

Working Together Project
Supporting community action & developing the workforce

Strategic Development Plan
April 2008 - March 2013

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Purpose of this Plan

This five year strategic plan attempts to build on the work that we have undertaken both as a project since 1998, and as a charity in our own right since 2001. It acknowledges the changing environment of the voluntary and community sector (VCS), and our need to develop with, and respond to, those changes.

It outlines proposed developments in line with consultation with our users, and linked to national, regional and local strategies.

Mission Statement

The Working Together Project (WTP) is dedicated to meeting the workforce development and community capacity building needs of the Third Sector and the Public Sector by offering a wide range of creative and partnership based training, learning and education. WTP is committed to community empowerment, reducing inequality and improving services to disadvantaged people and communities.

Aims

1. WTP aims to work in partnership to build the capacity of the VCS by meeting the training, learning and educational needs of staff, volunteers, community activists and management committees.
2. WTP aims to work in partnership to build the capacity and culture of the VCS to develop, deliver and support access to learning for their staff, volunteers, members and service users.
3. WTP aims to work in partnership to deliver cross-sector training to improve partnership, networking, sharing expertise and develop the public sector workforce for the benefit of the VCS and the statutory sector
4. WTP aims to improve the quality of life of all local residents, by supporting the VCS and the public sector to provide effective activities and services; particularly in, with and to, the most disadvantaged and / or those facing discrimination, so as to bring about social, cultural, economic and environmental improvement.

Objectives

In order to achieve its aims WTP, with a comprehensive range of partners, will:

1. Provide a quality marked rolling programme of short courses in order to support Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs) to build their capacity, develop their workforce, diversify their income streams, and to bid for and deliver work in the new public sector contracting environment.
2. Provide an outreach service to the VCS in order to support groups and organisations to identify their training, learning and development

needs, develop learning plans, and engage the VCS in meaningful training and learning who otherwise would not participate in courses and further training.

3. Design accredited/unaccredited community based courses with clusters of community groups within and across communities, which both offer skills to community activists and enable those volunteer activists to develop and improve their activities, services and communities.
4. Provide a leadership and management programme which supports new and emerging VCS leaders to grow into and be more effective in their role. This consists of both an accredited course and a programme of mentoring.
5. Support or facilitate the formation of new or existing partnerships in order to develop funded learning for VCOs; ensure that this learning is integrated into the range of support services available to the VCS; and / or support those VCOs to participate in work that supports the development of learning for their staff, volunteers, members and / or their service users.
6. Enable local communities to have a strong voice in the planning and delivery of local services through the provision of learning opportunities.
7. Ensure that there is clear progression to and from the range of courses that are delivered by WTP and between WTP provision and relevant courses that are delivered by other providers; and where there is not appropriate progression opportunities, work in partnership with other training / education providers to develop relevant high quality provision.
8. Provide learning and information resources by participating in the production and distribution of a regular paper publication & web resources.
9. Undertake research into existing and potential training provision to identify gaps and examine why people involved in the VCS are not taking up existing opportunities.
10. Enhance the networking capabilities of the VCS through the provision of information and delivery of training outlined above.
11. Develop new training and learning provision where there is evidence of need, and adequate resources available.
12. Develop a range of charged for services, including training and consultancy services that subsidise the services outlined in the first 11 objectives.

Organisational Values

WTP's core values are participatory and democratic and we are committed to ensuring we work with the full spectrum of VCOs, ranging from the smallest to the largest, the least formal to the most formal, and the newest to the oldest. WTP recognises too that it is accountable to that community of people and organisations, and to the wider community that funds those services.

WTP believes that in order to meet the needs of the VCS, a strategic, clearly focused approach is required that is firmly rooted in equality, diversity, and improved access to services and resources. This requires a pro-active approach based on evidence of the needs, wants and aspirations of the VCS, and the wider communities with which they work, or in which they are based.

WTP believes that in order for any group of people to bring about change in their community, a minimum capacity for social organisation and action is needed. Groups need to be able to diagnose their needs, identify barriers and challenges, potential responses and partners, and opportunities for self-help and / or service delivery. The whole range of organisational skills required, need to be underpinned by the knowledge and understanding of civic structures and the social, economic and political environment. To this end, WTP is committed to providing numerous and flexible progression routes between our own courses, and those of other providers.

Ethos of Learning Activities

WTP's training is always based on the self-identified needs of the VCS, gathered through a range of feedback mechanisms. Participants will find the training interactive and participatory, whilst also receiving input from the trainer.

WTP works with a huge diversity of groups representing both communities of interest and neighbourhoods, as well as within those groups, a broad range of services and other community activity. For a breakdown and more information see our annual evaluation documents (both internal and external).

WTP recognises, however, that training is not a complete response and will work in partnership with other voluntary organisations, statutory bodies and the private sector to develop a comprehensive approach to community and voluntary sector infrastructure and support, and develop a co-ordinated approach to training and learning both in Sussex and regionally. This will include brokering additional learning resources to the sector as appropriate opportunities arise, and signposting and supporting access to training provided by other community and voluntary organisations, colleges and universities.

Identification & Evidence of Need

Population & Deprivation in Brighton & Hove

Based on the Index of Deprivation 2007, Brighton and Hove is ranked as the 79th most deprived authority in England (out of 354). This compares to its

ranking of 86th in the 2004 IMD and 95th in the 2000 IMD This means the City falls within the most deprived 25% of all authorities in England. 15 of its 164 super output areas (9% of all SOAs in the City) fall within the 10% most deprived SOAs in England and 8 SOAs falling in the 5% most deprived. The city is characterised by pockets of severe deprivation, some in areas of relative wealth.

The city's Reducing Inequalities Review has highlighted that significant inequalities continue to exist between different areas and communities in the city. Critically, whilst individual families/households may have been helped by the two programmes, overall, statistically, the gap has not been closed. If anything, it has increased especially when considering those claiming DWP benefits.

The Reducing Inequalities Review found that the majority of 'deprived people' do not live in the 'deprived areas', though those experiencing multiple deprivation do tend to live in the City's most deprived areas. It also indicated a wider range of people who services need to consider. For example, pensioner poverty is above the England average. This means that going forward, service providers must consider both people and places when designing their services and allocating resources, and not one or the other. When considering the city's challenges LAA partners must recognise the persistence of these inequalities and plan their response accordingly.

The major socio-economic problems the city faces are around:

- Health inequalities particularly around mental health
- Drug, alcohol and substance misuse
- Low or no skills among sections of the population
- A quarter of all children living in households with no working adults
- High, static number of people claiming incapacity benefits
- High churn of people on and off Job seekers Allowance
- Above-average number of young people not in education, employment and training
- Large ecological footprint
- Poor air quality

Population and Deprivation in West Sussex

West Sussex lies on the coast of central southern England and since the 1991 Census the population of West Sussex has increased by 51,324 people to 753,614. The county has a population density of 3.8 people per hectare, but due to its mix of rural and urban areas there are huge variations of this figure ranging from just 1.4 people per hectare in Chichester to 30 people per hectare in Worthing, which has almost eight times the average population density of West Sussex.

The populations of Adur, Arun, Chichester and Worthing Districts are older than those of West Sussex as a whole. Horsham and Mid Sussex have slightly older age structures than England & Wales while Crawley has a younger population than both West Sussex and England & Wales.

97% of the West Sussex population gave their ethnic group as White (more than the proportion for England & Wales at 91%). But again there are wide variations across the county with Crawley falling within the 20% of local authorities in England & Wales with the lowest proportion of White people. As in England & Wales half of the county's non-White population describe themselves as Asian.

In the Health and Disability Domain of the Index of Deprivation 2004 two wards in Worthing, Central and Heene, rank 2181 and 2185 respectively (a rank of 3,248 or below means that the area is within the 10% most deprived in England). A ward in Arun, River, is just over that level at 3727; indeed out of the twenty most deprived wards in West Sussex nine are in the Arun district. Around one-tenth of the West Sussex population are unpaid carers for some amount of time each week. Arun has the highest proportion of people caring for 50 or more hours (21%) and Crawley has the lowest proportion of people in the most time intensive care group at 13%.

Population & Deprivation in East Sussex

Hastings is the 39th most deprived local authority area in England (Rank of Ward Ranks, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004). The town suffers from disproportionate levels of educational underachievement, unemployment, crime and poor health is spread across much of the town. However, Hastings also has three neighbourhoods which fall within the 3% most deprived nationally and has consequently been awarded Neighbourhood Element funding between 2006-2010 for these localities. This additional funding seeks to intensify Neighbourhood Renewal work and to create new interventions that tackle deprivation in new ways.

In the rest of East Sussex the total population is increasing in number. People aged 60 or over will comprise as much as 38% of the total population by 2026, as compared with 29% in 2006 (government growth prediction 21% to 28% in the same period). In contrast, working age people (between the age ranges 15-19 and 55-59), will decrease, both numerically and as a percentage of the total East Sussex population, from 53% in 2006 to 48% by 2026.

East Sussex is a low wage economy. In 2005 the average weekly wage in East Sussex was £507 gross, in contrast to £577 over the South East as a whole and £520 on average for Great Britain. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation statistics which show that Rother is the most deprived district. In addition to low wages, house prices in East Sussex are extremely high.

The VCS, Learning and the Economy

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) is a substantial 'industry'. In workforce terms it is larger than the NHS with 608,000 people employed and 1.2 million involved in voluntary work.

It provides community development services, social care and health, arts, economic development, housing and training/education. Voluntary and

Community Organisations (VCOs) need substantial skills, competencies and capabilities to provide these services. The VCS 'industry' benefits from training and learning and training inputs for both the providers of its services (staff and volunteers) and the recipients – clients, service users and communities. The VCS also provides benefits to the whole labour market and the economy by providing core and transferable skills through voluntary work, training, paid work and rehabilitation (that enables access to work and training that would otherwise not be available).

Unlike many other industries the VCS does not hoard its skills due to market competition. Rather skills and knowledge tends to be widely shared and dispersed in a collaborative endeavour. The beneficiaries of VCS learning provision are as follows.

VCS beneficiaries of training and learning:

- **Sector workforce** – paid staff; volunteers
- **Organisation and management** – VCS organisations i.e. community groups, charities (large and small), social enterprises and networks. This includes management and leadership carried out by trustees, directors and committee members.
- **Clients, users and beneficiaries** – individuals who learn skills and acquire knowledge through their involvement with a voluntary initiative, service, charity or project. Informal but critical core skills are learned through being a client, service user or member of a VCO.
- **Communities** – Neighbourhoods and communities of interest (organised groups and individuals with shared interests or needs) that receive benefits from voluntary organisation activity.

The wider economy and civil society:

- **The wider economy and labour force** – exceptionally the sector helps, supports and rehabilitates large numbers of people and reaches high needs groups and communities who can not participate in work or training. In addition it enables people to develop skills through voluntary work that prepares people with core skills (such as communication, teamwork, office and IT skills to name but a few). This enables participants to be more employable or more able to participate in training and learning and employment in the wider economy. The VCS is exceptional in that it provides core skills and widely transferable skills for participants who can not acquire or practice these skills in any other way (except in employment that might not be available to them)
- **Civil society** – The VCS provides the environment for developing skills for civil participation, leadership and management. These opportunities for developing citizenship, participation and management skills are barely available anywhere other than at the upper levels of companies and public sector bodies. This has immeasurable and critical benefits for the general health and well being of people and communities developing social relationships, networks and building the social capital that enables society, institutions and communities to function.

Community learning – Four Level Model

The VCS develops skills, creates knowledge, and trains individuals and groups at many levels. In view of the fact that VCS activities, in society and the economy, are about changing people, systems and opportunities for the better, it is necessary for learning to be taking place:

- at the individual and *personal* level;
- at the *work and workforce* level including professional training plus sector specific skills for staff and for volunteers;
- at the *organisational* level from small community groups to large charities and social enterprises;
- and at the level of *communities* of place (neighbourhoods, towns and cities) and *communities* of interest (social groups, social networks, people with common needs/wants/characteristics).

Perhaps what is most important about this model of community learning is that interaction between the learner, the organisation and the community is what brings about the knowledge, skills and capability of VCS endeavour. In turn this brings about the social and economic prosperity that the VCS creates. The model is taken from Jim Simpson Consultancy (2007)

Feedback and Consultation

WTP has a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the level of need for training and learning in the VCS in Brighton & Hove (outreach, phone, email and website requests, requests for further courses from participants, over-subscription rates, and findings from external evaluation). There continues to be an annual over-subscription rate of around 40% for courses. There is also a large body of evidence that corroborates our findings, and our methods of stimulating demand. These include directly, research identified in the following:

1. Brighton & Hove ChangeUp strategy, which identified support with strategic planning/business planning; raising money/finding sources of funding; improving an organisation's effectiveness; quality standards, monitoring and evaluation; skills development/training for staff and volunteers; marketing, publicity and communications; diversity issues; help with ICT/using computers; risk management; and user involvement. Training was identified as one of the key vehicles for support;
2. West Sussex ChangeUp Strategy, which identified training appropriate to all aspects of work in the sector as one of their four priorities. The other three priorities are key topics for training: finding funds and grants; finding and keeping volunteers; getting views across to statutory organizations;
3. East Sussex ChangeUp Strategy and business plan, which identifies training for trustees, managers and volunteers in a range of areas relating to their practice;
4. Voluntary Sector Skills Survey 2007, which is commissioned by NCVO, identifies strategic use of IT; legal knowledge; fundraising; strategic planning and forward thinking; health and safety; marketing; communication; leadership; monitoring and evaluation; team working;

negotiating and influencing; basic computer literacy/IT; finance; HR/Personnel; management of paid staff; project management; working in partnership with other organisations; management of volunteers; campaigning; procurement/contract management.

Delivery on Strategies & Priorities

As well as addressing the specific training needs identified in the research / strategies above, WTP will continue to contribute more generally to the delivery of the following strategies:

1. Brighton & Hove City Council's Strategic Plan identifies in its priority for a prosperous and sustainable economy, that an effective trained workforce is vital for the service economy;
2. The Regional Learning and skills Compact identifies the following areas as key priorities, which are also reflected in the LSC's Working Together Strategy: widening participation; workforce development; and improving quality and responsiveness of provision;
3. The 20:20 Community Partnership Community Strategy in Brighton & Hove's key priority to strengthen communities and involve people;
4. The City Employment & Skills Plan identifies two priorities; develop and improve skills of residents; and develop the city's infrastructure and intelligence;
5. Brighton & Hove Adult Learning Strategy identifies the following two priorities: increase the chances of employment and reduce worklessness through activities linked to Regeneration and Renewal as well as Economic Development; facilitate links between 'learning' and 'doing' that can encourage active citizenship and enable citizens of Brighton and Hove to improve the quality of their lives through a fuller engagement in civic life and/or volunteering;
6. Big Lottery Strategic Plan, Reaching Communities programme identifies support projects that respond to the needs of communities and actively involve them, and their Building and Sustaining Infrastructure Services (BASIS) programme identifies the need to increase the resources available to voluntary and community organizations and to increase voluntary and community organisation skills in: planning and management; financial management and funding; influencing national and local policy practice; learning and sharing learning; and governance;
7. Brighton & Hove Adult Learning Outreach Strategy identifies five priorities, including: to develop sustainable mechanisms so that learners can have greater control over educational activities; to facilitate communication and joint working between educational outreach workers and other relevant workers and providers; and to develop the provision of high quality outreach provision;
8. Learning and Skills Council Regional Strategic Plan identifies raising the skills of the nation, giving employers and individuals the skills they need to improve productivity, employability and social cohesion.

Managing the Organisation

Working Together Project is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee with no share capital, governed by a memorandum and articles of association. There is a membership scheme, which is open to all community and voluntary organisations and individuals committed to the values of the VCS in Sussex. This allows a diverse base from which Trustees are recruited and supports WTP's ethos of ensuring the organisation works to the needs of people and organisations it serves.

As a learning provider, the organisation's management structure is such that it ensures constant development of all its trustees, staff and volunteers. This will continue to ensure high levels of management in all areas of work, including developing a greater understanding of the VCS; increased effectiveness in the management of the resources that the organisation receives; and full compliance with the law and best practice in governance.

Governance

Our membership elects a board to act as directors of the company and trustees of the charity, which are non-remunerated positions. The board meets every two months, with Finance and Fundraising and Employment and Personnel sub-groups meeting an average of four times a year each. Our trustees' skills and experience include running training and learning projects, financial management, fundraising, staff and resources management, project development, and employment and personnel issues. The trustees come from a diversity of backgrounds, including people from the public and private sectors, as well as the voluntary and community sectors. While it is a strong board, we will be actively recruiting new trustees, as skills gaps are identified on an ongoing basis.

The Staff

The Working Together Project working environment is open, respectful and vibrant – it is a place where team working gets results and creative, collaborative ideas can flourish. Staff are encouraged to generate new ideas and take ownership for making them happen. Individual staff members are accountable to the staff team through weekly team meetings, monthly strategic development days, and six monthly work reviews which are also reported to the Personnel Sub-committee of the Trustee Board. New staff are line-managed for the first year. After a year, staff have an external supervisor to support their professional development. Project teams take responsibility for income generation and innovation. There is a belief that for good ideas to have an impact throughout the organisation, all members of the team need to participate. WTP will employ and support the development of staff, and contract trainers and consultants as they are required, to undertake work, in line with this strategic plan and the annual business plan.

Quality Assurance

WTP meets the PQASSO level 2 standards and will continue to be work towards level 3. WTP also uses the quality assurance procedures consistent with the Common Inspection Framework for Adult Learning, and the

Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited adult learning quality assurance system. WTP has the OCN Quality Mark which means that all of our provision is externally moderated for the quality of our provision.

Communications

Communication is vital to our success as a learning provider within the VCS. WTP has communications links at a local, regional and national level which is essential to ensure high quality training. We will ensure that the information that flows is accurate, relevant and at the heart of what we do. We will deliver the message, the tools and news of what's happening to the widest possible range of voluntary and community organisations, ensuring easy access to everything we produce and establishing ourselves as the first point of contact for people who require help in skills development within the local community and voluntary sector. WTP will continue to maintain and use the largest and most up to date database of VCOs in Brighton & Hove, regularly undertake publicity drops in all community venues, undertake regular outreach to identify learning needs and to promote the work of the organisation, and network effectively to promote and expand the work of WTP.

Sustainability of Subsidised Services

WTP has for the last nine years offered the majority of its services free at the point of entry. Whilst this has enabled significant numbers of people from VCOs to access the learning they need, therefore enabling us to reach organisation in greater depth, as well as enabling small community groups with little or no money to attend training that they would not otherwise have access to, WTP is aware that for there to be sustainability, the organisation must begin to charge for at least some of its services.

In 2007 WTP commissioned a feasibility study into possible ideas for income generation, and which also incorporated a feasibility study into the One Planet Learning Centre. The development of these new services will be taken forward by a working group of trustees and staff as part of the possible move to new premises on the One Brighton development (outlined briefly in the next section).

Premises & Training Facilities

To increase the sustainability of the organisation, to provide the space for expansion, and to maximise the surplus made from charged for services, WTP will explore the feasibility of securing premises that will enable the organisation to generate a level of income through the provision of an effectively run, central, competitively priced training, meeting and conference facility. This will provide a platform to develop a range of charged for training and consultancy services, which WTP hopes to do in partnership with other organisations that want to generate income through the delivery of more specialist training programmes

For more information, see feasibility study April 2007 by Ivan Clarke.

Partnership & Capacity Building Work

WTP will continue to be actively involved in developing strategic links and relationships within Brighton and Hove, East and West Sussex, the South East region, and nationally, to ensure that the organisation is able to develop its capacity and gain the resources necessary to meet its strategic objectives.

Staff will continue to attend strategic and partnership meetings as appropriate in order to: represent the sectors' training and capacity building needs; ensure that issues related to training and learning being identified by the VCS are being addressed; to ensure that WTP learners have access to progression routes through other providers and to work in partnership to explore the delivery of NOCN and NVQ qualifications; to develop mentoring and befriending approved provider status; to research and develop work in partnership with communities of interest based organisations; network with the local authority, statutory agencies and funding bodies; and identify potential funding to meet the need.

Funding

WTP will continue to pursue funds and resources in line with the strategic objectives. At the time of writing, the organisation requires around £250,000 per annum to dispense its services effectively, and this is likely to grow incrementally for the plan to be fully implemented over the next five years. The financial resources needed by WTP are likely to come from a range of sources including:

- Big Lottery Fund
- CapacityBuilders
- Brighton & Hove City Council Discretionary Grant
- Brighton & Hove City Council Community Development Commissioning
- Learning and Skills Council mainstream funding via a mainstream provider or the Sussex VCS Learning Consortium
- Learning and Skills Council Discretionary Funding including the Neighbourhood Learning Fund
- Area Based Grant
- Working Neighbourhoods Fund
- Local Area Agreement
- European Social Fund
- University of Brighton
- Brighton & Hove City Primary Care Trust
- Other European Funds including INTERREG
- South East England Development Agency
- Consultancy fees from training, research, consultation and development activities
- Commissioned cross-sector consultancy and training work
- Grant Making Trusts

The organisation develops a detailed fundraising strategy annually.

Policies and Procedures

WTP has the following policies in place, which will continue to be reviewed annually as legislation and good practice changes:

- Ethical Policy
- Corporate Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedure
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
- Grievance and Complaints Procedure
- Supervision and Appraisal Policy
- Redundancy Policy
- Financial Policy and Procedures
- Risk and Mitigation Policy
- Health and Safety Procedures and Responsibilities
- Membership Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Trustee Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Trustee Expenses Policy
- Policy on the Employment of Trainers
- Confidentiality Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures