



Learning South West

Strategic Plan 2010-2013

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Three year strategy 2010-2013

Learning South West is an education charity. We are a provider and membership organisation for Learning and Skills and Youth Work. Our sector members are Local Authorities, Further Education Colleges, Work Based Learning and Private Training Organisations, Voluntary and Community Sector, Adult and Community Learning Education organisations, Universities and Armed and Uniformed Services. We are well connected to a range of local, regional and national strategic and support bodies.

Our history of collaborative working has given us a reputation as an honest, neutral broker of cross sector partnerships and projects. Through our work and networks, Learning South West is in contact with many sector provider organisations and thousands of practitioners. Listening and responding to the needs of members informs the development of our strategy. We strive to embrace inclusive practice in all our charitable activities. Our partnership work is enriched by a cross sector approach and a shared value base. We believe that it is the sector itself that is best placed to discover and develop brilliant practice in youth work and teaching and learning.

Over the three year period of our Strategic Plan, we will ensure that learning and skills organisations, young people and youth work providers in the South West will have the opportunity to:

- Work productively in partnership with each other
- Influence policy
- Participate in the unique services offered by Learning South West to support excellent teaching and learning and youth work across the sector

Our strategy covers what we believe our membership expects of us as an organisation and focuses on our unique position of supporting the whole sector and a wide range of providers.

The strategy sets out our vision, our values, our guiding principles and the strategic aims on which we will focus over the next three years.

Strategic Purpose and values

The vision and role of Learning South West is

“Connecting professionals to transform the future”

Learning South West will incorporate its **values** in everything it does:

- Being an **inclusive** organisation
 - Across the learning and youth sectors
 - Encouraging learners and practitioner voices
- Encouraging **innovation**
 - Providing opportunities for ‘creative thinking’.
 - Being pro-active in trying new ideas and approaches
- Promoting **integrity**
 - Being at all times a socially responsible organisation
 - Providing an independent perspective for our members
- Encouraging **integration** in education
 - Making connections across the learning and skills and youth sectors
 - Providing opportunities for sharing practice across learning sectors
- Being an agency of **influence**
 - Offering advocacy on behalf of the learning and skills and youth sectors

Our Priorities

The following three strategic aims are the priorities that will steer Learning South West's work from 2010 to 2013

Priority one: Partnership

Build cross-sector partnerships and networks of organisations and professionals in order to improve the quality, responsiveness and accessibility of learning and youth work provision.

Priority two: Voice and Choice

Empower young people, adult learners and practitioners, so that they participate in and influence learning and youth work provision. Celebrate the achievements and positive contribution of young people and adult learners in order to engage everyone.

Priority three: Practice

Create and promote approaches to professional development and standards that reflect what works in practice.

Priority One: Partnership

Strategies	Evidence of success	Examples of what we will do	Outcomes for members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build strong, effective communities of practice to provide peer support and shared development opportunities • Build and support cross-sector partnerships and networks of organisations and professionals • Use partnerships and networks to support members to improve the quality, responsiveness and accessibility of learning and youth work provision • Support members through partnerships and networks to develop bids and deliver projects • Support partnerships between local authorities and voluntary youth organisations to ensure young people can access the best possible youth facilities and projects in their communities, in the region and beyond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigorous and effective networks that are skilfully facilitated and sustained • Good practice effectively shared and implemented • Projects undertaken and programmes delivered that move current practice and thinking forward in a practical way • Joint 'offer' to young people agreed between LA and VCS • Increased uptake of youth provision by young people from disadvantaged groups • Clear arrangements for infrastructure support for voluntary youth organisations in each LA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the SW Centre of Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) • Convene networks for Teacher Educators, Senior Curriculum Managers, Staff Development Managers and the Inclusive Learning Forum • Maintain links to national and international partnerships to ensure that our colleagues can share in and contribute to a wider professional discourse • Set up and sustain a cross sector, regional Supporting Teacher Education Partnership • Development work in local authority areas to improve joint working arrangements • Production of good practice guidance for local authority commissioners • Implementation of regional QA Toolkit across LAs and VCS • Tailored support and training in local areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well connected and well informed workforce • Members have greater confidence and expertise to serve learners even better • Members are part of a larger professional community of practice • Opportunity to receive additional funding to develop and influence practice • Opportunities for cost savings by improved collaborative working • Increase in recorded and accredited outcomes for young people accessing youth work in the region

Priority Two: Voice and Choice

Strategies

- Be an advocate for teachers, trainers and youth workers.
- Empower young people, adult learners and practitioners, so that they participate in and influence learning and youth work provision
- Provide channels to enable the voices of young people and adult learners and practitioners to be heard and to influence decision making
- Share and celebrate the achievements and positive contribution of young people and adult learners in order to engage and inspire others
- Extend opportunities for learning for people with limited life choices
- Ensure that young people's voice and influence is supported and promote positive images to celebrate young people as core members of our communities

Evidence of success

- Changes in proposed policies and modifications to existing poorly performing ones achieved
- Learning South West is recognised as a key advocate for learners and practitioners
- Innovative ways of consulting with members and learners
- Involvement of Learning South West in policy consultation at national level
- More learners and organisations involved in nominations for Adult Learners Week awards
- Adults improving their skills in a wider range of contexts and with more choice of approaches
- UK Youth Parliament elections continue to be well supported across the region
- 200 young people receive training in working with the media
- Increase in positive reporting on young people in the region
- Young people's voices make a difference to the development of new youth projects

Examples of what we will do

- Influence policy by listening to practitioners and representing their views as a collective
- Enable members of our networks to provide their views in a straightforward and effective way
- Offer focus groups to members to contribute to new policy consultations on behalf of the sector
- On line consultation
- Promote nominations for ALW and stage an inspiring and well publicised Regional Awards ceremony
- Promote literacy, language and numeracy as the building blocks to learning and support the professional development of the wider LLN workforce
- Tailored support to local authorities and youth groups to support young people's voice in their areas
- Sounds Positive media training available across the region
- Support young people as Media Champions in their areas

Outcomes for members

- Confidence that there are effective routes through which their opinions are heard and acted upon
- The chance to influence policy
- Increased profile of routes into adult learning and of individual organisations
- Opportunities to develop staff through training, peer support and access to resources and expertise
- More confident young people advocating on behalf of others in all areas of the region
- Young people are seen as respected community members across the region
- Youth projects in the region can access support to help them increase young people's influence in their areas

Priority Three: Practice

Strategies

- Support the sector and members to develop, review and share practice
- Promote, support and initiate mechanisms to share and disseminate best practice across and between the sector
- Create and promote approaches to Continuous Professional Development that model successful practice and utilise sector expertise
- Encourage and build capacity of workplace support for teachers and learners
- Help partners and members to make sense of complex information and provide practical solutions and routes for implementation
- Ensure regional networks meet the needs of members in the changing policy environment

Evidence of success

- A wide range of professional development opportunities available, widely taken up resulting in positive changes in practice
- Mentoring and coaching processes embedded in organisational culture
- More mentors / coaches being trained and supporting colleagues
- Positive feedback from user surveys
- Member organisations implement best current practice in their work with young people and learners, as demonstrated in external monitoring reports

Examples of what we will do

- Develop a sector owned Professional Development programme for teaching and learning through membership of Learning South West
- Attract national leaders in their field to the region to share their expertise and to explain national initiatives and policies
- Support providers in implementing mentoring schemes for teaching and support staff
- Support employers in providing workplace coaching for vocational learners
- Provide a signposting service for support as well as updates on key teaching and learning support opportunities and the 'What's Hot' newsletter
- Organise regional networks and communities of practice to share best practice and promote 'what works' across the region and beyond
- Organise CPD events and publications to disseminate best practice
- Tailored support and reviews of practice for member organisations

Outcomes for members

- Motivated and informed teachers who actively engage in their own development and that of others
- An effective 'learning organisation' culture achieved
- Good practice effectively shared and used
- Improvement in achievement rates
- A one stop shop for members to access up to date information
- Improved scores in external monitoring reports
- Greater satisfaction rates from users of provision
- Improved learner and youth outcomes

Policy Context

The policy context over the next three years will change rapidly. Learning South West will support the sector through information, signposting and Continuous Professional Development to meet the skills needs and expertise required. We will also provide a voice for advocacy of the sector in policy consultations.

- The new government will make substantial reductions in public sector spending which will impact on all aspects of Learning South West's work and on our partners and members. There will also be changes in the way that support services are made available to the sector and how Learning South West and providers can access funding. Partnerships to access funding will be essential and we will work closely with providers and other support agencies.
- The professionalisation of the sector and a new policy change agenda will continue to drive demand.
- The drive for more local decision making, and the involvement of individuals and communities in decision making and service delivery will impact on the way in which the Learning South West works with partners.
- The machinery of government changes implemented in 2010 involving the creation of new funding agencies to replace the Learning and Skills council is likely to change again over the next three years under the new government.
- Funding for apprenticeships will increase and post 16 providers will work with more 14-16 year olds. The Qualifications and Credit Framework and the 14-19 entitlement will be implemented. We will establish closer relationships with Local Authorities, the Training Provider Networks and NAS to support these changes.
- Within the Learning and Skills Sector there will be more Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offered internally. However, the market for locally delivered CPD and consultancy may increase as national-level initiatives are reduced and organisations work together
- Project financing is likely to be scarcer with most being prioritised in line with government priorities, especially innovation, e-learning and sustainability.
- Across the Learning sector there is an urgent need to fill skills/capacity gaps around work-based learning, the 14-19 agenda and in regional and local networking in order to secure project funding. Time is needed for national networking as most funding is allocated nationally rather than regionally.
- Policy changes will continue at a rapid pace with a new government. We will stay up to date with policy developments and keep our members informed of them.

Members' working contexts

Our members tell us that they are experiencing unprecedented levels of uncertainty concerning future sector policy. This policy uncertainty is intensified with the certainty of massive financial cuts and fears of job losses. Accelerating change makes regular Continuous Professional Development and practitioner networking even more important. Our members tell us that Learning South West offers valuable support and real benefit in these difficult times.

'I have found the [Regional Youth Work Unit] meetings and networks to be invaluable, particularly as I found the role of Principal youth Officer to be quite a lonely one. The ability to share concerns and doubts, to scope the new legislation and to tell wild stories is highly valued by me. I felt that they improved the value of my work, kept me in touch with other authorities and gave me a chance to relax. For that and the developmental documents produced by the RYWU that inform so much of our work, thanks' (Former Local Authority Head of Youth Services, 2010)

'Voluntary youth organisations in the South West are facing huge budget reductions as national funding streams dry up and local authorities cut their youth budgets. It is hard to see how the rhetoric of 'Big Society' sits with the scale of the impact of budget cuts on voluntary youth organisations and their capacity to respond to young people's needs. We need support from the RYWU to help us develop in the context of the new environment, and to work towards the most cost effective ways to maintain our provision to young people' (Chief Executive, local voluntary youth organisation)

"The real success has been the process – it's not a partnership set in stone but one that's growing. We're working together to find a better way to equip teachers and tap into expertise"

'Attending this event had a real impact on me, I now feel connected to a wider teaching/training community and I value being included in network communications. I was very impressed with the staff at Learning South West and I wanted to let you know how valued I felt during and after the event.' (Trainer NHS Trust)

'As a result of attending this event, I was able to extend my action plan for safeguarding and equality and diversity and have developed clear pathways for being inspection ready. I have many and varied actions to take back to college including having a clear and thorough plan for equality and diversity and safeguarding.' (Faculty Director, FE College)

Our Achievements through membership

- Hosting the South West Regional Youth Work Unit.
- Coordinating the South West Centre for Excellence in teacher training (CETT) a partnership of 82 cross sector organisations.
- Supporting Youth Work and Learning and Skills sectors through forums and networks, Continuous Professional Development events and conferences and resource development.
- Hosting the Institute for Learning 'CETT Connection'
- Providing the Regional Centre for the Functional Skills Support Programme.
- Facilitating a 'Regional Learning and Skills Workers' network.
- Providing a website and moodle that offers a signposting service for support as well as updates on key teaching and learning support opportunities and the 'What's Hot' newsletter.
- Offering focus groups on key policy areas.
- Hosting ABC Awards in the South West.
- Over 20,000 young people in the south west take part in the UK Youth Parliament annual elections.

Learning South West resources and capacity

Staffing

The staff at Learning South West are experienced and committed to delivering our organisational goals. The organisational structure and the roles of many individuals have undergone change in the past in order to deliver projects effectively and we understand the need to be flexible and adapt to the changes we are experiencing in the sector.

We support a culture of continuous learning and work hard to ensure that all of our staff have the skills and tools in order to perform their roles and objectives effectively.

We have held the Investors in People standard since 1995 and assess and improve our procedures and practices on an ongoing basis, working in collaboration with our staff to gain their input and ideas.

Accommodation

Bishops Hull House is a three storey Georgian House categorised as a listed building Grade II and stands within Bishops Hull Conservation Area. There are three meeting rooms on the ground and first floors available for Learning South West networks and conferences or for booking by members and other groups. There is on site car parking for thirty nine vehicles. The House has beautiful gardens that are an asset for relaxing break out sessions or a leisurely lunch with colleagues.

Meeting rooms raise funds for the Charity and meets our Charitable Objects by providing a venue for those in the sector that need a central point in the region to meet. Customers experience a high level of service, are able to meet in rooms that are well equipped, have good daylight and enjoy a garden outlook. We work with local suppliers to provide good quality catering and individual dietary needs can be met.

ICT

ICT Management at Learning South West maintain the organisation's ICT equipment and skills levels in order to support current and developing ICT needs of members attending networks and Continuous Professional Development events.

Learning South West is proud of its longstanding role in the learning, skills and youth infrastructure of the South West and we believe that this Strategic Plan enables us to continue to support the sector in achieving the best possible outcomes for learners and young people, and for the South West economy and society. In this time of reduced resources we can provide cost effective solutions, based on our values of public service and voluntary engagement.