf; Sussex: Clare Witz) and their colleagues for their input to the project
- VCO members of the RAISE Learning and Skills Network who responded to on-line survey
- Marisa McClelland, Regional Skills Leader at RAISE who acted as project manager for the benchmarking project and supported the on-line survey, and Catherine Johnstone, Director of RAISE
- other participants involved in meetings associated with this project

The project has been undertaken by Derrick Johnstone and Susan Johnstone of EDuce and Solihin Garrard of Makesfive ltd.

Benchmarking Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement with the Learning and Skills Council 2005

1 Summary

1.1 Progress made

Progress has been made over the past two years in engaging voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) in the work of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This is evident, for example, in the agreement of the South East Compact for Learning and Skills and in support from individual Local LSCs (LLSCs) for a range of projects using their discretionary funds. There are also several examples where LLSCs have sought to ensure that VCOs benefit from mainstream programme funding.

1.2 Benefits

Benefits to VCOs have included access to funding for workforce development and for developing capacity to offer learning opportunities, information, advice and counselling and new learning facilities in community learning centres. The LSC has provided funds to meet many learning needs amongst staff and volunteers and amongst communities served - needs which may not otherwise have been addressed. This is the main source of **benefits to learners**. The LLSCs estimate that £20.3m (around 2% of total LSC funding for post 16 education in the South East in 2005-06) is funding training provided *by or for* the voluntary and community sector (VCS), supporting over 62,000 learners. Some 70% is accounted for by work-based learning contracts, and 23% by ESF Co-financed provision.

Benefits to LLSCs have included the strengthening of relationships and communications channels (eg, through local and sub-regional networks), and evidence at project level of successes in attracting new learners and reaching harder-to-reach groups. Promising developments include the Sussex VCS Learning Consortium, which is providing a platform for greater learning activity, taking advantage of a mix of funding sources.

There are some examples where VCOs are performing better relative to other learning providers operating in comparable contexts. Evidence remains limited, however, regarding the added value for the LSC of VCS involvement in the delivery of LSC programmes. There is a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation (a need common across discretionary projects in general, not just to those led by VCOs).

1.3 Scale of involvement in learning provision

Currently, there are **very few VCOs which contract with LLSCs for the delivery of mainstream learning opportunities**. Across the six LLSCs there are only six mainstream providers from the VCS, of which three are solely concerned with contracts

for Entry to Employment. These six provide up to 2,000 places¹. Only one provider has been brought through the LSC's 'new provider route' during the last two years.

There are **more VCOs which are members of Next Step consortia** delivering information, advice and guidance for adults (at least 38 across the region), and 21 ESF contracts are led by VCOs, involving a further (unquantified) set of VCO delivery partners.

Data is not available on the numbers of VCOs which are involved in FE provision (as sub-contractors/ franchisees) or in Adult and Community Learning provision (where planning is the responsibility of Local Education Authorities contracting with LLSCs). The latest available learner records (2003/04) show that 5.3% of mainstream provision is franchised out to community-based organisations² (which compares to 5.5% nationally). Such franchising has been under threat more recently as a result of budget pressures on colleges. LLSCs can give **relatively few examples of colleges notable for their partnerships with VCOs as providers or customers.**

1.4 VCOs and workforce development

Some VCOs have taken advantage of LSC workforce development support, though figures are not recorded/ available for all LLSCs. This has been in addition to a number of discretionary projects (eg, Berkshire Training Brokerage). In some but not all LLSC areas, VCOs have featured prominently in support for the care sector and have been targeted by Business Links as part of their delivery contract with their LLSC. There are examples where LLSCs are seeking to increase take-up by VCOs (eg, steps by Kent & Medway to promote Employer Training Pilot grants).

1.5 Consultations and communications

LLSCs are involving VCOs more in consultations on LSC plans, and especially, in responding to draft prospectuses for discretionary funding. There has been relatively little involvement, however, of VCOs in Strategic Area Reviews undertaken the last two years to bring about a better balance between demand and supply of learning opportunities. Several Learning Partnerships in the region - funded by LLSCs - continue to serve as a vehicle for communications and consultation with VCOs (as in the case of the Kent and Medway partnerships and their Community Learning Forums).

Over half the members of the RAISE Learning and Skills Network consider that that they are unable to influence local LLSC plans and policies, with under one in ten feeling that they are able to do so. Over a quarter consider that they are 'very well' or 'reasonably well' informed about LSC policies and priorities, and able to access resources for training directly from the LSC or indirectly through colleges and/ or other learning providers. Just over half regard themselves as 'not very well' placed on such information or access.

It is not possible to estimate the total numbers of VCOs which are 'engaged' with the LSC or through LSC-funded activities, as numbers have not been recorded. This detail is

¹ This figure *excludes* a number of long-established work-based learning providers which fall under a broader definition of the sector including social enterprise/ not-for profit organisations.

² This is a proxy for VCOs; these organisations include a variety of non-profit making and publicly funded organisations.

not a requirement of delivery plans submitted by providers. Across the South East, over 600 VCOs are members of the Learning and Skills Network recently reconstituted by RAISE as part of the South East Compact agreement.

Most LLSCs link with, and in some cases support, networks involving voluntary sector infrastructure organisations, and most LLSCs are involved with local ChangeUp infrastructure development consortia. This provides a practical focus for looking at emerging organisational development and skill needs within the sector, and how best VCOs, the LSC and other partners can respond to these.

The LLSCs have adopted different policies regarding their participation in Compacts. All have signed up to the regional Learning and Skills Compact, and four are parties to county or local compacts. The others are using the regional Compact to demonstrate their commitment to Compact principles.

All the LLSCs have nominated lead contacts for the VCS, though we found that over half the respondents to our survey of members of the RAISE Learning and Skills Network did not know who the relevant lead contact was. Two in five of these network members report that they have been consulted by their local LSC in the past two (primarily regarding ESF Co-financing plans or Strategic Area Reviews).

1.6 Activities at the margins

While in principle there is considerable common ground between the interests of VCOs and the LSC, in practice **VCOs tend to operate at the margins of LSC policies and priorities.** This is because:

- *relative* priorities within the LSC (reflecting government guidance) place lower importance on widening participation and greater importance on, eg:
 - ◆ meeting the Government's commitment to learning opportunities for 16-19 year olds
 - ◆ improving the quality of existing provision, notably through FE colleges
 - ◆ achieving targets set by Skills for Life (the national adult basic skills strategy)
 - ◆ ensuring that learners progress to achieving qualifications
- the **VCS tends to be neglected because it is not recognised formally as an employment sector** warranting a Sector Skills Council, and does not feature in the national Standard Industrial Classification (typically used for defining the scope of government research). The RAISE 'Hidden Asset' report estimates that there are between 28,200 and 34,500 VCOs in the region, employing over 300,000 people (6% of the region's workforce, and larger than that for construction or agriculture)
- there has been **limited organisation within the sector on learning and skills**, in ways which enable VCOs *as employers* to influence learning provision, or collaborate to in offering learning opportunities. This in turn reflects:
 - ◆ the very diverse nature of the VCS, covering informal community groups as well as major national charities and serving a wide range of populations
 - ◆ the need to find resources to support networks and partnerships
 - ◆ available discretionary funding tends to be short-term, undermining longer term sustainability of projects and services

- the **limited direct evidence of the added value that VCOs bring to the LSC** in helping the organisation meet its performance targets

Many VCOs are dependent on short-term funding sources and continue to look to the LSC for funding. With a certain decline in European Social Fund monies available to the South East post-2006, there are pressures on VCOs and regional partners to look hard at future priorities.

The consequences of these factors include:

- a **continuing need for LLSCs to explain what they can and cannot do in relation to the VCS**, seeking to manage expectations about what it is possible to fund, and the nature of LSC quality requirements for providers
- **limited room for manoeuvre within the LSC on mainstream funding and contracting**, and a constant search for creative ways of engaging VCOs using discretionary resources
- **doubts within the VCS** about the benefits that engagement with the LSC will bring
- a **need to explore and promote delivery partnerships** bringing together VCOs, FE colleges, learning providers and promote models which have sufficient incentives to work effectively

From a VCO perspective, survey respondents provided a range of suggestions for actions that would best help VCOs and the LSC achieve more for learners and communities. These related in particular to:

- funding - with requests for easier, more direct access; a more secure, longer term basis; and subsidies to reach harder-to-reach learners
- challenges to LSC policies and priorities, where VCOs felt that they were having to bend what they do very much to fit what the LSC wants as a purchaser
- improvements in communications (with concerns expressed about misplaced perceptions within LLSCs about the VCS)
- the need for VCOs to continue to raise their own standards in relation to the services they provide (including learning opportunities)

This feedback mirrors research findings by RAISE on VCO development needs, undertaken in 2004 in preparing for the ChangeUp infrastructure development programme. This highlighted, eg, over-dependence on short-term funding; declining funding opportunities (from sources such as SEEDA, Lottery and ESF); needs for more effective collaborative working within the VCS; greater appreciation within the public sector of what the VCS have to offer, both socially and economically.

1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings strengthen the rationale behind the South East Compact as a vehicle for co-operation and action, and require a focus on those areas where it is in the power of LLSC leads for the VCS and interested VCOs to influence LSC mainstream policies and practices.

a) Strengthening the scope for VCO contributions to learning and skills provision

Emerging SE LSC proposals for ‘Action for Communities’ can provide a vehicle for greater priority - and benefits - to the VCS in the delivery of learning and skills programmes. This policy initiative is intended to integrate LSC support for learning in communities and provide coherent structure for how LLSCs can best engage with other funders (such as Jobcentre Plus and SEEDA) and contribute to LSP Community Strategies. A fresh approach to commissioning is proposed, along with a new model, ‘Fair Trade Franchising’ to promote partnering between mainstream providers and VCOs. This will also provide the context for (a) potential new arrangements for planning Personal and Community Development Learning, and (b) introducing the RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) process for validating the outcomes of learning which does not lead to qualifications. This is highly relevant to less formal learning opportunities preferred by many VCOs and their clients/ users.

Recommendations thus include:

- develop the Fair Trade Franchising model, based on ‘what works’ and appropriate incentives
- take steps to ensure that VCOs play a full role in the delivery of ‘Action for Communities’ (including capacity to deliver through partnerships; and appreciation of RARPA and related developments)
- seek further evidence of the added value of VCO involvement in learning delivery (with higher priority given to monitoring and evaluation at project level)
- promote collaborative responses with funders (eg, through Social Inclusion Partnership South East) to make the most of available funds for adult learning and inclusion (anticipating reduced ESF funding from 2006-07 onwards)

There should also be particular scope to explore how specialist VCOs can assist the LSC in key areas of common interest, eg, in meeting needs of Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (following the Little Review), offenders and ex-offenders (given the new LSC responsibility).

b) Ensuring that VCO workforce development needs are addressed

At the same time it is important that VCOs can benefit fully from the ‘Action for Business’ strand of the Regional Skills and Productivity Alliance Delivery Framework in their role as employers. This requires further action to:

- ensure that workforce development services for employers delivered by Business Links are marketed consistently to, and are accessible by, VCOs

- promote ways in which VCOs as employers can take advantage of LSC-funded provision to meet the learning and development needs of their staff and volunteers (with targeting as appropriate to demonstrate that services are geared to their needs not just 'business' employers)
 - ◆ develop skills brokerage services which serve VCOs
 - ◆ support initiatives within the voluntary sector to collaborate as employers
- share knowledge on individual LLSC/ Business Link approaches to workforce development in the VCS (and relevant Sector Skills Council sectors such as care), and identify what policies and practices can be transferred effectively

c) Strengthening capacity for mutual engagement

Further action is needed within the VCS and LLSCs:

- continue to work through ChangeUp consortia to address needs/ developing infrastructure services (and link this to LSC workforce development provision, including VCS priorities in ICT, performance improvement, leadership and management)
- ensure that the VCS is covered appropriately in the design of research projects (eg, by asking standard questions about legal status), and gaps in benchmarking data are filled on a consistent basis (with standard definitions adopted, preferably nationally by the LSC)
- research and explore with colleges, work-based learning providers and local education authorities (in their responsibility for adult and community learning funded by the LSC) options for greater engagement with VCOs and the relevance of Compact principles to their work
- maintain a regional resource to facilitate engagement at the regional level, essential for progress and ensuring a VCS contribution to the new regional LSC planning function, co-ordination across SSCs, and ensuring connections across relevant funding streams
- monitor changes and improvements in VCS engagement, building on qualitative (eg, on scale of involvement in provision) and quantitative benchmarks (eg, on VCO awareness of LSC policy and ability to influence) established in this project

2 Project Objectives & Approach

2.1 Project Aims & Approach

2.1.1 Project Aims

This project has sought to strengthen the implementation of the Learning and Skills Compact through:

- developing a baseline for assessing the benefits and impact of the South East Compact for Learning and Skills
- assessing progress made since an initial stocktaking of VCS engagement with the local LSCs in the South East in 2003, undertaken as a preliminary to establishing the South East Compact for Learning and Skills

It has been designed to further the development of the South East Learning and Skills Compact, established by the local LSCs in the region and RAISE, the regional voluntary sector network. This agreement and associated action plan seek to maximise the mutual benefit to be gained through strategic engagement of the voluntary and community sector in the work of the South East LLSCs.

The project has also been intended to inform strategy and action planning by individual LLSCs, local VCS infrastructure plans (being developed through the ChangeUp process) and the work of regional partnerships, especially the Regional Skills and Productivity Alliance and Social Inclusion Partnership South East.

The benchmarking project has primarily involved:

- a **stocktaking of practices and plans in each LLSC area** in relation to voluntary and community sector engagement with the LSC on learning and skills, especially in relation to the roles of VCOs as learning providers, employers and sources of expertise.

We interviewed the LLSC staff leading on relations with voluntary and community sector in each LLSC, to review current practices, initiatives and plans; assess progress since 2003 and what's working well and what's not; and identify/ clarify key issues to be addressed by the Compact Group. In most cases, these lead managers were accompanied by research colleagues. We expected that in order to complete this task, it was likely that the LLSC VCS leads would have to seek information from relevant colleagues, eg, contract managers and leads on adult and community learning.

LLSC data gathering (see Appendix A) was based on the framework used in 2003, meeting the further requirements for establishing a baseline that can be monitored in future. This has reflected advice provided in the 'Working Together' toolkit and relates to the undertakings set out in the South East Learning and Skills Compact.

Our interviews have been supplemented by internet/ desk research, to ensure our familiarity with relevant strategy and research documents, VCS capacity building projects, etc. We have also been able to draw on the **data on expenditure and**

learners gathered by LSC Berkshire for all the South East LLSCs in September 2005 at the request of LSC national office. (A full breakdown of this data is provided in Appendix D).

- an **on-line survey of members of the RAISE Learning and Skills Network** to establish a qualitative baseline and identify actions taken by voluntary and community organisations in relation to the VCS undertakings in the Compact, eg, in developing understanding of opportunities for VCOs and learners in the learning and skills agenda and promoting what the sector has to offer. The survey was also intended to provide a means of establishing the extent to which members of the Network have been involved in any LSC consultations and are aware of actions taken by the LLSCs, eg, nominated contacts.

Details of the survey (Appendix B) were sent to 610 registered VCO members of the Learning and Skills Network in August 2005, with two reminders. There were 47 replies, a response rate of 8%³. (Appendix C provides details of respondent characteristics.) Respondents were given the option of completing the survey on-line or returning it by e-mail or post.

As in our interviews with LLSCs, we sought to gather *evidence of added value* - the benefits (for learners, the VCS and the LSC) gained through LSC/VCS engagement over and above what would have been achieved otherwise - and to *identify ways of improving relationships* to the benefit of VCOs, the LSC and learners.

We also undertook a **review of national and regional policy developments** and their implications for LSC: voluntary/ community sector engagement in the region. This involved desk review of the principal policy developments relating to strategic engagement of the voluntary and community sector. It is important to place developments relating to learning and skills within the wider context of policies which concern the voluntary and community sector and its role in social inclusion, community development and service delivery. The policy context includes 'Working Together: A Strategy for the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Learning and Skills Council'; the National Skills Strategy; 'ChangeUp' and 'Firm Foundations' (the national strategies, respectively, for developing voluntary and community sector infrastructure and for community capacity building), the introduction of Compact Plus (to strengthen compact relationships and outcomes) and further developments around the Treasury-led agenda for the involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of public services. At a regional level, relevant developments include the review of the Regional Economic Strategy, the Regional Skills and Productivity Alliance and Social Inclusion Partnership South East.

Other **desk research** drew on the fieldwork undertaken for RAISE as part of the Early Spend Infrastructure project in 2004, which included research at sub-regional level intended to investigate key issues in VCS infrastructure development, from the perspectives of CVs, etc, and of statutory agencies (LLSCs included). Further sources have included the listing by NIACE of regional and sub-regional organisations supporting VCS involvement in learning and skills. We also took part in the regional

³ This response rate compares with 30% on a related survey mapping VCO capacity building needs in Luton and Bedfordshire run by EDuce over the same period. The latter, however, was more focused on the needs of individual organisations and offered the prospect of directly influencing a new project designed to benefit them.

Compact event on 16 May, which sought to promote interest within the VCS and endorse the Compact work programme, and explore current issues and opportunities on an individual LLSC basis.

The report proceeds to:

- highlight critical aspects of the policy context for the Learning and Skills Compact, setting out linkages, eg, with the regional ChangeUp plan for VCS infrastructure, the Regional Productivity and Skills Alliance and Social Inclusion Partnership South East (Chapter 3)
- summarise the 2005 baseline on VCS engagement with SE LLSCs and progress made since 2003, highlighting (a) gains in added value, and (b) interesting/ good practice which has scope for wider application (Chapter 4)
- draws conclusions, recommendations and key messages for different audiences (Chapter 5)

3 Policy Context

The extent, nature and quality of VCS engagement with the Learning and Skills Council is heavily influenced by the wider policy context. Some developments are favourable, while others make engagement more challenging.

National skills and education policies

Government White Papers in 2004-05 on 14-19 Education and on Skills have set out clearly the Government's priorities for public funding of learning and skills:

- a place at a school, college or training provider for every young person that stays on in full or part-time education and training (a statutory duty for the LSC)
- learning for adults who lack basic skills or the platform of skills for employability (recognised as a first full Level 2 qualification)
- ensuring a wide range of opportunities for adults to progress to higher level skills and qualifications, particularly at Level 3, while bearing some of the cost in recognition of the benefits received
- ensuring the continued availability of a wide range of adult learning opportunities for personal and community development.

Key priorities for the LSC (see *Priorities for Success 2006-2008*⁴) for the next two years are:

- embedding 14-19 reforms and raising attainment of Level 2 at 19;
- supporting low-skilled adults in acquiring basic skills and progressing from basic skills to Level 2 and above
- increasing employer engagement and increasingly meeting the needs of employers through the National Employer Training Programme⁵
- continuing to raise standards in all areas of education and training

The priorities include an entitlement for adults lacking basic skills to free learning. Learners pursuing their first full Level 2 do not pay tuition fees, and adults claiming income-related benefits are also entitled to full fee remission. In order to fund these commitments, it is necessary for individuals and employers benefiting from other LSC-funded provision to pay more towards the cost of their learning in line with the benefits they receive.

Despite significant real increases in LSC budgets, there have been further pressures on funding resulting from increased unit costs in provision for 16-18 olds and for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and as a consequence of improved retention and achievement rates in work-based learning.

⁴www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/FundingLearning/priorities-for-success.htm

⁵ The National Employment Training Programme (NETP) was announced as part of the Government's Pre-Budget Report 2004, to roll out the pilot Employer Training Grants programme. (Pilots included involves Berkshire and Kent & Medway) The programme provides funding directly to employers for them to invest in improving the skills of their low and semi-skilled employees.

The Government has ‘safeguarded’ funding for Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL)⁶ based on a formula that from 2006/07 will cover PCDL in mainstream FE and LA-funded (Local Authority) adult education.

The Government expects the LSC to focus on “increasing participation and achievement in areas of highest economic and social priority”, requiring a shift of resources away from the significant proportion devoted to students who already have a qualification at Level 2 or above and who are not progressing to higher levels.

Implications include proposals to reduce funding for non-accredited provision and withdraw funding from short courses (under nine hours), first aid at work and food hygiene courses, and basic skills provision that does not enable learners to progress towards achieving qualifications.

The LSC is to build on existing good local practice in planning this type of provision, with an aim of working through “true partnerships at local level which will lead to wider participation in this type of learning, drawing in non-LSC funding sources where feasible and involving local communities” (*Priorities for Success 2006-2008*, p14). The LSC is also to address gradually its funding legacy, whereby budgets for adult and community learning reflected historical spending by Local Education Authorities prior to the creation of the LSC. Some LLSC areas have thus been well-funded, while others have not. The formula will be based on the size of the adult population, deprivation measures and local costs.

NIACE in their initial response to *Priorities for Success*⁷ have raised a number of concerns relevant to VCS engagement with the LSC. These include:

- missed opportunities to integrate the skills agenda with the wider role that adult learning plays in cross-cutting public policy (referring, eg, to the recent SEU report, *Improving Services, Improving Lives*, and noting connections with policy objectives in health, citizenship, neighbourhood renewal and worklessness)
- reductions in numbers of adults participating in learning (as a consequence of higher fees and withdrawn provision)
- loss of short courses which can often be keys to meeting needs in small organisations and in widening participation through outreach activities

This latest statement of LSC priorities takes place in the context of the LSC’s Agenda for Change⁸, its programme for the reform of post-16 education. Proposals include further action to improve quality of provision and the introduction of Priority-Led Funding. The new funding system will ‘follow the plan’, ie, provider plans to meet employer and individual needs, with a common funding method and simplified funding formula. To give providers with greater stability, there will be a ‘core’ element (say between 90% and 95% of current levels) of funding. The remainder will be allocated by the LSC through commissions intended to meet local priorities. This may provide scope for new providers (including in some cases, VCOs), subject to their meeting LSC quality requirements (as currently the case). Changes also include reductions in LSC staffing and the strengthening of the regional tier within the organisation, including strategic planning

⁶ This guarantee also includes budgets for family and neighbourhood learning.

⁷ www.niace.org.uk/Organisation/advocacy/LSC/priorities-for-success.htm

⁸ Prospectus:

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/LSC/2005/quality/reshaping/agenda-for-change-prospectus.pdf>

functions. Overall, policy developments have tended to reduce the room for manoeuvre that LLSCs have in working with the VCS.

Sector Skills Councils

The other major development in the national skills policy has been the creation of 25 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). SSCs are employer-led, independent organisations that cover specific sectors of industry or business across the UK. Each SSC seeks to reduce skills gaps and shortages; improve productivity, business and public service performance; and improve the supply of learning opportunities. Their development has been supported by the Sector Skills Development Agency - which took the decision that there should not be an SSC for the VCS (though they have supported the work of the Voluntary Sector Workforce Development Hub, created under national ChangeUp arrangements for reform of VCS infrastructure). Each SSC is expected to address the needs of VCOs as employers in their sector, and to ensure that their sector workforce plans treat inclusion as a cross-cutting priority. Information is not available on the extent to which this is working out in practice.

The SSDA is supporting a project entitled, ‘The Volunteer Workforce’⁹ which aims ‘to formulate a strategic plan in relation to the volunteer workforce and which meets the needs of the voluntary and community sectors’. This involves five SSCs where there is a marked VCS presence (SkillsActive, Lantra, Skills for Health, Skills for Justice and GoSkills¹⁰).

The LSC and the Voluntary and Community Sector

The LSC introduced in 2004 the ‘Working Together’ strategy¹¹ for creating the conditions for VCOs and the LSC to work more effectively together to improve services the LSC and VCS provide. It recognised the roles of VCOs as providers of learning which can engage hard to reach learners as well as being employers with skill needs for trustees, and paid and unpaid staff. The strategy also places value on VCS roles as a source of expertise and intelligence and channel for networking and communication - and on the scope for mutual learning. There is no dedicated budget, but rather the strategy is expected to influence mainstream actions.

In the South East, ‘Working Together’ was preceded by agreement of the South East Compact on Learning and Skills, involving RAISE and the six LLSCs. Aims of the Compact are set out in the box below, and are backed up by an Action Plan which focuses on where the partners can help bring about tangible improvements. LSC monies, through the Widening Access and Participation Action Fund, have funded the post of Regional Learning and Skills Leader in RAISE to take this work programme forward, reporting to the Compact Advisory Group.

⁹ www.ssda-volunteer-workforce.org/

¹⁰ SkillsActive is the SSC for active leisure and learning, Lantra for land-based industries and GoSkills, for passenger transport

¹¹ Available under ‘Strategies and policies’ on the LSC corporate website, www.lsc.gov.uk

South East Compact for Learning and Skills

RAISE and the six LLSCs support each other in seeking to realise a learning society in the South East: *“a society in which everyone has the opportunity to go as far as their talents and efforts will take them, taking advantage of learning opportunities and participating fully.”*. This requires pursuing together strategic aims, to:

widening participation

1. Raise demand and widen participation in learning *within communities* served by voluntary and community organisations (VCOs)
2. 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
3. Extend learner aspirations, choice and opportunities for progression at all levels of education and training

workforce development

4. Raise demand for learning *within the VCS*, meeting the needs of individual staff, volunteers and trustees and VCOs as employers
5. 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

6. 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
7. Improve the quality of formal and informal learning opportunities, tailored to the needs of individual learners
8. Ensure equality and diversity are embedded throughout all strategies and provision

LSC regional priorities

LSC regional priorities¹² flow from those at national level and reflect particular needs within the region. Priorities of particular interest to many VCOs include adults at the margins of the labour force (including Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, older workers and the ‘hidden unemployed’), and the provision of coherent packages of learning programmes, advice and financial support for low skilled and disadvantaged people.

The priorities also include:

- Skills Brokerage, one of the main strategies of the Regional Skills and Productivity Alliance, which involves a regional approach to supporting the workforce development needs of employers across the South East through provision of skills and broader business support packages.
- The Action for Business College Network, which supports and accredits genuine change in the responsiveness of college employers.

While these latter initiatives are very much aimed at private sector businesses, they are potentially highly relevant to meeting needs in the VCS, provided that they are marketed and delivered appropriately.

¹² LSC South East Regional Priorities: 2005-06
www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/ej2j6pufi24vicl7w4aiqpoulamtthyo4m4msxj2unpexhc75f3c6gxr4s6x2w2t5slykjmhpap/RegionalStatementofPriorities2005.pdf

The LLSCs are currently the process of engaging VCOs and other stakeholders in developing a programme, Action for Communities, which will complement the 'Action for Business' strand of the Regional Skills and Productivity Alliance.

Parallel developments in government policy

The NIACE response to the Priorities for Success document highlighted important potential connections between LSC strategy and a range of cross-cutting government policies. Notable amongst these developments are:

- cross-government Treasury-led agenda for greater involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of public services - with a national PSA targets for the Home Office, "Increase voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion"
- ChangeUp, Home Office and DEFRA-funded national strategy for developing voluntary and community sector infrastructure - including:
 - ◆ support for sub-regional infrastructure development plans, potentially featuring workforce development services
 - ◆ funding of national hubs for workforce development, governance and performance improvement (all with links into the learning and skills policy agenda)
 - ◆ introduction of the new CapacityBuilders agency as a focus for improved performance
- Firm Foundations, the national, cross-government strategy for community capacity building
- the national Compact, and proposals for Compact Plus, intended to strengthen Compact relationships and outcomes from partnership between public and voluntary/ community sectors
- DEFRA Rural Social and Community Development Programme, providing support for sub-regional VCS partnerships and seeking to enhance community capacity building and entrepreneurial capability in rural communities, and help socially excluded individuals in rural communities improve their life chances

Positive and negative implications

Examples of positive and negative implications for VCS engagement with the LSC are set out in Table 1 below. These policy developments provide a complex context, in which there is a continuing need for VCOs to understand policy drivers and agency constraints - and the opportunities to benefit the communities they serve. There are concerns that as a sector, the VCS "doesn't quite fit" how learning and skills policies are developing - but there is a national LSC commitment to improving engagement. As noted above there may be particular opportunities with regard to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD), offenders and ex-offenders, and people experiencing mental health problems. Also, some LLSCs more than others might welcome approaches which will help hit targets where they are currently underperforming, or expect targets to become more difficult to achieve.

Table 1 Positive and negative implications of policy developments

Positive Factors → → →	← ← ← Negative Factors
VCS Involvement in public service delivery	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ government commitments for greater involvement of VCOs in service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ doubts within VCS about appropriate roles for VCOs in delivering <i>public</i> services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ fears of the state pushing VCOs in directions not in keeping with their missions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ major growth challenge for those VCOs who seek to play a bigger role
ChangeUp	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workforce Development Hub as a national focus on skills for the VCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ time-limited resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ incentives to collaboration within the VCS to meet infrastructure support needs (including potentially 	
Firm Foundations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ recognition of particular needs and issues relating to <i>community</i> groups 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cross-government commitment and action plan 	
Compact	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ introduction of Compact Plus, intended to strengthen Compact relationships and outcomes 	
LSC Priorities for Progress	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ scope for VCOs as employers to benefit from the National Employer Training Programme and RSPA priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VCS not recognised as a priority sector (with an SSC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ring-fence around adult and community learning budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ pressure on LSC budgets as a consequence of the learning guarantee for 16-19 year olds
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ uncertainties over future availability of LSC discretionary budgets
LSC Agenda for Change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ opportunities in Priority-Led Funding for new providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LSC quality requirements continue to apply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ introduction of RARPA, an mechanism for quality improvement and assurance appropriate to the VCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reform agenda very focused on existing providers, notably FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strengthening of strategic function at regional level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reduction in LSC staffing, potentially limiting scope for partnership and development work
LSC Working Together Strategy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ statement of intent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of dedicated budget
European funding	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ continuing EU policy priorities for learning, skills and social inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ significant reductions after 2006 in funds available through the ESF

4 Benchmarking Findings

We present our findings from the interviews, the survey of RAISE Learning and Skills Network members and LLSC data gathering under the headings of:

- 4.1 VCO involvement in learning provision
- 4.2 VCOs and workforce development
- 4.3 Building capacity for engagement and delivery
- 4.4 Consultations and communications

4.1 VCO involvement in learning provision

The South East LLSCs estimate that £20.3m (around 2% of total LSC funding for post 16 education in the South East) has been allocated in 2005-06 to learning provided *by or for* the voluntary and community sector (VCS), supporting over 62,000 learners. Some 70% is accounted for by work-based learning contracts, and 23% by ESF Co-financed provision¹³.

Mainstream providers

Table 2 below provides total for learner numbers and contract values relating to work-based learning provided by VCOs.

Table 2 LSC direct contracts with VCOs for work-based learning, 2005-06

LLSC	Learners	Contract Value (£)
Berkshire	181	682,675
Kent & Medway ¹⁴	284	2,862,852
Hampshire & Isle of Wight	1,618	5,841,764
Milton Keynes, Oxon & Bucks	100	352,160
Surrey	151	454,272
Sussex	660	2,089,900
TOTAL	2,994	£12,283,623

Source: LLSC estimates, September 2005

This tends to inflate the significance of VCO provision, however, as the totals include contracts with some group training organisations which provide training for business members, which many other VCOs would view as outside the definition of the VCS. Excluding these training organisations, it can be concluded that currently, there are **very few VCOs which contract with LLSCs** for the delivery of mainstream learning opportunities. Across the six LLSCs there are only six mainstream providers from the VCS, of which three are solely concerned with contracts for Entry to Employment (E2E)¹⁵. These six provide up to 2,000 places. Only one provider has been brought through the LSC's 'new provider route' during the last two years - and this provider has decided not to continue because of changes in its financial circumstances.

¹³ Appendix D provides a full breakdown of this data gathered in September 2005 by the SE LLSCs in response to a request from LSC National Office.

¹⁴ Includes E2E Consortia

¹⁵ This programme aims to help those young people aged 16-18 who are not yet ready or able to directly enter Modern Apprenticeship programmes, further education or employment

Information, advice and guidance providers

Local LSCs report that there are **more VCOs delivering information, advice and guidance (IAG) for adults** as members of Next Step¹⁶ consortia (at least 38 across the region), and 21 ESF contracts are led by VCOs, involving a further (unquantified) set of VCO delivery partners. Numbers of VCS IAG providers range between 4 in Surrey to 12 in Berkshire, and between 9% (Surrey) and 32% (Hampshire and Isle of Wight¹⁷) of contracted outputs. The numbers of VCOs contracted to deliver IAG have fluctuated over the past two years, as a consequence in changes in LSC delivery and contracting guidance. VCOs have benefited from capacity building support run through IAG contracts, most notably through support for staff achievement of relevant NVQs (an LSC contract requirement) and for organisational attainment of the national Matrix quality standard.

There has been a significant change in focus for IAG services, in that LSC requirements now concentrate on individuals ‘yet to achieve a Level 2 qualification’, rather than a wider service offer for adults. In the case of Kent and Medway, this shift has put pressure on the community based nature of the IAG consortium, and it has proved impossible to retain the network of Community Learning Advisers with core funding. The Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities budget is now used, but with future funding uncertain.

ESF Co-financed projects

Some 21 ESF contracts in 2004-06 are led by VCOs, involving a further (unquantified) set of VCO delivery partners, with an estimated budget (2004-06) of £4.1m (Table 3). Compared to the previous ESF period, there are fewer awards, but the average size is larger and typically requires partnership-based tenders. LSC commissions have become increasingly focused to meet regional and local priorities not otherwise being addressed. In some cases, specifications have explicitly targeted VCOs (eg, for a workforce development strategy in Berkshire in the September 2005 round) or needs where VCOs might have a particular contribution to make (eg, in meeting needs of people with disabilities). The LSC Sussex specification for ‘Learning in the Community’ seeks to provide access to training for low-skilled adult learners in non-traditional venues and requires “robust community partnership working and to be in partnership with at least one voluntary organisation”.

Table 3 LSC ESF Co-financing contracts with VCO leads, 2004-06

LLSC	Learners	Contract Value (£)
Berkshire	180	73,333
Kent & Medway	847	297,124
Hampshire & Isle of Wight	4,449	919,224
Milton Keynes, Oxon & Bucks	1,054	925,032
Surrey	2,400	667,000
Sussex	2,427	1,229,742
TOTAL	11,357	4,111,455

Source: LLSC estimates, September 2005

¹⁶ ‘Next Step’ is new brand and contractual system for the delivering of information, advice and guidance services for adults.

¹⁷ where in 2003 there were no VCO providers

Over a quarter of the total for contract value is accounted for by Sussex, for example, there are currently 6 ESF projects led by VCOs, of a value of £1.2m and with 2,427 target beneficiaries.

Examples of current contracts include:

- most of the CVSs in Berkshire are part of a Voluntary Sector Workforce Development Scheme, managed by the Community Council for Berkshire (CCB).
- in Surrey: Learning Champions, Embedded Basic Skills, Financial Literacy, VCS Capacity Building and Outreach ICT
- training needs analysis and courses for VCOs provided by Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action
- 'Women Builders - Building Opportunities' provides practical building skills to NVQ level 2 qualifications, employment opportunities and a secure supportive environment in which to learn and practice construction skills. Covers Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and run by Milton Keynes Women Builders, with 50 accredited outcomes every 12 weeks to mainstream standards
- Learning Together courses in Sussex, intended to help participants in community organisations become more effective and learn new skills together. Courses include, eg, Understanding Communities; Funding and Business Planning; Interpersonal Skills; Communications and Networking, Computers, Office Skills and Managing Your Group, and are available at different levels
- MACLS (Medway Adult and Community Learning Service) working with two CVSs to train new community-based basic skills tutors
- Workability project led by KCC Social Services to build local capacity in VCOs to work with young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight: VCO-led capacity building project relating to basic skills

ESF has also been accessed by LSC Hampshire and Isle of Wight to provide Global Grants¹⁸ (a budget of £532,000 in 2004-06 and estimated 3,800 participants). Such grants - of up to £10,000 - are aimed at small VCOs who work with disadvantaged people and lack the capacity to access the ESF either through Co-financing opportunities or direct bidding to the Government Office for the South East. Two other LLSCs co-fund Global Grants in their areas, administered by other county-wide bodies (Berkshire Community Foundation and Surrey Community Action). Global Grants are available across the rest of the region, administered by a variety of other intermediary organisations¹⁹.

Provision with colleges and other providers

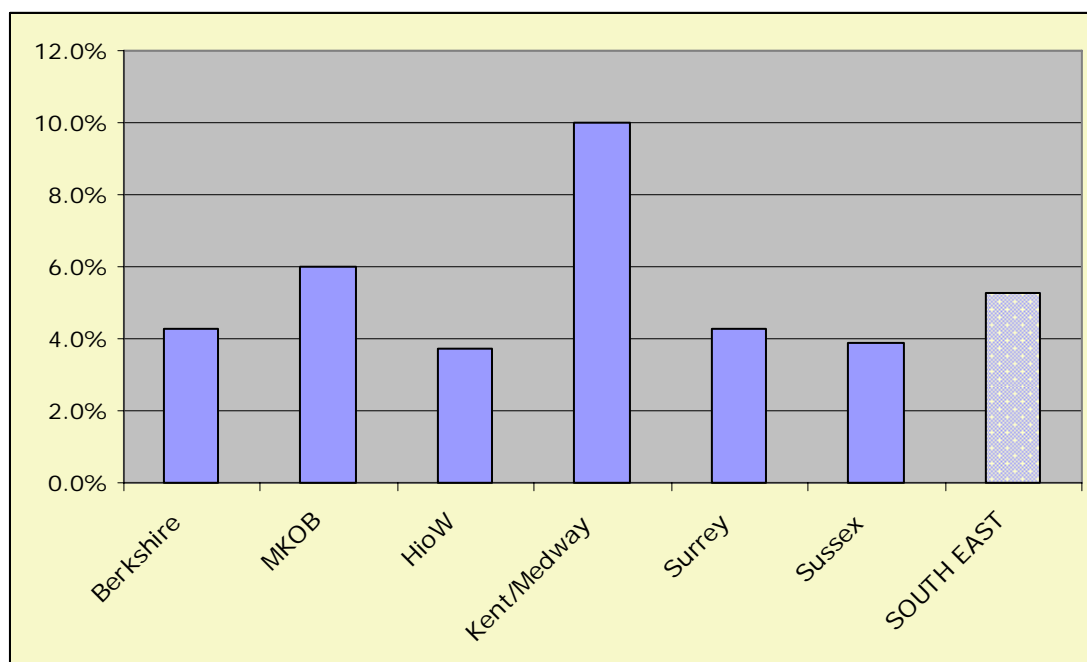
Data is not available on the numbers of VCOs who are involved in FE provision (as sub-contractors/ franchisees) or in Adult and Community Learning provision (where planning is the responsibility of Local Education Authorities contracting with LLSCs). The latest available learner records (2003/04) show that 5.3% of LSC mainstream

¹⁸ Global Grants are handled separately by Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Partnership for their area.

¹⁹ See www.savage-europe.org.uk/globalgrants.htm. Recent evaluation of Global Grants programmes for DWP (Research Report 287) found consistent evidence of positive outcomes for learners and VCOs, in the form of new skills, enhanced confidence and employability.

provision is franchised out to community-based organisations²⁰ (which compares to 5.5% nationally). Such franchising has been under threat more recently as a result of budget pressures on colleges. LLSCs can give **relatively few examples of colleges notable for their partnerships with VCOs as providers or customers.**

Figure 1 % mainstream provision franchised out to community-based organisations, by LLSC



Source: SE LLSCs

LSC Sussex have encouraged the participation of the Sussex Voluntary and Community Sector Learning Consortium in the Sussex Provider Collaboration Forum, resulting in improved relationships and a platform for collaborative activities with colleges and work-based learning providers. To this end, the members of the group have agreed a 'Partnership and Collaboration Protocol Framework' and are working up a framework and template for contracting arrangements to cover, eg, project objectives and deliverables, management, quality, and finance and payment terms.

This developed as an outcome of research, 'Partnerships for Learning', undertaken earlier in 2005 by FE Sussex for the VCS Consortium. This sought to explore partnership working between the sectors and investigate the reasons behind difficulties experienced, eg, in franchise arrangements (where a college negotiates a subcontract for the delivery of learning funded through its mainstream budget)²¹. It found a considerable amount of

²⁰ This is a proxy for VCOs; these organisations include a variety of non-profit making and publicly funded organisations.

²¹ Franchise arrangements may offer benefits in attracting hard-to-reach learners in community venues, where colleges enter into partnership with VCOs. Franchises have also been set up in the past with individual employers, and have been a cause for concern for the LSC and the Adult Learning Inspectorate, where provision has not met quality standards. The LSC now requires colleges to have (normally) no more than 5% of their income accounted for by franchise or related agreements. Colleges must now make adequate funding provision for subcontractors to ensure quality provision, demonstrate local need, and provide support for professional and organisational development. They must stipulate, in their three year funding

cross-sector goodwill, but serious concerns over planning and funding issues. The following comments from the Partnerships for Learning report are typical, reflecting points made by participants in the consultations for the South East Compact:

“Many of the VCOs feel that they are involved in partnerships with colleges in order to access funding, the agenda is rarely theirs, and the partnership funding tends to drive the activities, rather than it being driven by local needs of communities of individuals within the communities.

“The funding for franchised work is mainstream FE funding, based on the assumption that there are viable groups of learners all with similar learning needs. This rarely fits the profile of VCO learners. Academic years don’t feature in the VCOs’ work, and learners need to take differing amounts of time to complete their courses. FE funding which drives colleges to be efficient, with performance indicators of attendance, completion within a given period, and achievement of full certification, is not seen as an appropriate approach for many of the learners in VCOs.”

The Sussex report highlighted some successful examples (eg, Level 1 Land-based operations and chainsaw training involving Plumpton College and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), with illustrations of partnership benefits and difficulties contained in summaries of project interviews. It gave examples of some weaknesses in college approaches to partnership working, eg, in approaching prospective VCO partners very late in the day when preparing a tender, and notes a college concern that there has not been enough dialogue to ensure mutual understanding. It also posed some questions for colleges and VCOs to consider:

Questions for Colleges - Sussex report
<p><i>For colleges</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Do you see the college as an active member of its community?▪ What do you want to achieve in developing learning and skills for excluded members of your community?▪ How could you work with VCOs in the community to achieve your aims?▪ How could you make such a long-term partnership operational? What would ensure it operated at strategic as well as operational level?▪ What part could franchising play in such a partnership? <p><i>For VCOs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How could your local college work with you in a long-term partnership to support your work contacting hard-to-reach learners, and delivering learning programmes to them?▪ What could be achieved by such a long-term partnership that would improve your current practice and activities?▪ What could FE colleagues learn from you?▪ How would you see it operating on a day-to-day, month-by-month basis?▪ Could franchising be a useful part of such a partnership?

agreements, their partners, the learning provision involved and funding retained by the college top-sliced from the funding formula allocation.

Sussex Downs College is an example of a college that has seen franchising with VCOs as a *strategic* matter, part of their approach to widening participation. It has six franchise partners, and is leading on a new ESF project, 'New Futures for Communities in East Sussex', working with umbrella community groups in three areas of deprivation. The project involves identifying needs of non-learners and groups, recruiting individuals to work within groups as regeneration champions, a range of strategies to promote learning and flexible delivery, and support for dependency care and travel. Partners include Newhaven Community Development Association and Peacehaven and Telscombe Regeneration Partnership.

In Surrey, the LSC's FE Relations Team are seeking to influence college development plans such that colleges become more responsive to VCO workforce development needs and enable VCO contributions as outreach providers. Other examples of college/VCS partnership have included:

- collaboration between Totton College and Community Action New Forest in running a successful capacity building project in 2002-04 - branded for the VCS, with training delivered by the College.
- workshops run in Berkshire, the first to introduce WAPAF to colleges and Neighbourhood Learning Centres and encourage pairings, and the second to review and agree roles where partnering arrangements were to be pursued

LSC Hampshire and Isle of Wight piloted a scheme using discretionary funds to encourage college/VCO collaboration, but this met with limited interest.

There is anecdotal evidence (eg, in Kent and Medway and Hampshire and Isle of Wight) of colleges withdrawing from franchises and other partnership arrangements as a consequence of pressures on college budgets and LSC priorities for 14-19 and Level 2 provision. In one case (West Kent) the situation proved retrievable where it was possible to secure LSC funding (Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities - NLDC) for training VCS staff, with accreditation via the Open College Network.

The wider context is one where there is potential mutual benefit in partnerships between colleges and VCOs (with VCOs playing a role in attracting learners or delivering some of the learning , or in forming employer networks) but many VCOs:

- lack confidence that partnerships with colleges will be beneficial
- doubt that college trainers will deliver in tune with what they or their users want
- would prefer to control resources for learning themselves

Experience also shows that much of the real progress has been dependent on individuals - and is at risk when they move to jobs in other organisations. In practice overall, factors tending to work against establishing and sustaining partnerships between colleges and VCOs tend to outweigh significantly those working in favour - and there is a need to ensure that there are sufficient incentives in the funding system to encourage sustainable partnerships.

Voluntary sector involvement in Adult and Community Learning

Similar issues can arise in relation to Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision which the LSC funds via Local Education Authorities. As noted in Section 3, there are pressures on LSC budgets and expectations that the balance of provision should shift away from leisure learning. Hampshire and Isle of Wight is one area where the LLSC has asked their LEAs to concentrate on those most in need (at expense of leisure learning).

The LLSCs have limited information available on VCS involvement in ACL provision, and commented on significant differences in approach by LEAs, eg, with LEAs in Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Portsmouth and Surrey delivering all (or almost all) provision directly; Southampton, mainly through community schools; with a 'mixed economy' in Hampshire and a myriad of small providers on the Isle of Wight.

LSC Kent and Medway are expecting some relevant data from their current research project, and LSC Sussex is encouraging dialogue between the VCS Learning Consortium and VCOs and the LEAs in future planning. LSC Berkshire note some evidence of growing LEA/ACL commitment to widening participation and more VCS involvement

Other discretionary funds

Other relevant discretionary funds available to the LLSCs have included Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC), Widening Access and Participation Action Fund (WAPAF)²², and the Capacity Building Fund²³. The first is allocated according to a needs-based formula, while the others have been shared evenly across the six LLSCs.

These funds have been used in a variety of ways to support learning provision through the VCS and build VCO capacity. Examples (Table 4) include:

Table 4 Examples of Use of Other Discretionary Funds

LLSC	NLDC	WAPAF	Capacity Building Fund
Berkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ community learning centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ web-based resources to support VCS development
Kent Medway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ eg, CVS training suite in NW Kent; media training centre at VCS centre in Medway ▪ IT education suite for community association in Deal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ research by NW Kent Racial Equality Council support into activities and needs of local BME organisations
HIoW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ engaging 4 VCO providers in widening participation for adults through LEA and FE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ e.Volve online directory of voluntary and community organisations (Hampshire CC-led)

²² WAPAF supports implementation of the LSC strategy for widening adult participation strategy launched in 2003. It seeks to fund development projects to promote what works in widening participation and identify effective practice and make best use of its impact locally, regionally and nationally. It has been mainly used in the South East to support Skills for Life provision in the VCS.

²³ This was which was available in 2004-05 only. National evaluation of the Fund: <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/2005/quality/performanceachievement/evaluation-vcs-capacity-building-fund.pdf>

LLSC	NLDC	WAPAF	Capacity Building Fund
		funded support (focus on progression from first steps)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ support for a group of local black business managers and community leaders
MKOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ drop-in learning centre in High Wycombe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mapping work to increase engagement of BME VCOs in local networks and Compact activity ▪ identification of potential community champions from BME organisations
Surrey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ training 60 volunteer community development workers
Sussex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sussex VCS Learning Consortium project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VCS Learning Consortium activities: website; work; quality toolkit; collaborative links with FE Sussex; short courses in support of the Common Inspection Framework

The Community Development project in Surrey, delivered through Surrey Community Action, funds training (accredited at NVQ2) for community development volunteers (many with basic skill needs, and eight or nine with no qualifications). The project has been promoted through outreach, eg, in village events. About half are expected to gain the qualification and 8-15 to become permanent volunteers in their communities, supporting clients on learning queries, introducing them to IAG, local colleges, etc.

There has also been a region-wide Capacity Building Fund project run by the Dyslexia Institute to provide training for staff in working on basic skills with people with dyslexia, and involving two training modules and CD.

4.2 VCOs and workforce development

As employers, VCOs are eligible to take advantage of workforce development support funded by the LSC, typically through mainstream funding. In Hampshire and Isle of Wight, eg,

- Investors in People - gap analysis and action planning, optional workshop programme, on-going support from an Account Manager on the Investors in People and other assistance in implementing the action plan
- Team Leader Development Programme
- Learner Representatives (training for staff who devote a few hours a week to encouraging colleagues to take up learning opportunities within the workplace or outside)
- Level 2 Offer: free tuition, usually at level 2 to any adult who does not already have this level of qualification

There is evidence of some take-up by VCOs of such support, though figures are not recorded/ available for all LLSCs. This has been in addition to a number of projects funded through discretionary budgets (eg, Berkshire Training Brokerage).

TEECAP & Training Brokerage in Berkshire

TEECAP was a pilot scheme funded by the LSC, completed in March 2003, with the aim of identifying the training needs of VCOs, and options for how best to meet these. Windsor and Maidenhead Voluntary Action and Slough Council for Voluntary Service jointly ran the pilot, which established that most VCOs wanted tutor-led training. Although four out of the five most commonly identified needs (health and safety, office IT, management skills and marketing) could be offered by mainstream training providers, barriers to take up of these courses included lack of confidence, funding issues, and mismatch of availability. The pilot found that personal contact and taster training sessions encouraged wider take up of learning opportunities. It was also identified that there was a great deal of other needs that could not be met by mainstream providers.

Findings from the TEECAP pilot informed the bid by Berkshire CVSs for Local Intervention and Development Fund (LIDF) funding to develop a partnership approach to meeting the training needs of local VCOs – the Berkshire VCS Training Brokerage Scheme. This scheme enabled each CVS to employ a half-time Training Coordinator to work to identify local training needs and find ways of addressing them, either through encouraging existing providers to make provision, or by organising training themselves.

The Training Brokerage evaluation concluded that it has provided a useful way to increase access of VCOs to training, building their capacity to be more effective in delivering to their objectives. The programme has developed informative partnerships and increased the awareness of VCS needs, engaged local groups with learning and delivered appropriate, tailored training to the local voluntary sector. It also reinforced community development work, including close working with individual groups to assist them to develop training strategies, whether provided by the broker or another member of the relevant CVS team.

LSC Berkshire sees future funding very much as geared to the implementation of the regional priority for skills brokerage, and is promoting ways in which the VCOs might engage in this process.

Surrey Community Action: Build-It-Up, Training Courses and RARPA

Build-It-Up is delivered by Surrey Community Action (SCA) to build capacity in the VCS so that more VCS providers can access funding successfully. It seeks to raise awareness of funding opportunities, advise on how best to meet funding criteria, and provides support in preparing applications. It also offers a range of free workshops dealing with common needs in the sector, including fundraising, volunteering, data management, quality, interpersonal skills and change management. 34 VCOs have signed up to the programme, with several taking advantage of mentoring and advice on applications, business planning and marketing.

SCA run a training programme, funded by the LSC and ESF, designed to meet the overall skill development needs of staff, volunteers and trustees in the VCS, covering topics such as fundraising, governance, and managing projects and organisations. Accreditation is available through the Surrey and Region Open College network, and all courses are delivered according to the 5 Stage Process involved in RARPA (Recognising and Rewarding Progress and Achievement). This process involves:

1. accurate description of course content
2. understanding the objectives of learners in attending courses, and ensuring that these are met
3. ensuring courses provide learners with appropriately challenging objectives
4. mid-course review of learner progress
5. end-of-course reflection and self-assessment of achievement

SCA act as regional champions promoting the introduction of the RARPA process in adult and community learning - endorsed by the LSC as a key to quality improvement in this learning sector.

SCA also run 'Tech-it-up', funded by the LSC and ESF, offering drop-in computer learning on a roadshow touring locations throughout the county.

LSC Milton Keynes Oxfordshire Buckinghamshire are supporting three Learning and Development Networks focused around CVSs in each area, while in Kent and Medway, there is ESF funding for a Medway CVS programme providing customised, modular training for VCO staff and volunteers in North Kent. Lottery funding is used to supplement that from the LSC to support non-accredited courses. West Kent College is working with Voluntary Action West Kent as lead deliverer: to examine current capacity and skill gaps, then help implement training plans for VCOs and individuals.

'Level 2 Offer'

LSC Kent and Medway have monitored take-up of the Level 2 Offer and found that less than 1% of their Employer Training Pilot programme has come from VCS employers. It has commissioned an action research project to investigate barriers to take-up and encourage participation. Data is not available in other LSC areas (not being captured in standard management information requirements).

Sectoral workforce development

There is a regional dimension to the work of the Sector Skills Councils, and work focusing on these sectors at an LLSC level. In some but not all LLSCs, VCOs are reckoned to feature prominently in support for the care sector, with the box below outlining the approach to workforce development in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Some 25% employment in the sector there is estimated to be provided by VCOs.

Health and Social Care Workforce Development Plan - Hampshire and Isle of Wight

The Workforce Development Plan aims to ensure there is sufficient, good quality training tailored to meet the needs of employers in the health and social care sector, and to do this by addressing some of the key challenges, by supporting the development and marketing of progression opportunities, and supporting the development of the CoVEs²⁴.

The National Minimum Standards for registered care services (issued by the Department of Health- DoH) provide a context for this plan as they include requirements about the competence of the work force including their suitability, experience and qualifications. This has been translated into targets, eg, for all care staff in homes for older people to be qualified to NVQ Level 2 or 3 by the end of 2005.

Priorities in the Workforce Development Plan are: (i) improving basic skills; (ii) people in work, or disengaged from learning, without level 2 qualifications; (iii) addressing specific sector skills shortages; and (iv) improving brokerage arrangements for employers. It seeks to make full use of funding streams - not only LSC, but also ESF, local authority and DoH funds.

There are several regional projects which feature in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight plan :

- Paperless portfolio project - Part of a national project to provide innovative ways to deliver and assess NVQs using IT systems
- Carepoint website developed by the six LLSCs in partnership with SEEDA and TOPSS to design and develop this virtual one-stop providing information on training and development, funding and good practice in the care sector
- assessor network in order to address the shortage of care assessors available to the sector

²⁴ The CoVE (Centres of Vocational Excellence) programme is focused on delivering skills at NVQ level 3 and will enable the development, maintenance and delivery of high quality, specialist provision across a range of vocational areas.

Other elements of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight strategy include:

- three CoVEs (Residential and Domiciliary Care for Adults; Learning Disabilities and Mental Health; and Early Years, Play Work and Children's Services)
- ESF projects providing NVQ Care level 2/3 provision and training for managers in the Residential and Domiciliary Care sub-sector.
- Essential Skills Support Unit (ESSU) support including marketing materials specifically focused on the Care Sector and staff training
- skills brokerage and IiP support through Business Link Wessex

In Surrey there is a large mainstream adult health care project. About a fifth of activity relates to the VCS, mainly small organisations. There is also support for workforce development in childcare.

Role of Business Links

Each LLSC contracts with the Business Link (BL) in its area for the delivery of workforce development support, typically in providing skills brokerage and promoting Investors in People (IiP). LSC Hampshire and Isle of Wight have tried to encourage BL Wessex to target VCOs, and have proposed IiP referrals as an indicator in a recent ESF specification for skills brokerage.

In Surrey, seven VCOs are now committed to IiP (previously there were none), with the VCOs benefiting from free consultancy and assessment (through a development of the Build-It-Up ESF project). Business Link Surrey has to meet IiP targets for seven priority LLSC sectors, of which the VCS is one.

There are concerns, however, that as a quality mark, IiP tends not to be the most relevant for VCOs, in that there is the PQASSO²⁵ quality standard which is a more all-encompassing in its scope, geared specifically to smaller VCOs and increasingly recognised by funders as a quality mark when considering tenders.

4.3 Building capacity for engagement and delivery

Capacity within the VCS

Each LSC has invested in projects to build capacity in the VCS to engage in planning and delivery of learning and skills - with several examples given above. These have variously involved a mix of needs analyses learning provision networking, and quality development. Outcomes have included individual skills and knowledge gains, organisational development, and stronger networks and communications. LLSCs also observe improved quality in bids from VCOs - though in a context where bidding has become ever more competitive. LLSCs report that many VCOs now have a better understanding of LSC requirements, though some tensions persist, especially in relation to VCO views on what the LSC *should* be funding.

Examples of projects (several already mentioned) include:

²⁵ Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations

- workshops to inform VCOs about the LSC (eg, on LLSC business plans, the Working Together strategy and the Common Inspection Framework) and on tendering (open to all but designed to ensure relevance to VCOs) in Kent & Medway and in Surrey
- support for 'ladder4learning', the on-line directory and guide to learning in the VCS in Hampshire and Isle of Wight
- Global Grants (with VCO involvement in grants appraisal; also skill development on evaluating learning projects)
- feasibility work in Hampshire on establishing a VCS learning consortia by The Learning Curve (from Wiltshire - one of the best established sub-regional VCS learning consortia)
- support for training and development networks in Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire

In some cases, earlier projects (eg, in Hampshire and Isle of Wight) have run their course, though these have provided some legacies, eg, in the continuation of the Bridges Forum, in Southampton.

The Sussex VCS Consortium is now the best developed model in the region (see box below), providing a platform drawing funding streams together and enabling broader and deeper engagement and partnership working.

Sussex VCS Learning Consortium
<p>Sussex VCS Learning Consortium, supported originally by SEEDA funding through RAISE, has developed as an effective vehicle for harnessing VCS contributions to learning delivery and as a consultation partner in LSC planning. It has drawn on a variety of LSC and other funding streams to carry out research into what VCOs can offer and into learning needs relating to widening participation. The intention from the outset was to plan development of the Consortium over three years, taking full advantage of discretionary funding, in order to position the Consortium for delivery of mainstream LSC contracts. Up to £0.5m has so far been secured from a range of sources (including ESF and the local universities).</p> <p>Projects and activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ workforce development strategy for VCS, linking the three ChangeUp infrastructure consortia in Sussex▪ collaboration with Brighton & Hove Learning Partnership and Brighton University to raise demand for learning (using WAPAF)▪ membership of the Provider Collaboration Forum and work on protocols for collaborative working▪ partner in a Skills for Life project▪ ESF Co-financing projects (eg, for Early Years and Childcare Assessors)▪ quality improvement▪ early discussions on greater involvement in delivery of adult and community learning <p>LSC Sussex are pleased with the extent to which relationships and mutual understanding have developed, and how the Consortium has taken the initiative to forge links with learning Partnerships, Area Investment Framework partnerships, LSPs, etc.</p> <p><i>"The impact of the work and development of the Learning Consortium cannot be underestimated. Not just that it has been developed significantly since 2003, but the professional attitudes of its members, their understanding of each other, of the realities of working with the LSC, of how best to engage with it, etc. This has provided benefits to all: learners, voluntary and community organisations and the LSC."</i></p> <p><i>"There's been a significant knock-on effect into the wider agenda - ChangeUp, etc. Attitudes much more 'can do', and there have been significant changes in culture towards the LSC. These are now less about 'give us the money...' and more about 'how can we work together?'. There is evidence of a much changed approach to working with other agencies."</i></p>

Several projects involving actions to help raise the *quality* of learning provided by VCOs:

- feature of some LID-funded projects in Hampshire and Isle of Wight
- development work with VCO providers (ESF Co-Financed projects) in Berkshire
- self-assessment framework introduced for ESF contractors in Kent, with training run by LSCKM staff, supported by an ex-ALI inspector; also standard evaluation report format
- a strand of the Sussex VCS Learning Consortium development plan
- Surrey Community Action participation in the national RARPA pilot - 5 stage process being applied to all courses (including half-day ones)

Several LLSCs have tried to broker partnerships with other providers, especially for ESF projects - reflecting a view that:

“Systems and processes are no easier for voluntary organisations than before. The hurdles for the VCS are very high, even for discretionary funding streams. The best way in is as a partner.”

Contractual responsibilities for quality assurance and management information may be taken on by colleges or larger work-based learning providers. However, as the section above on working with colleges points out, there are obstacles to successful partnership arrangements.

Evaluation²⁶ of some of the capacity building projects (in common with that of other discretionary projects) has raised concerns about the adequacy of project monitoring and evaluation, as illustrated by this LLSC comment:

“We always want them (projects) to address issues of progression and sustainability, tracking individuals and doing follow-up surveys. When it gets to it, this is always what seems to be left out.”

Reviewing capacity building support overall, from an LLSC point of view, such projects must increasingly relate to national and regional priorities of the LSC. From a VCS perspective, there are concerns that funding remains relatively short-term (though available for longer periods than in the past), with the risk, highlighted by the Berkshire and Hampshire evaluations, of staff turnover and potentially lost momentum and focus. It is also clear from the experience in developing networks and consortia within the sector that there is a need for sustained leadership and time commitment within the sector. These costs are significant, and prospective partners must be confident of the rewards if they are to make the necessary commitment.

To varying degrees across the six LLSC areas, there remain weaknesses in the extent to which VCOs have developed a common agenda, reflecting:

- the diversity of interests within the VCS
- the extent of understanding what and how to influence
- lack of conviction in the case for consortia and networks²⁷

²⁶ ‘Evaluation of the Berkshire Voluntary and Community Sector Training Brokerage Scheme’; ‘An Evaluation of the LID programme’ - LSC Hampshire and Isle of Wight

- doubts about what is best for the sector: to seek strategic influence or concentrate on delivery? To focus on workforce development or on learning opportunities for communities served?
- opinions that the LSC has little to offer VCOs

Capacity within the LLSCs

The development of the national 'Working Together' strategy, along with the agreement of the South East Compact has resulted in greater recognition and wider interest within the LLSCs in the contribution of the VCS - though this varies across the LLSCs and across functions within them.

There is now wider, formal recognition in relevant LSC job descriptions, and all have a 'Lead Contact' for relationships with the VCS. This role is typically part of someone's job, in ways which differ across the LLSCs, located, eg, in workforce development (Surrey), external funding (Hampshire and Isle of Wight) strategy (Milton Keynes Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire), inclusion (Berkshire) and development (Sussex). These leads have played an active role internally in promoting the VCS. Specific actions have included, eg:

- invitations to network meetings (Berkshire)
- staff briefings (eg, Hampshire and Isle of Wight)
- hot desk arrangement for the co-ordinator of the VCS Learning Consortium (Sussex)
- cross-directorate working group, involving managers from FE, ACL and Skills teams (Kent)
- presentation to staff by the RAISE Learning & Skills Leader

Some have been systematic, while another lead admitted that, *"it's all ad hoc and depends on individual staff's responsibilities and interest/ inclination"*. There are concerns that LSC colleagues do not fully appreciate the contribution that VCOs can make - with acknowledgements that this is partly a consequence of the target and priority driven nature of the LSC's approach.

There has been growing interest in the VCS amongst LLSC research teams. Examples of VCS-related research includes:

- Kent and Medway: current mapping project, with a steering group which includes both representation from VCS ChangeUp consortium members and from mainstream providers
- Sussex (seconded - mapping, developing profiles of VCS Consortium members, researching purposes, motivations and activities of VCOs in providing learning)
- Berkshire: support for a Community Needs Survey (with Berkshire Community Foundation), Community Strengths Assessment (organisational development needs review of VCOs) and needs research as part of the original TEECAP project
- LSC Surrey propose research in conjunction with Surrey Community Action

²⁷ An example was in Hampshire where feasibility work supported The Learning Curve did not lead to sufficient support to create a consortium.

The process involved in the Sussex research (including the having a secondee based in the LLSC) was reckoned to be very valuable in helping establish better mutual understanding.

The VCS did not feature much in research undertaken for Strategic Area Reviews (either as employers or as providers). One exception was work in Surrey in 2004 to establish which VCOs see themselves as providers.

One of the associated issues has been that the VCS can be a 'hidden sector' for sector targeting and for research, given that it does not fit SSC definitions nor the Standard Industrial Classification used for standard statistics. Also, volunteers are not recorded in occupational statistics. These factors need to be considered in designing research briefs and methods, with scope, eg, for including questions to draw out VCO dimensions (eg, through questions relating to legal status).

This issue needs further investigation, as there are problems with definitions, exemplified in the data gathering exercise by the LLSCs in September 2005. While the LLSCs have adopted NCVO's definition of a 'voluntary organisation'²⁸ there can be differences of interpretation which can affect the picture painted by the data. No standard definitions were set by LSC National, and there is a need in future to ensure that there is greater consistency. Complications can arise, eg, where there are organisations constituted as companies limited by guarantee, and possibly with status as an educational charity, but which, eg, serve businesses rather than local communities (eg, group training organisations). Analysis of VCO engagement and LSC expenditure needs to differentiate:

- provision by and for VCOs
- provision by VCOs for their clients/ users in the community
- provision by VCOs for businesses

There are also grey areas relating to other 'third sector' organisations, including housing associations and social enterprises. It would also be helpful if the definition of community-based franchised provision could be differentiated to distinguish that involving VCOs.

4.4 Consultations and communications

LLSCs have been involving VCOs more in consultations on LSC plans, and especially, in responding to draft prospectuses for discretionary funding. There has been relatively little involvement, however, of VCOs in Strategic Area Reviews undertaken during the last two years to bring about a better balance between demand and supply of learning opportunities. Positive examples have included representation on the Sussex StAR and Southampton Local Area Review steering groups, VCS-specific consultation sessions in Southampton and Berkshire, and an influence over the decision to develop

²⁸ Organisations meeting the following criteria (NCVO):

- formal: organisations with a recognisable structure with a constitution or formal set of rules
- independent of government and self-governing
- non-profit distributing
- voluntarism to a meaningful degree in terms of contributions of time or money
- public benefit - beyond that of the organisation's own membership

Community Learning Centres by LSC Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

In practice, many of the StARs were largely preoccupied with 14-19 learning, and provision through FE and sixth form colleges. One LLSC commented that:

“We had no recommendations regarding VCS involvement in the StAR. The reviews were mainly mainstream, and focused on FE, schools and adult and community learning. The three year development plans provide for little, if any, scope for VCS involvement.”

It is not possible to estimate the total numbers of VCOs which are ‘engaged’ with the LSC or through LSC-funded activities, as numbers have not been recorded. This detail is not a requirement of delivery plans submitted by providers. Across the South East, over 600 VCOs are members of the Learning and Skills Network recently reconstituted by RAISE. LSC Kent and Medway have a database of 170 VCO contacts, and make active use of LSCKM website and e-mail alerts, and run relevant events (eg, updates on Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities). In Sussex, the VCS Learning Consortium acts as the conduit for contacting a wider group of interested VCOs. Several *Learning Partnerships* in the region - funded by LLSCs - continue to serve as a vehicle for communications and consultation with VCOs (as in the case of the Kent and Medway partnerships and their Community Learning Forums).

As noted earlier, several of the LLSCs have placed a priority on supporting the development of VCS networks in their area. Examples include the three Learning and Development Networks (in Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire - of which the VOICES network in Milton Keynes is the longest established and most developed) and the Berkshire Community Network (‘ComNet’) (see box below).

Berkshire Community Network
<p>The Berkshire Community Network (ComNet) brings together the six CVSs in the sub-region, Berkshire Community Foundation, WEA, and the Berkshire Association of Young People. Its function is to develop strategy and provide an overview of all elements related to the voluntary and community sector, such as the Strategic Area Review, Compact, Skills Strategy, Information Advice and Guidance (IAG), etc. It is chaired by an LSC Berkshire board member, and the agenda is set by the participating VCOs. There is an open invitation to relevant LSC staff to attend, and individuals make specific inputs as appropriate, eg, when ESF specifications are being developed. Its role has more recently widened to provide a vehicle for the Connexions voluntary sector engagement strategy.</p>

The Sussex VCS Learning Consortium is now established well enough for it to be the first point of contact for learning and development activities involving VCOs, and the LSC treats it as such. They observe more enthusiasm in the VCS and a more proactive attitude to working with the LSC than previously.

In seeking to improve relationships with VCOs, LLSCs continue to stress needs to:

- manage expectations (around what are and are not LSC priorities; what is fundable, and amounts available; LSC quality and reporting requirements; etc)

- encourage VCOs to collaborate as employers, and how this can help them access resources

LSC participation in Compacts and ChangeUp

The **LLSCs have adopted different policies regarding their participation in Compacts**. All have signed up to the regional Learning and Skills Compact, and four are parties to county or more local compacts. The others are using the regional Compact to demonstrate their commitment to Compact principles. Given the potential resource demands where they are likely to have several Compacts within their sub-region, it is difficult for them to be active partners in all (a similar situation to their scope to for involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships). Several LLSCs feel that is better not to sign up to local Compacts than to be a token name.

LLSC	Compact Involvement
Berkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ support for Slough Compact - conditional on mapping against SE Compact
Kent & Medway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ no plans to sign up to local Compacts
Hampshire & Isle of Wight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ policy decision not to sign up to local Compacts; technical input on funding and procurement sub-group in Southampton
Milton Keynes, Oxon & Bucks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ signatories in Milton Keynes; propose to sign up to those for Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire ▪ developing codes of practice relating to learning and skills
Surrey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ on working group for Surrey Compact, launched 2004 ▪ underpinned by five codes of practice, including one on funding
Sussex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ signatory to Compacts covering Brighton and Hove and West Sussex (county-level) - cross-referenced to South East Compact on Learning and Skills

The requirement in the national Compact for **longer consultation periods** has been increasingly observed (eg, LSCKM seek to provide an 8-12 week consultation phase for new bidding wherever possible).

The LLSCs tend to see more practical benefit in involvement with local ChangeUp consortia, where there is a more direct connection between VCO needs (in support for workforce development through VCS infrastructure arrangements) and LSC interests. In Kent and Medway, for example, the LSC is represented on the Medway ChangeUp committee, and in Sussex, on the East Sussex ChangeUp Executive Group and Brighton and Hove ChangeUp Consortium. The Sussex VCS Learning Consortium is currently developing a workforce development strategy for the sector linking the three ChangeUp consortia in Brighton and Hove, East and West Sussex. Looking across the region, workforce development does not currently feature in all ChangeUp consortia plans, and there is no common approach. The LLSCs are also represented on the regional ChangeUp consortium and its ICT sub-group.

4.5 Feedback from RAISE Learning and Skills Network members

Influencing the LSC

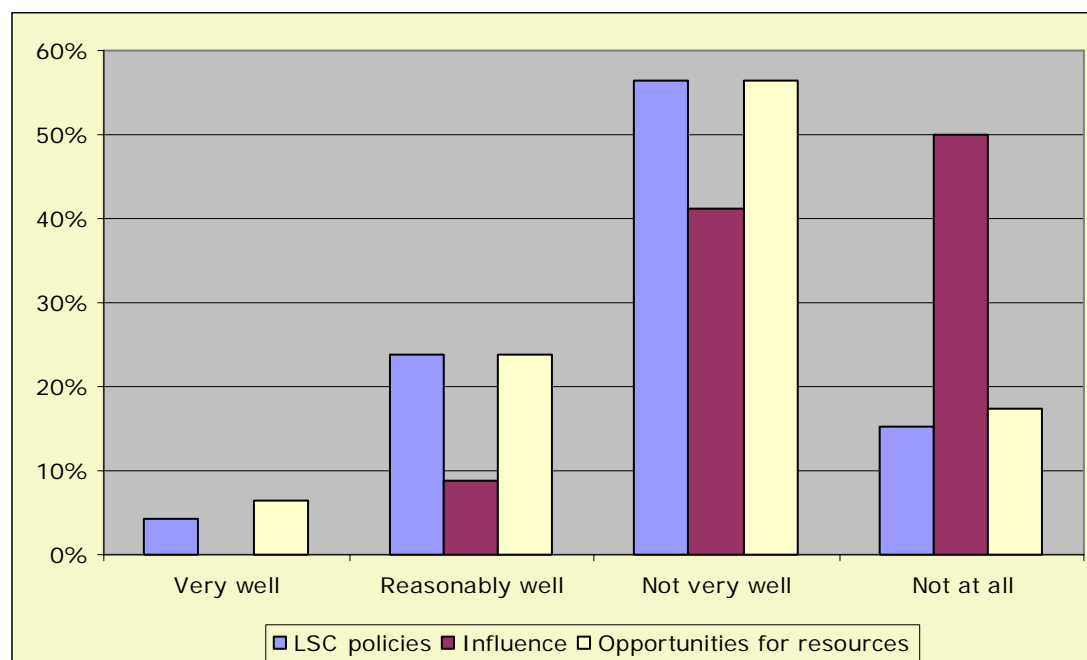
In our survey of RAISE Learning and Skills Network members²⁹, we found that about one in seven respondents felt that VCOs have influenced LLSC plans ‘to some extent’ and just over a third, ‘at the margins’, with a further third considering that they were not able to comment. Two in five are aware of having been consulted in the past two years (primarily on ESF Co-financing plans or StARs).

While all the LLSCs have nominated lead contacts for the VCS, we found that over half the respondents to our survey of members of the RAISE Learning and Skills Network did not know who the relevant lead contact was. Two in five of these network members report that they have been consulted by their local LSC in the past two (primarily regarding ESF Co-financing plans or Strategic Area Reviews).

We proceeded to ask, as a benchmark, for their assessment (Figure 2) of the extent to which they felt:

- informed about LSC policies and priorities
- able to influence Local LSC plans and activities
- able to access resources for training directly from the LSC or indirectly through colleges and/ or other learning providers

Figure 2 RAISE Network member knowledge and ability to influence their LLSC



N = 46 VCO respondents

²⁹ Appendix C provides a breakdown of the survey respondents.

Over half felt that that they are *unable* to influence local LLSC plans and policies, with under one in ten feel that they are reasonably able to do so. Several comments related to a mismatch between what VCOs want and what the LSC will fund, eg:

“I feel LSC do not understand the needs of the voluntary sector and see them as a ‘basic skills’ group. when this is not always the case, in most circumstances they just want specialist training, eg, on charity law or funding.”

Over a quarter respondents considered that they are ‘very well’ or ‘reasonably well’ informed about LSC policies and priorities, and able to access resources for training directly from the LSC or indirectly through colleges and/ or other learning providers. Just over half regard themselves as ‘not very well’ placed on such information or access.

Other evidence tends to confirm this picture, eg, the FE Sussex report for the Sussex VCS Consortium on Partnerships for Learning found that

“VCOs expressed concern that their expertise and ability to contribute to the assessment of need in a local area lies with VCOs but is rarely called upon. And if it is called upon, the capacity to really engage with the process (in terms of time and pairs of hands) is lacking.”

Feedback from the VCS consultation as part of the Berkshire StAR met with concerns from VCOs that they support lots of learning for which they are unrewarded and unrecognised, that VCOs are in competition with colleges for scarce funding, that LSC quality requirements are onerous and not fit for purpose in community-based learning, and that VCOs depend on precarious sources of funding. There were also criticisms of the language of ‘learning and skills’ as a barrier to engagement.

Action within the VCS

Undertakings in the South East Compact recognise the need for action within the VCS to strengthen the role that VCOs can play and maximise the benefits, for VCOs and the communities they serve, from engagement with the LSC. Our survey of RAISE Learning and Skills Network members found that

- two in five have taken part in activities to promote VCS role
- half are members of other networks bringing together VCOs to address learning and skills needs and opportunities

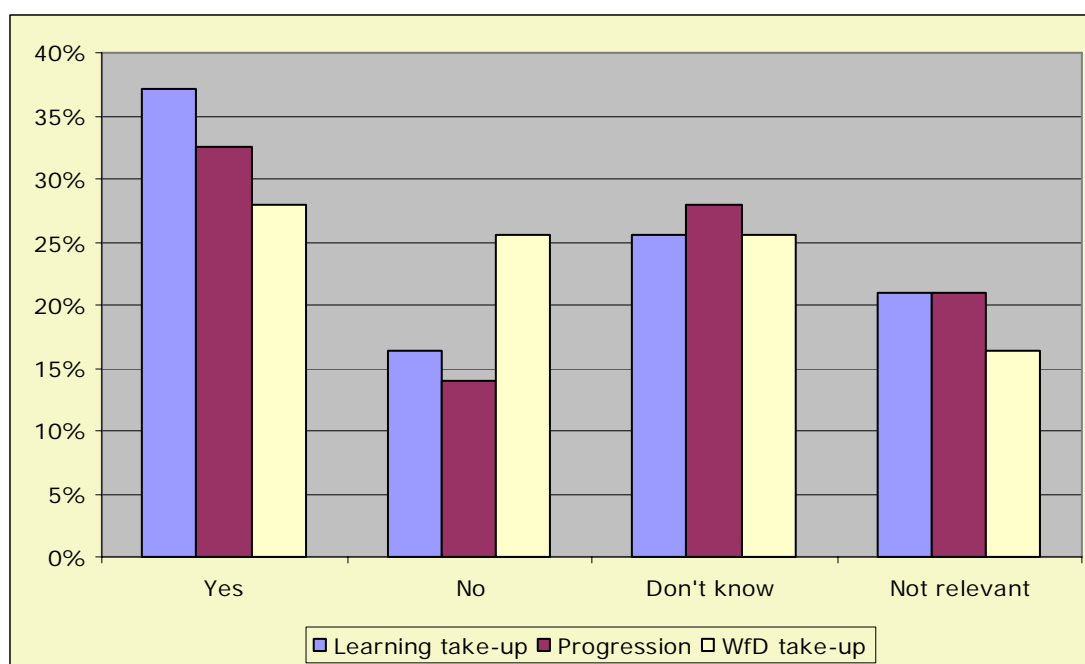
Examples provided of actions taken included presentations to Local LSC councils (ie, boards), participation on local VCS skills networks, attendance at LSC events. Network participation included Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Network, National Open College Network, NCVO Trainers Group, Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, Community Learning Forums and Lifelong Learning Partnerships.

VCO perspectives on the impact of engagement with the LSC

We also asked respondents whether their involvement with the LSC had led (Figure 3) to:

- a) increased take-up of learning opportunities by disengaged learners and socially excluded groups,
- b) increased progression by these groups to further learning, and/or
- c) increased learning activity by their own staff and/ or volunteers

Figure 3 Percentage of RAISE Network members reporting impact



N = 46 VCO respondents

A third of respondents to the survey reported that their involvement with the LSC had led to increased take-up of learning opportunities by disengaged learners and socially excluded groups, with a slightly lower proportions saying the same for increased progression by these groups to further learning and for increased learning activity by your own staff and/ or volunteers³⁰. Over a quarter could not comment, and for one in five the questions were not relevant.

Suggestions for improvement

Finally, RAISE Network members were invited to make suggestions for actions that would best help VCOs and the LSC achieve more for learners and communities. These mainly related to:

- *funding*, with requests for easier, more direct access to funding; a more secure, longer term basis; and subsidies to enable VCOs to reach harder-to-reach learners

³⁰ Of the respondents, two in five have received LSC funding (co-financing 7; NLDC 5; via colleges 5; and ACL 4). The purposes have mainly related to widening participation (10), basic skills (6), and first steps learning (6).

- some *challenges to LSC policies and priorities*, including the nature of outputs and what is fundable - with a view that often VCOs must contort themselves to fit LSC requirements
- the need for *better communications and understanding*

There was also some recognition of need for improvements within VCS, eg, in training quality.

Illustrative comments included:

“Access to mainstream funding either through consortium or as individual provider. Failing that - true partnership working with colleges”

“Being able to access LSC funding for one or two day courses that are not section 96 or 97. Outcomes for volunteers are generally community orientated and not dependent on progression to level 2 training.”

“I am hoping that as a result of this survey the LSC will open up doors to learning opportunities for the voluntary and community sector, rather than just trying to focus on increasing the number of learners that need basic skills”

“I cannot accept that there is not more that can be done to support the tremendous work done by VCOs. I also acknowledge that VCO organisations are not perfect and that changes must be made if we are to raise our collective credibility as learning providers.”

5 Conclusions

Progress made

Progress has been made over the past two years in engaging voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) in the work of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This is evident, for example, in the agreement of the South East Compact for Learning and Skills, the support of a range of projects using discretionary funds held by individual Local LSCs (LLSCs). There are also several examples where LLSCs have sought to ensure that VCOs benefit from mainstream programme funding.

The LLSCs estimate that £20.3m (around 2% of total LSC funding for post 16 education in the South East in 2005/06) is funding training by or for the VCOs, supporting over 62,000 learners. However, there are **very few VCOs which contract with LLSCs** for the delivery of mainstream learning opportunities. Across the six LLSCs there are only six mainstream providers from the VCS, of which three are solely concerned with contracts for Entry to Employment. These six provide up to 2,000 places³¹. Only one provider has been brought through the LSC's 'new provider route' during the last two years.

There are **more VCOs which are members of Next Step consortia** delivering information, advice and guidance for adults (at least 38 across the region), and 21 ESF contracts are led by VCOs, involving a further (unquantified) set of VCO delivery partners.

Data are not available on the numbers of VCOs involved in FE provision (as sub-contractors/ franchisees) or in Adult and Community Learning provision (where planning is the responsibility of Local Education Authorities contracting with LLSCs). The latest available learner records (2003/04) show that 5.3% of mainstream provision is franchised out to community-based organisations³² (which compares to 5.5% nationally). Such franchising has been under threat more recently as a result of budget pressures on colleges. LLSCs can give **relatively few examples of colleges notable for their partnerships with VCOs as providers or customers**.

Some VCOs have taken advantage of LSC workforce development support, though figures are not recorded/ available for all LLSCs. This has been in addition to a number of discretionary projects (eg, Berkshire Training Brokerage). In some but not all LLSCs, VCOs have featured prominently in support for the care sector and have been targeted by Business Links as part of their delivery contract with their LLSC. There are examples where LLSCs are seeking to increase take-up by VCOs (eg, steps by Kent & Medway to promote Employer Training Pilot grants).

LLSCs are involving VCOs more in consultations on LSC plans, and especially, in responding to draft prospectuses for discretionary funding. There has been relatively little involvement, however, of VCOs in Strategic Area Reviews undertaken the last two years to bring about a better balance between demand and supply of learning

³¹ This figure *excludes* a number of long-established work-based learning providers which fall under a broader definition of the sector including social enterprise/ not-for profit organisations.

³² This is a proxy for VCOs; these organisations include a variety of non-profit making and publicly funded organisations.

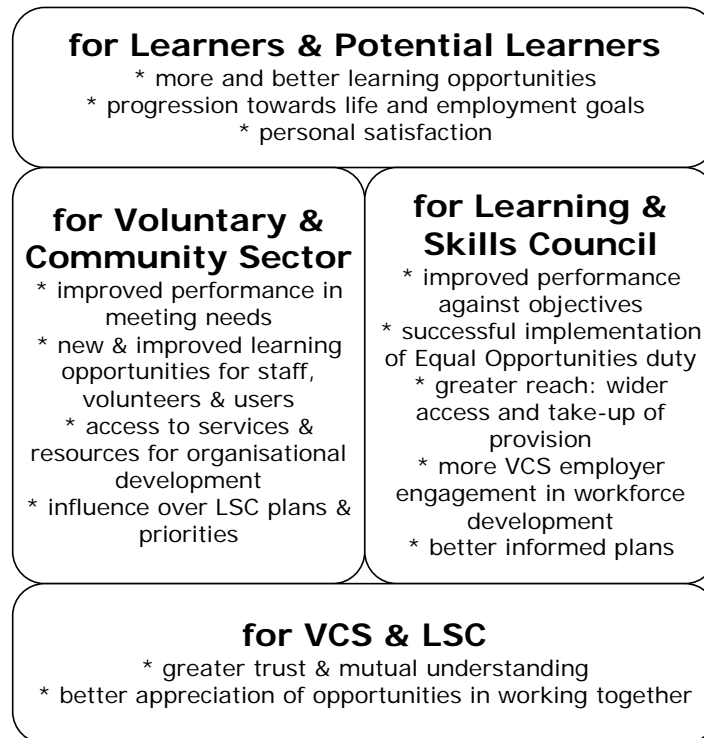
opportunities. Several Learning Partnerships in the region - funded by LLSCs - continue to serve as a vehicle for communications and consultation with VCOs (as in the case of the Kent and Medway partnerships and their Community Learning Forums).

Few VCOs - less than one in ten - responding to the survey of members of the new RAISE Learning and Skills Network **feel that they are reasonably able to influence local LLSC plans and policies**, and nearly half feel that they have no influence at all. Over a quarter consider that they are 'very well' or 'reasonably well' informed about LSC policies and priorities, and able to access resources for training directly from the LSC or indirectly through colleges and/ or other learning providers. Just over half regard themselves as 'not very well' placed on such information or access.

Benefits

Figure 5 sets out the range of potential benefits from VCS engagement with the LSC, incorporated in the South East Compact as a focus for evaluation.

Figure 5 Potential Benefits from LSC/VCS Engagement



The project has gathered evidence of **benefits to VCOs** in the form of access to funding for workforce development and for developing capacity to deliver learning opportunities, information, advice and counselling and new learning facilities in community learning centres in some LLSCs areas (eg, Berkshire and Milton Keynes Oxfordshire Buckinghamshire). The LSC has provided funds to meet many learning needs amongst staff and volunteers and amongst communities served which would not otherwise have been addressed. This is the main source of **benefits to learners**. LLSCs have also observed some improvements in the provision of learning and IAG in being better attuned to needs of VCOs and excluded/ disadvantaged learners.

Benefits to LLSCs have included the strengthening of relationships and communications channels (eg, through local and sub-regional networks), with some evidence at project level of successes in attracting new learners and reaching harder-to-reach groups. Promising developments include the Sussex VCS Learning Consortium, which is providing a platform for greater learning activity, taking advantage of a mix of funding sources.

There are some examples where VCOs are performing better relative to other providers operating in comparable contexts, eg, in promoting learning champions in Surrey (successful in reaching more and different organisations and linking learners to Skills for Life provision), and in Kent and Medway, VCS-led ESF projects tending to out-perform College projects. Evidence remains limited, however, regarding the added value for the LSC of VCS involvement in the delivery of LSC programmes, with doubts in some LLSCs about the extent to which VCS provision encourages progression by learners. There is a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation (a need common across discretionary projects in general, not just to those led by VCOs).

Activities at the margins

While in principle there is considerable common ground between the interests of VCOs and the LSC, in practice **VCOs tend to operate at the margins of LSC policies and priorities**. This is because:

- *relative* priorities within the LSC (reflecting government guidance) place lower importance on widening participation and greater importance on, eg:
 - ◆ meeting the Government's commitment to learning opportunities for 16-19 year olds
 - ◆ improving the quality of existing provision, notably through FE colleges
 - ◆ achieving targets set by Skills for Life (the national adult basic skills strategy)
 - ◆ ensuring that learners progress to achieving qualifications
- the **VCS tends to be neglected because it is not recognised formally as an employment sector** warranting a Sector Skills Council, and does not feature in the national Standard Industrial Classification (typically used for defining the scope of government research). The RAISE 'Hidden Asset' report estimates that there are between 28,200 and 34,500 VCOs in the region, employing over 300,000 people (6% of the region's workforce, and larger than that for construction or agriculture)
- there has been **limited organisation within the sector on learning and skills**, in ways which enable VCOs as employers to influence learning provision, or collaborate to in offering learning opportunities. This in turn reflects:
 - ◆ the very diverse nature of the VCS, covering informal community groups as well as major national charities and serving a wide range of populations
 - ◆ the need to find resources to support networks and partnerships
 - ◆ available discretionary funding tends to be short-term, undermining longer term sustainability of projects and services
- the **limited direct evidence of the added value that VCOs bring to the LSC** in helping the organisation meet its performance targets

Many VCOs are dependent on short-term funding sources and continue to look to the LSC for funding. With a certain decline in European Social Fund monies available to the South East post-2006, there are pressures on VCOs and regional partners to look hard at future priorities.

The consequences of these factors include:

- a **continuing need for LLSCs to explain what they can and cannot do in relation to the VCS**, seeking to manage expectations about what it is possible to fund, and the nature of LSC quality requirements for providers
- **limited room for manoeuvre within the LSC on mainstream funding and contracting**, and a constant search for creative ways of engaging VCOs using discretionary resources
- **doubts within the VCS** about the benefits that engagement with the LSC will bring
- a **need to explore and promote delivery partnerships** bringing together VCOs, FE colleges, learning providers and promote models which have sufficient incentives to work effectively

From a VCO perspective, survey respondents provided a range of suggestions for actions that would best help VCOs and the LSC achieve more for learners and communities. These related in particular to:

- funding - with requests for easier, more direct access; a more secure, longer term basis; and subsidies to reach harder-to-reach learners
- challenges to LSC policies and priorities, where VCOs felt that they were having to bend what they do very much to fit what the LSC wants as a purchaser
- improvements in communications (with concerns expressed about misplaced perceptions within LLSCs about the VCS)
- the need for VCOs to continue to raise their own standards in relation to the services they provide (including learning opportunities)

This feedback mirrors research findings by RAISE on VCO development needs, undertaken in 2004 in preparing for the ChangeUp infrastructure development programme. This highlighted, eg, over-dependence on short-term funding; declining funding opportunities (from sources such as SEEDA, Lottery and ESF); needs for more effective collaborative working within the VCS; greater appreciation within the public sector of what the VCS have to offer, both socially and economically.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings strengthen the rationale behind the South East Compact as a vehicle for co-operation and action, and point to the need to focus on those areas where it is in the power of LLSC leads for the VCOs and interested VCOs to influence LSC mainstream policies and practices.

- a) **Strengthening the scope for VCO contributions to learning and skills provision**

Emerging SE LSC proposals for 'Action for Communities' can provide a vehicle for greater priority - and benefits - to the VCS in the delivery of learning and skills

programmes. This policy initiative is intended to integrate LSC support for learning in communities and provide coherent structure for how LLSCs can best engage with other funders (such as Jobcentre Plus and SEEDA) and contribute to LSP Community Strategies. A fresh approach to commissioning is proposed, along with a new model, 'Fair Trade Franchising' to promote partnering between mainstream providers and VCOs. This will also provide the context for (a) potential new arrangements for planning Personal and Community Development Learning, and (b) introducing the RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) process for validating the outcomes of learning which does not lead to qualifications. This is highly relevant to less formal learning opportunities preferred by many VCOs and their clients/ users.

Recommendations thus include:

- develop the Fair Trade Franchising model, based on 'what works' and appropriate incentives
- take steps to ensure that VCOs play a full role in the delivery of 'Action for Communities' (including capacity to deliver through partnerships; and appreciation of RARPA and related developments)
- seek further evidence of the added value of VCO involvement in learning delivery (with higher priority given to monitoring and evaluation at project level)
- promote collaborative responses with funders (eg, through Social Inclusion Partnership South East) to make the most of available funds for adult learning and inclusion (anticipating reduced ESF funding from 2006-07 onwards)

There should also be particular scope to explore how specialist VCOs can assist the LSC in key areas of common interest, eg, in meeting needs of Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (following the Little Review), offenders and ex-offenders (given the new LSC responsibility).

b) Ensuring that VCO workforce development needs are addressed

At the same time it is important that VCOs can benefit fully from the 'Action for Business' strand of the Regional Skills and Productivity Alliance Delivery Framework in their role as employers (notably the emphasis to . This requires further action to:

- ensure that workforce development services for employers delivered by Business Links are marketed consistently to, and are accessible by, VCOs
- promote ways in which VCOs as employers can take advantage of LSC-funded provision to meet the learning and development needs of their staff and volunteers (with targeting as appropriate to demonstrate that services are geared to their needs not just 'business' employers)
 - ◆ develop skills brokerage services which serve VCOs
 - ◆ support initiatives within the voluntary sector to collaborate as employers
 - ◆ share knowledge on individual LLSC/ Business Link approaches to workforce development in the VCS (and relevant Sector Skills Council sectors such as care), and identify what policies and practices can be transferred effectively

c) Strengthening capacity for mutual engagement

Further action is needed within the VCS and LLSCs:

- continue to work through ChangeUp consortia to address needs/ developing infrastructure services (and link this to LSC workforce development provision, including VCS priorities in ICT, performance improvement, leadership and management)
- ensure that the VCS is covered appropriately in the design of research projects (eg, by asking standard questions about legal status), and gaps in benchmarking data are filled on a consistent basis (with standard definitions adopted, preferably nationally by the LSC)
- research and explore with colleges, work-based learning providers and local education authorities (in their responsibility for adult and community learning funded by the LSC) options for greater engagement with VCOs and the relevance of Compact principles to their work
- maintain a regional resource to facilitate engagement at the regional level, essential for progress and ensuring a VCS contribution to the new regional LSC planning function, co-ordination across SSCs, and ensuring connections across relevant funding streams
- monitor changes and improvements in VCS engagement, building on qualitative (eg, on scale of involvement in provision) and quantitative benchmarks (eg, on VCO awareness of LSC policy and ability to influence) established in this project

Appendix A Checklist for LLSC Interviews

LLSC/ VCS STOCKTAKING 2005

A) Action on 'Mutual Advantage' Key Messages

Valuing the Sector

- 1 What are you doing as an LLSC to *appreciate the nature and importance of the voluntary and community sector?* (eg, through research into the sector and its contribution to learning and social inclusion)
 - ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Changes made?
 - ◆ Benefits & results?
 - ◆ Plans
- 2 Are you involved in any Local Compacts? If so, which ones?
 - ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Plans

Sector Involvement in Addressing LSC Objectives

- 3 What are you doing in general to inform and consult the voluntary and community sector of LLSC plans and opportunities for engagement?
 - ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Changes made?
 - ◆ Benefits & results?
 - ◆ Plans

Specifically:

- 4 What are you doing to encourage sector involvement in raising demand for learning and *widening participation?*
 - ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Evidence of take-up
 - ◆ Plans
- 5 What are you doing to encourage sector involvement in *workforce development?* (Nb. This could be as a target sector, or as part of another sector, eg, care)
 - ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Expenditure
 - ◆ Evidence of take-up
 - ◆ Plans
- 6 What are you doing to encourage sector involvement in *raising achievement of young people and adults?* (including basic skills)
 - ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Evidence of take-up
 - ◆ Plans

- 7 What are you doing to encourage sector involvement in *raising the quality of education and training*?
- ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Changes made?
 - ◆ Benefits & results?
 - ◆ Plans

Sector Capacity Building

- 8 What are you doing to *help the sector build its capacity* to play a fuller role in learning and skills (either directly as a provider of learning or IAG, or in other roles)?
- ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Benefits & results?
 - ◆ Plans
- 9 Are you collaborating with other partners on wider capacity building initiatives for the voluntary and community sector which go beyond their role in learning and skills? If so, what? (eg, through LSPs or regeneration partnerships)
- ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Changes made?
 - ◆ Benefits & results?
 - ◆ Plans

Internal Capacity Building

- 10 What are you doing to *develop your internal capacity for working with the sector* (including any joint capacity building activities with voluntary and community organisations)?
- ◆ Actions taken
 - ◆ Changes made?
 - ◆ Benefits & results?
 - ◆ Plans

Benefits/ Results

- 11 Which of your activities to engage the voluntary sector have provided **significant** benefits/ results?
- Seek specific examples of added value: greater results/ benefits? faster? better? (see Appendix 1)*
- a) for learners
 - b) for VCOs
 - c) for the LLSC

B) Current issues

- 12 What do you see as the three main issues concerning how you can maximise the potential of the voluntary and community sector in relation to LSC objectives?

C) *Other Fact Finding*

- 13 How many voluntary/ community sector *mainstream providers* do you have?
- ◆ Number
 - ◆ Who are they?
 - ◆ Scale of provision (places, contract size)
 - ◆ Share of LLSC budget
 - ◆ How does this compare with 2003?
- 14 How is the voluntary/ community sector *involved in partnerships relating to learning and skills* in your area:
- a) Learning Partnerships
 - ◆ Estimate of numbers involved in the partnership/ groups
 - ◆ How does this compare with 2003?
 - b) Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships
 - ◆ Estimate of numbers involved in the partnership/ groups
 - ◆ How does this compare with 2003?
 - c) Other partnerships and forums, eg, on Basic Skills, Connexions
 - ◆ Estimate of numbers involved in the partnership/ groups
 - ◆ How does this compare with 2003?
- 15 What information (eg, numbers, scale, type of provision) do you have on *outreach provision or access involving voluntary and community organisations*, including franchising and other arrangements, through:
- a) College provision
 - ◆ Comment
 - ◆ Numbers of VCOs
 - ◆ Scale of provision (outputs, budget)
 - ◆ How does this compare with 2003?
 - b) Adult and Community Learning provision
 - ◆ Comment
 - ◆ Numbers of VCOs
 - ◆ Scale of provision (outputs, budget)
 - ◆ How does this compare with 2003?
 - c) ESF, SRB or other funded provision
 - ◆ Comment
 - ◆ Numbers of VCOs
 - ◆ Scale of provision (places, budget)
 - ◆ How does this compare with 2003?
 - d) IAG provision
 - ◆ Comment
 - ◆ Numbers of VCOs
 - ◆ Scale of provision (places, budget)
 - ◆ How does this compare with 2003?

Appendix B Questionnaire: Benchmarking Involvement with the LSC

As used for the on-line survey run in August 2005

A About you & your involvement with the LSC

1. What is the nature of your involvement with the Learning and Skills Council?

Please select all that apply

1. As an employer interested in developing skills of staff/ volunteers 2. As a provider of learning opportunities
 3. As a provider of information, advice or guidance on learning
 4. In seeking improved services/ opportunities for communities served
 5. As a channel for communications to other groups/ organisations 6. Other
-

2. If 'Other', please specify:

3. In which local LSC area(s) do you operate?

Please select all that apply

1. Berkshire 2. Hampshire & Isle of Wight 3. Kent & Medway
 4. Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire 5. Surrey 6. Sussex
-

4. Do you know if there is a lead contact person for the VCS in your Local LSC(s)?

1. Yes 2. No
-

5. Have you been consulted on any LSC plans in the past two years?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't remember
-

6. If 'yes', on which plans?

Please select all that apply

1. Local LSC corporate plans 2. ESF Co-Financing 3. Strategic or Local Area Review 4. Workforce development
 5. Information, advice and guidance 6. Basic skills 7. Learners with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities
 8. Other
-

7. If 'Other', please specify:

8. How far do you feel that the views of VCOs have influenced these plans?

1. A great deal 2. To some extent 3. At the margins 4. Not at all 5. Not able to comment
-

9. Have you participated in any activities to promote what the VCS has to offer in raising skills and widening participation in learning?

1. Yes 2. No
-

10. If 'yes', which activities?

11. Other than through RAISE, are you a member of any network which brings together VCOs with an interest in learning and skills?

1. Yes 2. No

12. If 'yes', to which networks do you belong?

B Awareness about LSC policy & opportunities

13. To what extent do you feel...**(a) informed about LSC policies and priorities?**

1. Very well 2. Reasonably well 3. Not very well 4. Not at all

14. ...**(b) able to influence Local LSC plans and activities?**

1. Very well 2. Reasonably well 3. Not very well 4. Not at all

15. ...**(c) able to access resources for training directly from the LSC or indirectly through colleges and/ or other learning providers?**

1. Very well 2. Reasonably well 3. Not very well 4. Not at all

C Funding from the LSC

16. Have you received funding from the LSC in the past two years?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know

17. If 'yes', which funding streams have been involved?

Please select all that apply

1. ESF Co-Financing 2. Work-Based Learning 3. Adult and Community Learning
 4. Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities 5. Local Intervention Development Fund
 6. Delivery arrangement through FE college 7. Don't know 8. Other

18. If 'Other', please specify:

19. If you have received LSC funding, what has been its main purpose?

Please select all that apply

1. First steps learning 2. Level 2 qualifications 3. Level 3 qualifications 4. Workforce development
 5. Widening participation 6. Basic skills 7. Other

20. If 'Other', please specify:

D Learning, Benefits and Actions

21. In what ways has your organisation or group benefited from funding or other relationships with the LSC?

Please select all that apply

1. Contracts for delivery of learning 2. In-house development of staff or volunteers
 3. Off-the-job training for staff or volunteers 4. Assistance in developing the quality of learning or advice you provide
 5. No benefit gained 6. Other

22. If 'Other', please specify:

23. Has your involvement with the LSC led to... (i) increased take-up of learning opportunities by disengaged learners and socially excluded groups?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know 4. Not relevant to me

24. ... (ii) increased progression by these groups to further learning?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know 4. Not relevant to me

25. ... (iii) increased learning activity by your own staff and/ or volunteers?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know 4. Not relevant to me

E Increasing impact

26. What two or three actions would best help VCOs and the LSC achieve more for learners and communities?

F More about your organisation/ group

Provided that you are happy to do so, please provide your details. Otherwise, thank you for completing the survey.

27. What is your name?

28. What is your organisation or group called?

29. What are your main fields?

Please select all that apply

1. Health 2. Welfare/ social care 3. Community development 4. Community safety/criminal justice
 5. Environment 6. Housing/homelessness 7. Leisure/recreation/sport 8. Environment
 9. Arts/ culture 10. Education and skills 11. Play/youth work
 12. Supporting/working with community or voluntary groups 13. People with disabilities 14. Other

30. If 'Other', please specify:

31. Which are the main groups you serve?

Please select all that apply

1. Children under 5 2. Children 5-15 3. Young people 16-24 4. Families 5. Older people
 6. Unemployed people 7. Ethnic minorities 8. People with physical/ sensory impairments
 9. Carers 10. People with mental health issues 12. Homeless/poorly housed people 12. No one specific group 13. Other

32. If 'Other', please specify:

33. How many staff do you employ in the South East?

1. 0 2. 1-5 3. 6-10 4. 11-25 5. 26-50 6. over 50

34. How many volunteers do you have?

1. 0 2. 1-10 3. 11-50 4. 51-250 5. over 250

35. How many 'learners' have you supported or trained in the past year?

1. 0 2. 1-10 3. 11-50 4. 51-100 5. over 100

F Local research or follow-up

There may be an interest at Local LSC level in following up this survey. We wish, however, to avoid further calls on your time that you do not want.

36. Do you agree to your response being made available for processing as part of related local survey work by the LSC?

1. Yes 2. No

37. Are you willing to be contacted for further information on the topic of this survey?

1. Yes 2. No

H Final comments

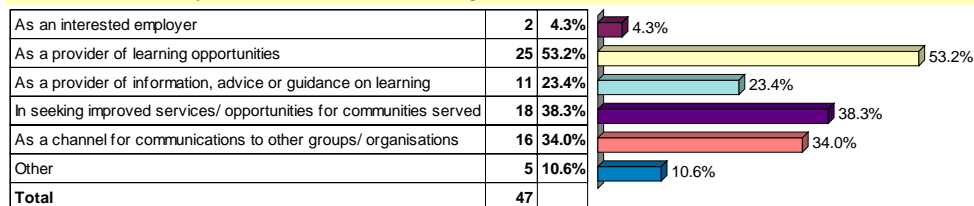
38. Please add any other comments you wish relevant to learning, skills, the VCS and LSC.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

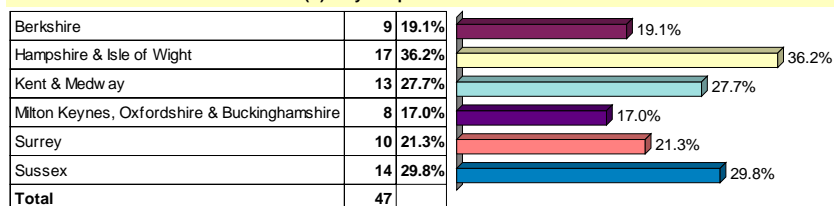
Appendix C Survey Respondent Characteristics

Numbers relate to the order of questions in the survey (see Appendix B)

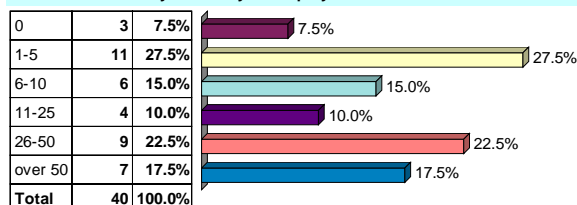
1. What is the nature of your involvement with the Learning and Skills Council?



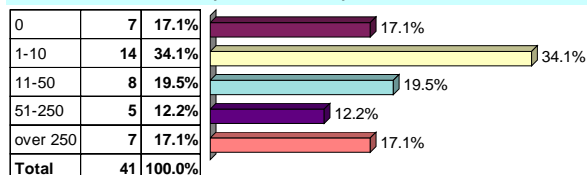
3. LLSC area - In which local LSC area(s) do you operate?



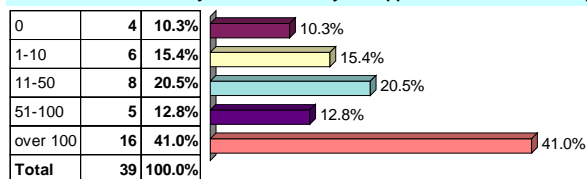
29. Staff - How many staff do you employ in the South East?



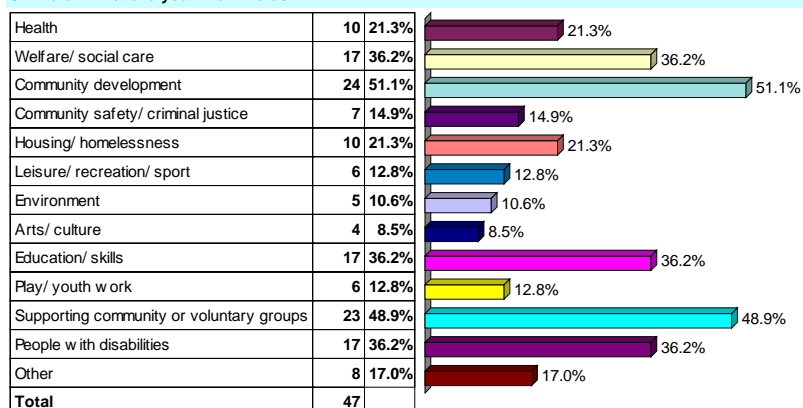
30. Volunteers - How many volunteers do you have?



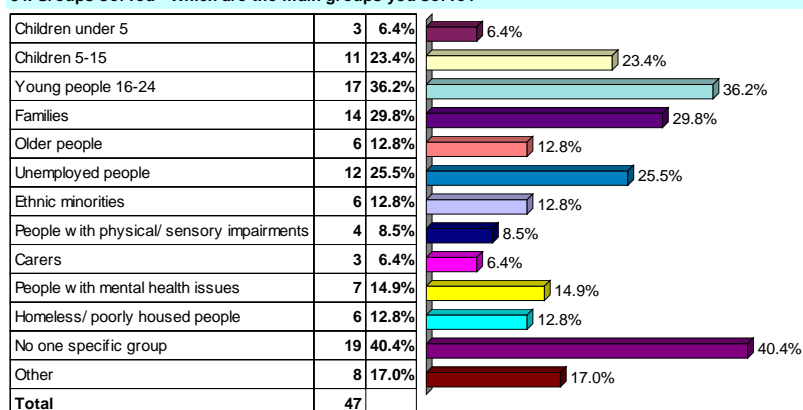
31. Learners - How many 'learners' have you supported or trained in the past year?



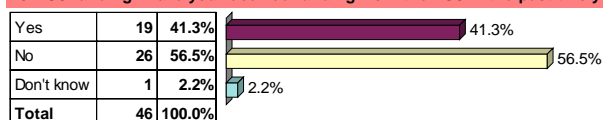
32. Field - What are your main fields?



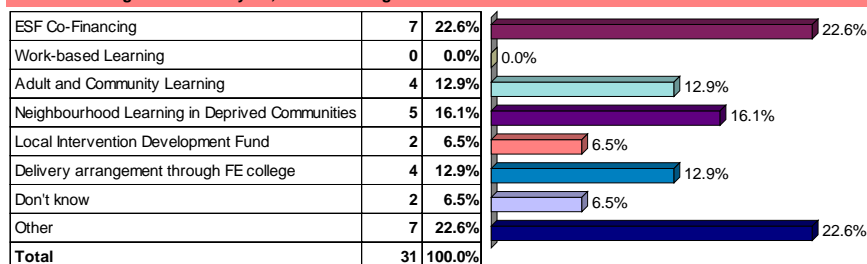
34. Groups served - Which are the main groups you serve?



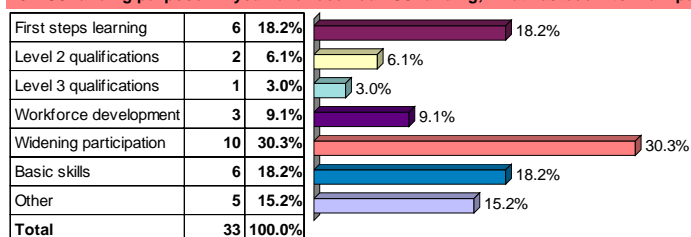
16. LSC funding - Have you received funding from the LSC in the past two years?



17. LSC funding streams - If 'yes', which funding streams have been involved?



19. LSC funding purpose - If you have received LSC funding, what has been its main purpose?



Appendix D LSC Benchmarking Data 2005-06

The tables which follow set out estimates for 2005-06 of learner numbers and contract values relating to VCO providers, either through direct contracts or indirectly through sub-contracting or franchising arrangements. The LSC presents this internal data as their best 'guesstimates' for the year which could be compiled in the short time available for the exercise. **There are variations in some of the definitions and time periods used by individual LLSCs - such that the tables are not universally comparable.**

The first table provides the aggregate for the South East, with the remainder setting out the position for each LLSC.

1) LSC South East: All engagement with the Voluntary Sector 2005-06				
Programme	Predicted learners - direct	Contract Value	Predicted learners - indirect	Contract Value
European Social Fund (ESF)*	11,357	£4,111,455	895	£135,000
Further Education (FE)	1,054	£340,368	40,983	£11,271,007
Adult and Community Learning (ACL)	0	£0	6,099	£798,897
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)	1,392	£349,368	32,624	£8,691,534
Widening Access and Participation Action Fund (WAPAF)	60	£73,333	376	£182,000
Work based learning (WBL)	2,994	£12,283,623	63	£238,263
Employer Training Pilot (ETP)	12	£15,000		
Capacity Building	127	£31,904	0	£0
Local Intervention and Development (LID)	370	£246,761	0	£133,000
TEC Legacy Fund	110	£10,000	unknown	£49,000
Workforce Development (WfD)	30	£20,000	0	£10,000
Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	200	£9,850	6,540	£315,985
LSC HLoW Global Grants	3,800	£532,000		
Total	21,506	£18,023,662	87,580	£21,824,686
Total learners (direct and indirect funding)	109,086			
Total funding (direct and indirect)		£39,848,348		
Cost per learner		£365.29		

Notes

1. "Direct contract" means contractual arrangements with the voluntary sector.
2. "Indirect contract" means contractual arrangements with a non voluntary sector provider but delivered for the sector, eg, franchising arrangements. FE indirect data comes from the latest available records, for 2004-05 (ILR Field A21).
3. ESF data are one-year estimates on the basis of three year programmed expenditure (2005-08).
4. Figures for the Employer Training Pilot only relate to Berkshire and Kent.
5. No figures and currently available for the number of learners supported by VCO providers under Adult and Community Learning

2) LSC Berkshire engagement with the Voluntary Sector 2005-06				
Programme	Predicted learners - Direct	Contract Value	Predicted learners - Indirect	Contract Value
ESF*	180	£73,333	30	£90,000
FE			2,098	£492,498
ACL				
NLDC			28	£3,265
WAPAF			126	£72,000
WBL	181	£682,675	0	£0
ETP	12	£15,000		
Capacity Building	60	£20,000		
LID	10	£30,000	unknown	£133,000
TEC Legacy	110	£10,000	unknown	£49,000
WfD	30	£20,000	research project	£10,000
IAG			960	£39,485
Total	583	£851,008.00	3242	£889,248
<i>Total learners (direct and indirect funding)</i>		3825		
<i>Total funding (direct and indirect)</i>		£1,740,256.00		
<i>Cost per learner</i>		£454.97		

Notes

1. ESF 2005-06 project prediction. Predicted learners for the remaining period to 2008 are 2,665; funding £2,731,053
2. On ACL provision, some colleges make reference to working with VCOs though no data is currently available.

3) LSC Hampshire Isle of Wight engagement with the Voluntary Sector 2005-06				
Programme	Predicted learners - Direct Contract	Contract Value	Predicted learners - Indirect	Contract Value
ESF	4,449	£919,224	unable to determine	Unable to determine
ACL			3,176	£317,600
FE			6,289	£1,550,681
IAG			5,580	£276,500
NLDC			300	£45,000
WAPAF			150	£36,667
WBL	1,618	£5,841,764		
Capacity Building				
LID				
TEC Legacy				
WfD				
Global Grants	3,800	£532,000		
Total	9,867	£7,292,988	15,495	£2,226,448
<i>Total learners (direct and indirect funding)</i>		25,362		
<i>Total funding (direct and indirect)</i>		£9,519,436		
<i>Cost per learner</i>		£375.34		

Notes

1. ESF based on what has been contracted for to 2007. Cannot estimate indirect engagement in a reliable way to report for the year, and another round (£2m total budget) is scheduled in November 2005.

4) LSC Kent and Medway engagement with the Voluntary Sector 2005-06				
Programme	Predicted learners - Direct	Contract Value	Predicted learners - Indirect	Contract Value
ESF	847	£297,124	820	£1,120,000
ACL	not yet known			
FE	not yet known		14,293	£2,514,542
IAG				
NLDC	1,317	£714,455		
WAPAF			100	£73,333
WBL	284	£2,862,852		
Capacity Building				
LID	dev't project	£35,000		
TEC Legacy				
WfD				
Total	2448	£3,909,431	15,213	£2,587,875
<i>Total learners (direct and indirect funding)</i>		17,661		
<i>Total funding (direct and indirect)</i>		£6,497,306		
<i>Cost per learner</i>		£367.89		

Notes

1. ESF Direct includes 928 SME employees in care being trained under a VCS-led consortium. Figures are for 2004-2007.
2. WBL = E2E consortia
3. NLDC contracts are under negotiation

5) LSC Sussex engagement with the Voluntary Sector 2005-06				
Programme	Predicted learners - Direct	Contract Value	Predicted learners - Indirect	Contract Value
ESF	2,427	£1,229,742		
ACLR			2,923	£481,297
FE			6,778	£1,782,897
IAG				
NLDC	Capital funding	£70,000	400	£157,126
WAPAF	60	£73,333		
WBL	660	£2,089,900	63	£238,263
Capacity Building	67	£11,904		
LID	dev't project	£40,000		
TEC Legacy				
WfD				
Total	3,214	£3,514,879	10,164	£2,659,583
<i>Total learners (direct and indirect funding)</i>		13,378		
<i>Total funding (direct and indirect)</i>		£6,174,462.00		
<i>Cost per learner</i>		£461.54		

Notes

1. ESF is an estimate for 2005-06, relating to 2005-08 commitments. A further tendering round will take place in 2005. The total contract value for Indirect Contracts is £3,359,300. It is not possible to estimate ESF indirect learner numbers in a reliable way.
2. NLDC contract is still being finalised. The total Indirect contract = £287,126 which includes capital funding.
3. The WAPAF project also includes research and course development.
4. The Capacity Building contract also includes project management, research into FE VCS partnerships, website research and development and a loose-leaf guide. Total contract funding = £44,000.
5. LID is a capacity / development project for the VCS Consortium

6) LSC MKOB engagement with the Voluntary Sector 2005-06				
Programme	Predicted learners - Direct Contract	Contract Value	Predicted learners - Indirect	Contract Value
ESF*	1,054	£925,032	45	£45,000
ACL				
FE	1,054	£340,368	5,236	£2,840,149
IAG				
NLDC				
WAPAF				
WBL	100	£352,160		
Capacity Building				
LID	300	£100,000		
TEC Legacy				
WfD				
Total	2,508	£1,717,560	5,281	£2,885,149
<i>Total learners (direct and indirect funding)</i>		7789		
<i>Total funding (direct and indirect)</i>		£4,602,709		
<i>Cost per learner</i>		£,590.92		

Notes

1. ESF: new round 2005-08 project prediction awaiting tender

7) LSC Surrey engagement with the Voluntary Sector 2005-06				
Programme	Predicted learners - Direct	Contract Value	Predicted learners - Indirect	Contract Value
ESF	2,400	£667,000		
FE			6,289	£2,090,240
ACL	0	£0		
NLDC	75	£9,000		
WAPAF	(now through LID)			
WBL	151	£454,272		
ETP	0	£0		
Capacity Building	0	£0		
LID	60	£41,761		
TEC Legacy	0	£0		
WfD	0	£0		
IAG	200	£9,850		
Total	2,886	£1,181,883	6,289	£2,090,240
<i>Total learners (direct and indirect funding)</i>		9,175		
<i>Total funding (direct and indirect)</i>		£,3,272,123.00		
<i>Cost per learner</i>		£,356.63		