

Skills Third Sector  
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Dear Colleague,

### **Skills Third-Sector**

#### **A Framework for a Voluntary Sector National Skills Strategy 2011-2014**

#### **Consultation response from Skills for Health**

Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the health sector across the United Kingdom (UK). Our role covers all healthcare employers – including those in the National Health Service (NHS), independent and voluntary sectors. We are part of a UK network of Sector Skills Councils covering 85% of the UK economy. Our strategic aim is to develop a skilled, flexible and productive workforce for the whole health sector in all UK nations, to raise the quality of health and healthcare for the public, patients and service users. The delivery of this aim is reflected in our Statement of Purpose, which is appended to this response.

We are pleased to be able to respond to this consultation from Skills Third-Sector.

We agree with the delivery principles outlined in the consultation document but would suggest that greater emphasis is placed on the need for flexible delivery models which recognise the diverse organisations that make up the third sector, from, for example large national charities, to small local organisations.

We agree with the four priority areas for investment and skills development that have been identified and are pleased to see acknowledged the increasing contribution that volunteers make to NHS organisations. It is critical that in the health sector skills development extends beyond the paid workforce to volunteers, informal carers, user led organisations and service users themselves. We support the approach taken by Skills Third-Sector to placing an emphasis on developing the skills of the people who manage volunteers as a way of raising the skills and opportunities for all volunteers. It is important to understand and acknowledge the way in which this development can support extended participation in learning, the building of social capital, capacity building in local communities and neighbourhoods and a reduction in inequalities. We are of course committed to the development of our respective workforces and will continue to work together to develop appropriate qualifications and development opportunities to enable this to happen. However it is important also to understand that volunteers come from diverse backgrounds and will have different perspectives of what they may want to get out of a volunteering role. Skills development initiatives therefore need to be sensitive to such differences.

The recent White Paper *'Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS'* emphasised the role of the NHS in the vision for the 'Big Society'. The extension of patient choice and the continued policy support for personal health budgets and personalisation of services has the potential to bring many more third sector providers into the health sector in line with the broader drive around the expansion of civil society. Commissioners of health services will want to assure themselves, through the commissioning process, that third sector organisations have in place robust governance structures and leadership. Skills development in these areas will therefore be crucial in providing this assurance. Similarly third sector organisations aspiring to tender to provide health services will require the business skills to enable them to do this effectively and efficiently.

We look forward to being able to continue working with Skills Third Sector through the Third Sector Forum to support delivery of this framework.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Pond', enclosed within a simple, hand-drawn oval shape.

Christina Pond  
Executive Director, Standards, Qualifications and Policy