

Membership Prospectus.

Greater Manchester Voluntary Sector Learning Consortium.

Context/Introduction

Voluntary sector learning providers work positively with individuals who are most in need and experience barriers to learning for many reasons.

Historically, these providers have obtained Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding only through competitive bidding rounds or through franchises from further education colleges. The first offers short-term projects only; the second is subject to reduced income as a result of contributions made to the partner colleges administration costs. The national LSC 'Working Together' strategy provides a forum for joint strategic working with the voluntary and community sector, highlighting that the LSC acknowledges the sector as being a key partner in achieving their objectives, especially with difficult to reach learners.

Unfortunately however the sector is often perceived as being difficult to access and unaccountable. There was a need therefore to formulate a system to address these difficulties.

Greater Manchester LSC approached GMCVO as a result of its capacity, track record and sub-regional status, with a proposition to develop a 'consortium' grouping of voluntary sector learning providers formulated as one organisation, that would have 'preferred provider status' equal to further education institutions.

This document sets out a formal business proposition for that organisation.

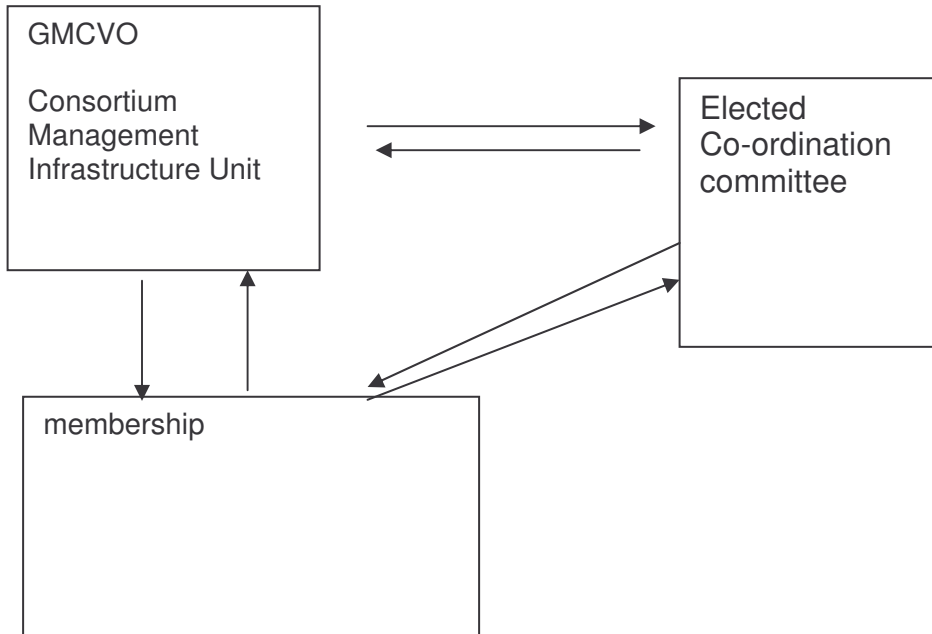
Business Model

At this stage the Consortium is a 'loose' consortium, managed by GMCVO as the lead body, it does not have its own separate constitution or legal entity and GMCVO will take full contractual responsibility for work undertaken.

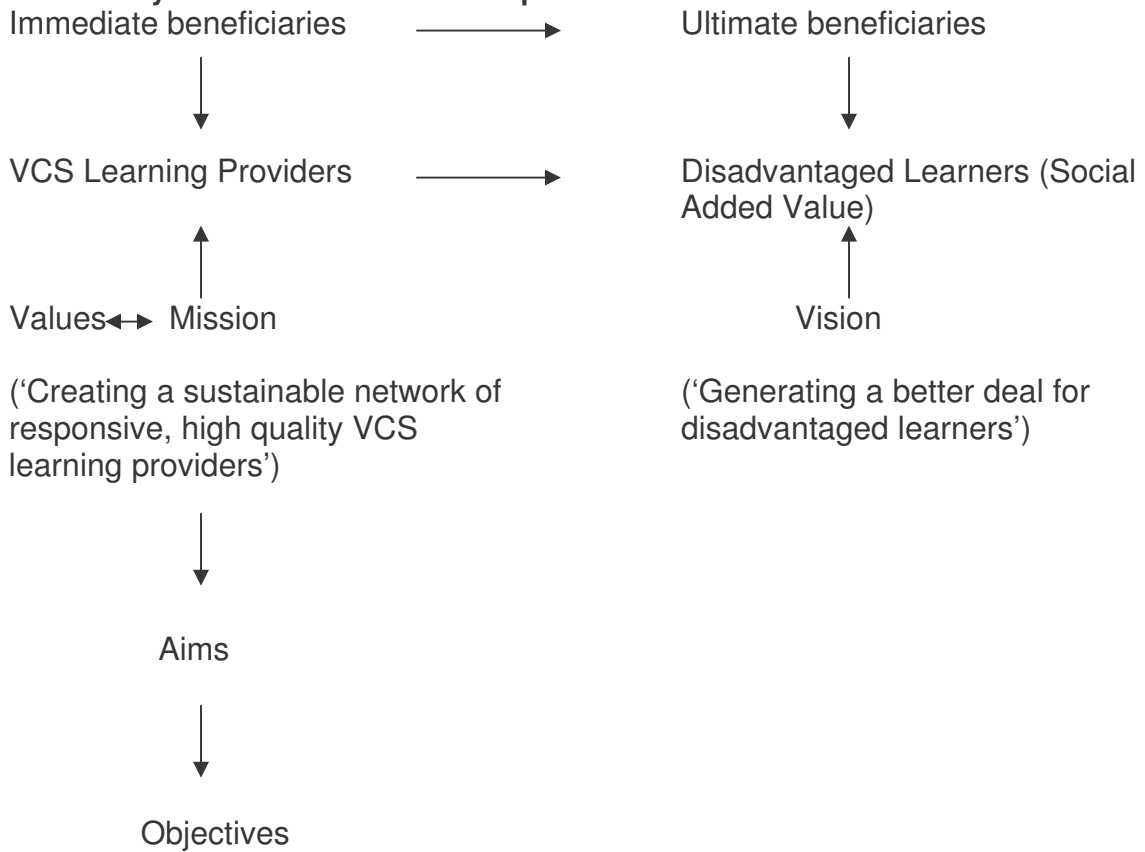
The structure of the Consortium is designed so that all member groups are treated equally in any strategic processes and decision making, whilst recognising that where consensus cannot be reached a decision may need to be taken based on the optimum fulfillment of any contractual obligations. This would be the responsibility of the Lead body.

Where specific policies, proposals and documentation are required, these will be formulated initially by a co-ordinating committee, and then passed through the membership in a formal consultation process either by e- communication or full membership meeting.

The organisation will work within social enterprise business principles.



Beneficiary Continuum in relationship to the Business Model



Vision

Working collectively to provide consistent, high quality, accessible and diverse learning and guidance opportunities to people who experience disadvantage and barriers, who do not or cannot access mainstream learning provision. Enabling them to benefit from a wide choice of quality services tailored to their needs, gain qualifications and/or progress to further learning opportunities.

Mission

To provide procurement, monitoring and support frameworks to enable members to secure sustainable funding and resources, both collectively and individually to meet the needs of commissioning bodies and the learners they seek outcomes for.

Objectives

In order to realise our mission and vision the organisation has the following objectives:

- Create an enabling infrastructure to service members needs, and ensure that the organisation fulfills the requirements of the Learning and Skills Council and other funding regulatory regimes as appropriate. To bid for, obtain, manage and co-ordinate contracts on behalf of the organisation.
- Generate economies of scale and therefore efficiency savings through a central administration/information management point.
- Give a strong single voice at Greater Manchester level to voluntary sector learning providers, allowing them to represent the needs of their client groups to those who make strategic decisions about learning opportunities.
- Provide a pathway for the co-ordination of activities across the membership group to ensure that beneficiaries consistently receive the most appropriate provision and progression support.
- Develop a common standard of quality for the overall organisation, in direct relationship to the Common Inspection Framework, providing capacity building and monitoring support to member groups to enable this to be fulfilled.
- Achieve preferred provider status with the LSC and other funders of learning as appropriate.
- Membership of the organisation, at different levels, will potentially be available to any voluntary sector learning provider working specifically within Greater Manchester, providing it can meet required quality and accountability thresholds.
- Actively promote the work of the organisation through appropriate media.

Values of the Organisation.

- Member groups will be involved in addressing disadvantage through the provision of learning, guidance and associated support.
- The organisation is specifically concerned with the requirements of voluntary sector learning providers, however it will work co-operatively and pro-actively with other providers and agencies from other sectors where this is of appropriate benefit.
- The business of the organisation will be driven by the needs of the learners that it aims to support.

- The organisation will protect and enhance the autonomy and independence of its members, whilst benefiting them through the added advantages of a consortium approach.
- The organisation will be directed by and accountable to, its membership.
- The structure of the organisation will be open, transparent and accountable, guided by an elected co-ordination committee from within the membership, and also by representatives from funding organisations and learners.
- The organisation will be focussed impartially upon the objective needs of all the member groups that shall be equal in status. It will not be dominated by the particular interests of certain groups or individuals.
- The development of the organisation is an enabling mechanism to increase the opportunities of its members to access funding and effectively manage it once received. It does not compete with its own membership to secure resources that would be as easily accessible to individual providers, who may bid on their own behalf, but not then form part of a consortium bid.
- The organisation will be dynamic and responsive to the developing needs of its members, funders and the learners supported.

Business Principles

Since it will be a social enterprise, selling services and outputs, on a not for profit basis the organization will need to adhere to a range of business principles. The organisation will:

- Apply business skills and commercial principles in order to flourish as a social enterprise operating within the independent sector.
- Set clear business objectives.
- Explore and take advantage of opportunities within a planned approach, drawing on the organisation's strategic position within the sub-region and beyond.
- Create and use management information as an integral part of business and strategic planning.
- Undertake long-range business and financial forecasting.
- Focus on outputs rather than inputs.
- Adopt a total, "whole organisation" approach to developing business awareness, understanding and acumen.
- Recruit infrastructure unit staff with appropriate business skills and acumen.
- Improve and enhance the business skills of infrastructure unit staff as part of a Continuous Professional Development strategy.
- Employ business and financial analytical tools (e.g. competitor analysis, break-even analysis etc) as a natural, routine function of maintaining the organisation.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Organisation.

- This is a new and innovative way of working.
- The organisation will provide a credible alternative to traditional institutionalised, statutory or commercial learning environments.

- Through the work of its members in engaging the hardest to reach individuals, the organisation will improve life long learning, increase social and community cohesion, life enrichment and employment prospects for key target people.
- Utilising the wide diversity of its member groups the organisation will ensure fair and equal access to high quality learning provision for people across Greater Manchester.
- A key strength of the organisation is in the stability inherent in its size, skills and diversity. This will ensure that contracts are fulfilled with the minimum of risk to the funding provider.
- The main weakness of the organisation is the vulnerability of some of its members. Due to uncertainties around funding, vital delivery staff are often lost, putting the provision of the individual group at risk. This may then need to be absorbed by other member groups.
- The voluntary sector is one of high passion and sensibility, with strong personal visions and ideals, it is inevitable therefore that some groups may not wish an ongoing membership of the organisation.
- Two opportunities currently available for the organisation to take advantage of are:
 - The development of the Greater Manchester City Strategy.
 - The increasing availability of the mainstream LSC contestibility fund.

Benefits of organisational membership

There are a number of benefits that the organisation brings to its members.

- Access to funding obtained by the organisation.
It is envisaged that we will be in a position to apply for funding in the 2007/2008 financial year.
The organisation infrastructure will be financed directly from contracts obtained. This will be a minimum required contribution per annum, however due to economies of scale the percentage take from each contract will reduce the more successful the organisation is in obtaining funding. The organisation is a non profit making social enterprise and therefore any surpluses at the end of each financial year will be reinvested for the benefit of members.
- Be part of developing and promoting a sub-regional sector view on training / learning / guidance issues
- Enhanced representation at sub-regional, regional and national levels on key training / learning / guidance issues
- Regular information updates

- The organisation will be in a position to actively assess the 'market' for training / learning / guidance delivery opportunities and, as a result, plan a curriculum and develop programmes to fulfil requirements. As a benefit this should lead to the delivery of joint programmes with the mapping of appropriate progression routes from one provider to another within the organisation.

- Strategic planning
The organisation will benefit its members through strategic planning co-ordinated through a function that stimulates, guides, collates and shapes the different, separate strategic aims and objectives of each member group.

- Promotion, publicity and learner recruitment
Instead of relying solely on programmes being advertised discretely by each individual provider, promotion can also be done jointly as a central, co-ordinated function by posting course information (as an example) on the organisation section of the GMCVO website.

- Quality assurance and inspection support
Strategies for continuous improvement, self-assessment and preparing for and managing inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (or appropriate body) are co-ordinated through the organisation. Support to members will be provided through practical guidance and training events. This aspect of enhancing quality is done within a mutually supportive ethos and is focused upon the development of the member groups.

- Enhanced bargaining power
A collection of voluntary sector providers from across Greater Manchester working together in a partnership, as opposed to working in isolation, will increase bargaining power with funding organisations including the Learning & Skills Council.

Requirements of member Groups

There will be the following requirements of member groups:

- Member groups will be expected to work with appropriately qualified staff/volunteers and to undertake regular supervision and appraisals with their workers, highlighting professional development needs. These needs should be summarised and reported in to the management infrastructure unit, together with proposed details for how they will be addressed.
It is recognised that high quality training specifically suitable for staff working within the voluntary sector is not generally widely available. However GMCVO does offer a comprehensive range of development training to people working within the sector and will encourage staff from member groups to take part.

- Possession of a written equal opportunities policy that is understood by staff, volunteers and learners and reviewed regularly

The demonstration of not just an understanding but the practical application of equal opportunities is essential.

- Possession of a written Health & Safety policy with the undertaking and recording of appropriate checks and assessments
Member groups must be able to ensure, as a fundamental requirement, a safe learning environment for learners and staff. This will entail up-to-date and thorough Risk Assessments.
- For groups that work with young people and other vulnerable individuals, there is an expectation that members will have the requisite Child Protection / CRB disclosures / vulnerable people policies in place.
- Demonstrate an interest in, support for, and promotion of, the development and furtherance of the organisation as a whole and not merely their respective individual groups.
- Be prepared to input ideas into the further development of the organisation.
- Be willing to provide information and support for joint bids and applications.
- Member groups must be committed to providing high quality learning, and have systematic arrangements which ensure that the quality of teaching, training and guidance does not fall below a satisfactory level, and which continuously strives towards the improvement of the learning experience as it impacts directly on the learner this must include working within the Common Inspection Framework. (see appendix D)

How groups join the organisation

Groups need to complete the Membership Application. This needs to be returned to GMCVO (See appendix A)

Once the form has been received by GMCVO the group is contacted to make an appointment for a visit to carry out a service/eligibility check.

If the group is deemed to meet the criteria for full membership their application will be considered by the co-ordination committee. If the group does not meet all the membership criteria, support and guidance can be given to ensure that it is able to attain the necessary standards, or associate membership may be offered.

Eligibility Criteria

Membership of the organisation is open potentially to any voluntary sector learning provider in Greater Manchester, as long as it can meet certain essential quality and accountability thresholds. These are:

Sector

Any prospective member must be a voluntary sector group. By this we mean a non-profit making group operating with a Management Committee (that can also be a Board of Directors/Trustees). For a more detailed definition of terms see Appendix B.

There is a two-tier form of membership – Full and Associate. (see Appendix C)

Where a group is applying for membership that is part of a larger, parent organisation, we ask that this is declared. A failure to do so could result in membership being withdrawn.

Addressing disadvantage

Prospective member groups must be concerned with addressing disadvantage. This could be achieved by targeting disadvantaged individuals, groups or communities (of place and interest) for learning and skills development that will assist them to address their particular disadvantage, or by developing the knowledge and skills of people to tackle disadvantage. This does not mean that in order to be eligible groups have to work exclusively with disadvantage and disadvantaged individuals and groups, but that the pervading ethos or overriding mission of groups must be about addressing disadvantage.

This eligibility criterion applies to both Full and Associate members.

Training, learning and/or guidance provider

Any prospective member group must already deliver, or intend to deliver in the near future (and have a realistic and credible plan for developing capacity to fulfil that intention), training or education in some guise or form. This can either be informal, non-accredited provision or more formal, accredited programmes. As examples, it could be about training volunteers or paid staff to deliver a core service such as counselling, advice-giving or running a community enterprise, or it could be about training unemployed people in new job-related skills.

Critically, it must be provision under the direct control of the group. (see Appendix B)
As mentioned above, the organisation has a two-tier form of membership, Full and Associate, (see Appendix C) so there are opportunities for non-training provider voluntary sector groups to join the organisation through Associate membership.

Geography

Members must be operating in Greater Manchester (comprising of the ten local authorities). In other words, the learners for whom a prospective member group is providing a service must be resident in the sub-region.

It is recognised that this will include a variety of providers, large and small, very local to regional or national. Whilst it is difficult to be precise, the aims of the organisation are to support and develop local groups that have originated from Greater Manchester.

Management Information and data

Members must be able to provide the organisation with regular, specified information relating to learner numbers, attendance records, achievements, etc. Information must be provided on time and in an agreed format that is complete, clear and accurate. This requirement is fundamental to the entire operation. Help and support to member groups can be supplied to help fulfil this basic requirement.

This eligibility criterion applies to Full members only.

Minimum threshold for learning output

Even though the organisation structure is designed to enable small groups to access funds through the LSC, there will be times when the organisation needs to set a minimum threshold of learning output because we will have to fulfil the requirements of the funding bodies, such as Greater Manchester Learning & Skills Council. Groups will need to be confident that they can meet the minimum threshold year-on-year.

At some point in the future the organisation may wish to set a maximum threshold beyond which it would be more appropriate for the group to be bidding to LSC independently.

This eligibility criterion applies to Full members only.

Minimum threshold for Quality Assurance to be a member

The organisation is committed to enabling member groups to achieve appropriate levels of quality and in so doing meet standards set. (see Appendix D)

Appendix A

**Application for Membership
GM VOLUNTARY SECTOR LEARNING CONSORTIUM**

The GMVSLC has been set up to bring together groups from the voluntary sector who currently deliver training or have an interest in doing so in the future. The consortium is a representative body and therefore it is crucial that as many and as diverse as possible groups comprise its membership. Please complete with as much detail as possible and contact us if any area is not clear. Please return the form to:

*Hyacinth Walters-Olsen
Hyacinth@gmcvo.org.uk*

*GMCVO
St. Thomas Centre
Ardwick Green North
Ardwick
Manchester
M12 6FZ*

1. Please provide the following information about your group:

a. Full name of group:

b. Postal address:

c. General email address:

d. General phone number:

e. General fax number:

f. General website:

2. Please provide details of the main contact for the Learning Consortium:

a. Name:

b. Postal address:

c. Phone number:

d. Email address:

3. Please provide a brief, general description of your group:

4. Please provide a brief description of your learner base (approximate number of learners per year, age range, ethnic background, gender, employment status, disability, refugees, asylum seekers, etc):

5. Please can you confirm the status of your group:

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| A local charity or voluntary/community group | | A business, commercial or other 'for-profit' group | |
| An academic institution, statutory or public body | | A regional branch of a voluntary group | |
| Other please specify: | | | |

6. Please provide approximate numbers and roles of staff (full-time and part-time) and volunteers (if applicable):

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

7. What are your geographical area/s of service delivery (X as many as applicable):

| | | | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| Countywide | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bolton | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bury | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Manchester | <input type="checkbox"/> | Oldham | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rochdale | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Salford | <input type="checkbox"/> | Stockport | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tameside | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trafford | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wigan | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. What kind of training provision do you deliver (X as many as applicable)?

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Apprenticeships | <input type="checkbox"/> | ESOL/TEFL | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Entry to employment (E2E) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Further Education | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Workforce development | <input type="checkbox"/> | ICT | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| First Steps | <input type="checkbox"/> | Leisure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Basic skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | VCS staff development | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other please specify: | | | |
| | | | |

9. Please provide the following details regarding the courses that you offer:

| Accredited courses | Approximate number of learners |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| | |

| Non-accredited courses | Approximate number of learners |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | |

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
|--|--|

10. Does your group have any links with any colleges or private training providers (e.g. franchises, progression routes, teaching support, joint delivery)?

| | | | |
|--|--|----|--|
| YES | | NO | |
| If answered YES- please provide details of this: | | | |
| | | | |

11. Does your group currently receive any LSC funding?

| | | | |
|--|--|----|--|
| YES | | NO | |
| If answered YES- please provide a brief description: | | | |
| | | | |

Thank you for filling in this Application. If you have any comments about the form please let us know.

Appendix B:

1. Definition of terms relating to the voluntary sector .

The voluntary sector can be viewed in two distinct entities. The voluntary sector is comprised of organisations/groups that are 'not for profit' and are set up and run by voluntary management committees which may or may not include service users. A fair proportion of these organisations/groups will employ paid staff and might, though not necessarily, involve volunteers and local people in carrying out their service. Some, but not all, are charitable, and are registered as such.

The community sector is an umbrella classification for community groups. Community groups are 'very small groups and organisations which might range from self-help groups to neighbourhood controlled community infrastructures'. Community groups are characterised by their self-help nature, are self-controlling, typically have few resources and are totally, or almost always, reliant on voluntary effort.

2. Definition of terms relating to training, learning and/or guidance provider

Usually a training provider will have direct ownership and control over premises, equipment, resources, tutors, programmes, accreditation systems, the number of learners on programmes, the number of qualifications they achieve.

Being a training provider should not be confused with other roles that groups can and do usefully adopt in relation to the training process. Groups could, for example, host training or learning activity delivered through another provider.

Appendix C

Membership Status

Full

Applicants for full membership will need to be voluntary groups who are already delivering formal learning opportunities and fulfil all the necessary criterion for quality assurance, capacity, etc.

As a Full member, you will be entitled to be part of relevant commissioning bids (subject to note under 'minimum threshold for learning output').

Associate

As an Associate member the respective group will be unable to be part of the Organisation's delivery (unless, as an exception, the respective group's specialism is required to help deliver organisation goals).

Typically, associates could fall into any of the following example categories:

- A voluntary organisation that is not a direct training or learning *provider* (but which might *host* or *promote* learning in some way)
- A large voluntary organisation that is seeking, under its own independent auspices, to secure a direct contractual relationship with the Learning and Skills Council
- A non voluntary sector-based organisation or partnership body

The benefits of associate membership include:

- Access to advice, information and support through the organisation infrastructure unit relating to general issues pertaining to group development, and specifically quality assurance and the functional aspects of managing information and managing finances
- Access (where relevant) to advice, information and support through the organisation infrastructure unit relating to strategies for building the capacity of the associate member in order for it to progress, if appropriate, from being a training host or promoter to become a training provider
- The potential to network with other members, full and associate, in order to facilitate the transfer of goods and services, including skills and know-how"

Groups' membership status (whether Full or Associate) can be reviewed at any time by request due to, for example, wanting to be part of an organisation piece of work, or having built capacity sufficiently to engender a change of status

Appendix D

QUALITY STANDARDS & ASSURANCE

1. Definition

1.1 A succinct definition of quality is: The effectiveness of teaching, training and guidance in facilitating the achievement of good outcomes for the learner or client.

1.2 Quality Assurance may be defined as : Systematic arrangements which ensure that the quality of teaching, training and guidance does not fall below a satisfactory level, and which continuously strives towards the improvement of the learning experience as it impacts directly on the learner.

1.3 Quality assurance cannot restrict itself to certain aspects of provision within the organisation, but must cover the whole of the teaching, training and guidance process – from first contact through to the final assessment of achievement and any after-care support. Good quality assurance is not about being dependent on the contingent skills of particular staff but about establishing robust underpinning systems that support the entire process of delivery. It is also about forward planning with the emphasis on learning from current and past mistakes and deficiencies and putting them right for the future. Sound quality assurance systems will give us the confidence that standards of performance will be maintained and improved upon.

2. A Quality Assurance Strategy for the organisation.

2.1 The organisation aims to ensure quality within all its activities in order to fulfil its commitment to all who are engaged within its learning provision, its funders and government sponsored inspection bodies, (eg. ALI & OFSTED).

2.2 In order to fulfil this aim, the organisation will develop a quality policy, practices and procedures to meet and wherever possible exceed specified requirements. These will be reviewed annually. QA policies and procedures will complement other policies of the organisation, its membership and governance arrangements to ensure a seamless and integrated approach to quality management, self assessment and continuous improvement of its membership.

2.3 The organisation will concertedly address these aims and objectives by :

- Setting out a quality framework that will be owned and clearly understood by the membership.
- Ensuring that such a framework protects and furthers the distinctive mission and ethos of member groups in tackling disadvantage and advancing equality and social inclusion.
- Part of the role of the infrastructure unit will be to assist member groups with:
Developing and maintaining internal quality assurance systems

- Self-assessment
- Action planning
- Managing external inspections

Establishing robust management information systems that will collect and collate data relating to pre-entry educational attainment levels, retention, achievement, learner destinations etc

2.4 It is likely that any external inspection or audit of our provision will consider it as a single unified entity. Not all groups may be inspected in any given inspection. However the management of the organisation will need to be satisfied that the quality of provision is maintained at a consistently satisfactory or better level. This will be achieved through a cyclical process of audit of the provision of member providers. The infrastructure unit will manage this process in conjunction with the co-ordination committee.

2.5 In order to balance the need for the development of effective quality assurance systems with the furtherance of our distinctive mission of addressing disadvantage and advancing equity and social inclusion, the organisation will:

- Set standards (such as retention rates) that are appropriate to the particular disadvantaged groups we are targeting as a distinct sectoral provider.
- Promote the concept of added value as a means of demonstrating our contribution to the Government's "best value" agenda. This concept of added value will be practically articulated through evidence of:
 - Meeting the needs of particularly disadvantaged learners.
 - Delivering training that develops skills to tackle disadvantage and social exclusion.
 - Actively involving the disadvantaged user groups in the ownership and control of learning facilities, resources and processes, thereby building self-reliance and self-determination in parallel to, or integration with, up-skilling.
 - Developing linkages to other community-focused strategies such as with training that underpins or supports community enterprise and neighbourhood renewal.

3. **Statutory Requirements**

3.1 It is a fundamental requirement for all government funded learning provision, that providers who deliver such provision have the necessary systems, processes and skills in place to meet specified quality assurance requirements. Expectations are made clear by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and OFSTED who are responsible for inspection. Funding bodies such as the LSC require providers to work to these prescribed standards. They also require recipients of funding to have self assessment procedures in place to evidence the pro-active way in which providers are continuously working towards quality improvement.

3.2 The prime responsibility for quality rests with the lead body, which receives and disperses funding to member groups. However, it is incumbent upon each and every membership group to provide for the following in respect of its own provision. Systems and procedures must be in place which will enable honest, effective and accurate 'self

inspection' against the governments Common Inspection Framework. Self Assessment must :

- Be even-handed about weaknesses as well as strengths
- Be evaluative rather than descriptive
- Lead to clear Development Plans with deadlines and nominated responsibilities
- Address the quality of learners' experience, standards achieved and effectiveness of management and quality assurance arrangements
- be integral to strategic and operational planning
- Evaluate learners' and customers' views
- be based upon evidence that can be readily produced for audit and inspection purposes
- Enable each provider to assess itself against the standards achieved by others, (ie. 'benchmarking').
- Consider targets pre-set by the organisation for recruitment of learners, retention rates etc.
- Aim to minimise drop out rates and deliver high completion and achievement rates and appropriate progression
- Ensure competent and appropriately qualified staff deliver and assess learning.
- Offer equality of access to learning opportunities and closing equality gaps in learning and job outcomes
- Provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment that meets the needs of learners
- Aim to provide good management and leadership of the learning and guidance process

4. Responsibilities of Member Groups

4.1 Every member group of the organisation has a responsibility for ensuring that a consistently high quality of provision is aimed for, maintained and continuously improved upon.

4.2 The Lead Body has overall responsibility for ensuring the quality of the organisation's services. It will be responsible in conjunction with the co-ordination committee for production of the annual 3 Year Organisational Development Plan, Self Assessment Report and Development Plan.

4.3 Membership Groups have responsibility for managing the direct delivery of learning provision in accordance with the organisation's QA policy and procedures. They are responsible for facilitating and ensuring a quality learning environment and for ensuring equality of opportunity that meets the diverse needs of our learners.

4.4 Partners and Sub-contractors who support membership groups in learning delivery have responsibility for providing feedback on learning provision and its impact on the learner from their perspective. They are responsible for maintaining contract / Service Level Agreement specification requirements.

4.5 Service Users have a responsibility for providing feedback about the quality of their learning and/or guidance.

5. **QUALITY STANDARDS**

5.1 The organisation will establish policies and procedures for measuring and assessing effectiveness against agreed performance indicators and targets.

5.2 In support of the organisation's quality provision, additional standards will be set and maintained in the following aspects of delivery :

- Initial assessment, Advice and Information
- Teaching and Structured Learning
- Guidance
- Assessment and Monitoring of Progress
- Achievement Objectives
- Curriculum Range and Development
- Client and Learner Support
- Accommodation and Learning Resources
- Human Resources
- Equality / Diversity
- Widening Participation

Membership groups will :

- aim to meet or exceed all external quality assurance standards where they are specified.
- conduct periodic observations of all contracted provision in accordance with agreed procedures and provide prompt feedback to staff/volunteers
- conduct periodic feedback surveys with its learners, partners and staff.
- periodically evaluate data against contracted and planned expectations
- periodically conduct quality audits of its contracted learning provision and provide prompt feedback to staff involved
- periodically produce reports on quality standards achieved, together with recommendations for improvement and change
- ensure that quality matters, (including analysis of feedback, Self Assessment Reports and Development Plans) are routinely communicated to their staff, volunteers and learners.

6. **Self Assessment**

6.1 Self-Assessment is a fundamental and continuous process through which the membership groups will assess their own quality and manage improvement. It is also the way in which the organisation as a whole will benchmark its service and prepare for inspection.

6.2 Quality Management Cycle

Membership groups will need to have in place, an annual quality management programme of audits and observations and feedback activity, which will need to be routinely reviewed.

6.3 Instruments of Evaluation

The annual quality management process will use various Instruments of Evaluation in order to gather information to enable self assessment of quality and continuous improvement of service delivery. These instruments are likely to include the following :

Evaluation of Data

Number of clients receiving IAG (information, advice and guidance)

Number of learners starting each learning provision

Number of learners leaving each learning provision

% of early leavers (not having achieved their learning objectives)

Retention levels

% of Absences

% of Learners who achieved their learning objectives

Observation Reports

Evaluation of Observation of learning sessions

Evaluation of IAG sessions

Audits

Internal Quality Audit Reports

External Verifier/Moderator visit reports

Funding organisation monitoring visit reports

Feedback

Evaluation of personal learner development

Evaluation of Focus Groups discussion with learners

Evaluation of Learner Feedback Questionnaires

Evaluation of partner/employers Feedback Questionnaires

Other Sources

Membership group team/management meeting minutes/action notes

Organisation Team minutes/action notes

Sub-Committee minutes/action notes

7. **Guidance and Support for Learners and Clients**

7.1 Pre-Engagement

All learners engaged in provision made available through the organisation shall be offered impartial information, advice and guidance to assist them in making informed choices about their learning and life goals.

The means by which this is provided will vary across the region and membership groups. This will take into account local community needs and the remit, specialisms and skills of each member group. However, as a basic requirement information shall include :

Limitations, eligibility criteria and mandatory requirements
Start dates, session times and holidays
Information about venues and accessibility
Accurate information about any costs that will need to be met by the learner
Recommended prior knowledge/skills/experience expected at the start of all provision
An explanation of teaching, work experience and learning methods to be provided
How individual needs can be met
How progress and achievement will be measured
Progression opportunities

7.2 At the beginning of all courses and support programmes

learners will receive an introduction to their course from their tutor or an introduction to their programme of support at the first session. This outlines as appropriate :

- What they can expect to achieve in relation to current knowledge/skills experience
- Guidance and support available
- Teaching and learning methods
- Information about qualifications if available
- An assessment of individual needs
- Guidance about additional support, if needs have been identified
- Health and Safety
- Equal Opportunities/Diversity
- Administrative and domestic arrangements
- Learner Information Sheet, including rights, responsibilities and expectations
- Procedures for complaints, grievances and discipline
- Systems for gathering learner and client feedback

In addition, all learners funded through the organisation shall receive a copy of the member group's learner agreement. This may be issued as part of the Induction Pack or as a hand-out at the first session. The Statement must make clear what the member group promises to provide through its services. It shall state responsibilities of the learner and give an opportunity for feedback.

7.3 During all courses and support programmes

Learners will receive:

- Ongoing feedback about their progress and learning goals
- Relevant and timely information about assessment, where appropriate
- Access to advice and support relating to the course or programme
- Prompt and sympathetic handling of any complaints or grievances
- An opportunity to give feedback about their course or programme of support via evaluation sheets and comments forms and, where appropriate, through open forum discussion

7.4 Towards the end of all courses and support programmes

Learners will receive :

- Information and guidance about future courses or careers information
- An opportunity to give feedback about their time with the group or the support they have received.

Particular thanks for their work and support in preparing this document are due to:

Steve Bottrill
Gary Copitch
Neil Coulson
Rob Jackson
Gordon McGuire

We are also indebted to VC Train (South Yorkshire), who have been an invaluable source of best practice information.

Disclaimer

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