

# Briefing paper

## Sector Skills Council and Youth Work – July 2011

### Introduction

This briefing paper provides a summary as to the current developments on the Sector Skills Council front, all of which have important implications for the youth work sector across the UK. This paper includes information which has been taken from text agreed by a group representing the youth work sector from across the UK. The National Council for Youth Services is a member of that group.

### What are Sector Skills Councils?

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are responsible for meeting the skills gaps and needs of specific occupational groups. For example, they develop and revise qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks.

Between 2005 and the end of March 2011, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) was selected as the SSC for youth work. Whilst not a perfect fit for youth work, LLUK's educational identity was regarded as most sympathetic to our work. This belief was further enhanced because its 'footprint' covered allied sectors such as community learning and development, work based learning, career guidance and further education.

In December 2010, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), the body who licenses SSCs, took the decision not to re-license LLUK which resulted in its closure in March 2011. As an interim measure UKCES transferred some of the LLUK footprint to a Standards Setting Organisation (SSO), called the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and gave them responsibility for the review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and qualifications development. This was to be a temporary measure until March 2012, after which point a decision would be made, based on a consultation process with the sector, on a final destination for youth work.

### Current issue

However, on 29th June UKCES announced that under new arrangements only licensed Sector Skills Councils will be able to develop NOS and qualifications from March 2012. This means that under the new arrangements **any SSC will be eligible to tender for NOS and qualifications development for the youth work sector, regardless of whether they have a relationship to or knowledge of the sector.** As a Standards Setting Organisation, LSIS will not be eligible to tender for this work. LSIS has already begun the process of reviewing both the qualifications and the National Occupational Standards for youth work.

It has been speculated that UKCES has been in discussions to move youth work (and parenting education) to a Sector Skills Council called Skills for Care and Development. This SSC is responsible for the social care footprint, and also encompasses the Children's Workforce Development Council based in England.

Concern has been voiced to UKCES that there has been **no consultation** with the youth work sector stakeholders in any of the UK jurisdictions on this matter. UKCES has recently denied any plans to locate youth work within Skills for Care and Development.

Representatives from the youth work sector across the UK are now seeking assurances from UKCES that a process of meaningful consultation with key stakeholders will take place so that youth work, and indeed community learning and development, are not located in a SSC that does not share our ethos, values and principles.

### **Risk of the situation**

Youth work and community learning and development could potentially be left without a fixed SSC, but supported by any of the other SSCs that successfully bid for work required by the sector. This may not offer a time and/or cost effective solution – each time work on standards and qualifications is required, new relationships will need to be forged with a SSC who may or may not have the necessary knowledge and experience of the workforce in order to effectively support the process.

There is a great **risk of losing UK-wide coordination and buy-in of stakeholders if youth work is relocated to a new Sector Skills Council, without exploring the full range of options available and undertaking a full consultation with all stakeholders**. As we move to more community based approaches to youth work, the proposal to split youth work from community learning and development is likely to be counter-productive.

### **Consultation principles and next steps**

Any consultation on the location of youth work within a new Sector Skills Council should ensure that:

- Each of the UK devolved authorities continues engagement to enable youth workers to transfer their qualifications across UK borders;
- Employers and professional bodies in all UK devolved authorities will have their views taken into account;
- Employers in the statutory and voluntary youth work sectors are consulted.

Youth Work representatives across the UK are currently working together to ensure these points are addressed with UKCES but **need some feedback from you as a key stakeholder to aid this process**.

Please complete this short survey >>

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/D52887K>

**Without evidence from key stakeholders across the UK that they want a say in any decision process**, youth work and community learning and development could in effect be left as 'orphan' workforces. In future this may result in the sector being both inadequately represented and unsupported in the work it does, to secure professional recognition for youth work through the development of UK-wide standards and qualifications.

## Further information

This paper has been prepared by Nichola Brown, Workforce Development Officer at NCVYS. If you require any clarification please contact her. We appreciate the language/jargon used is complex as well as there being a multitude of bodies involved in this situation! Nichola can be contacted on 07792 875635 or email [nichola@ncvys.org.uk](mailto:nichola@ncvys.org.uk).

NCVYS is being represented in these discussions by Gethyn Williams, Director of Workforce Development. If you would like to raise any points or would like further details, then contact Gethyn on 02077136074 or email [gethyn@ncvys.org.uk](mailto:gethyn@ncvys.org.uk)

We will endeavour to keep our members updated as the situation evolves.