

Mary's Bulletin

Mary's Bulletin No. 8 '07

What's going on & what's it got to do with the DTA & our members?

Delivering public services threatens independence and sustainability - The chair of the Charity Commission, Dame Suzi Leather, used NCVO annual conference to "sound a wake up call to the sector and to commissioning authorities alike about the future of public service delivery by charities". This flows from an online survey that the Commission ran last year, completed by over 3,800 charities representing a broad cross section both by income and operational area. This found that over 60% of charities with annual income above half a million pounds deliver public services on behalf of public authorities, but over 40% of all charities doing so are not paid the full cost involved. Leather also highlights that almost 50% of charities delivering public services can't agree whole-heartedly that their activities are determined by the charity's mission, rather than by funding priorities.

Read Leather's speech at http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/recent_changes/speech.asp. The survey results, 'Stand and deliver: the future for charities delivering public services', are in pdf format, 304kb, at <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Library/publications/pdfs/RS15text.pdf>.

Alongside the results of the survey, and after a consultation exercise, the Commission has published new guidance. 'Charities and public service delivery' (CC37) is a practical guide to the legal and good practice issues that charities need to be aware of if they are planning to deliver services under a funding agreement with a public authority. This can be found at <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc37.asp> (also available as pdf).

Richest 2% are heard by Government - The richest 2 per cent of voluntary organisations have a disproportionate influence over government policy, according to a position paper published by the Directory of Social Change this week. It is therefore calling for the government to review the way it consults the voluntary sector to ensure more regular and representative feedback.

It argues that the majority of the sector requires grant funding rather than public sector contracts, and cites DSC research which found that most charities would not consider engaging in service delivery, with 68 per cent believing public service delivery is not charitable at all. As a result, "public service delivery under contract is inappropriate, undesirable, and inapplicable to the majority of the sector". It also states that for the sector to flourish it "needs to be trusted to do its work", rather than have its future determined by the state."

"This report has been published as a contribution to the growing debate about the relationship between the state and voluntary activity," said Ben Wittenberg, director of policy and change at the DSC and author of the report. "The voluntary sector's independence is critical both for its own future and for the achievement of government objectives to energise civil society." The full report can be viewed at http://www.dsc.org.uk/charityexchange/DSC_policy_doc.html

Fit for Purpose? - Review of the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) - Vanessa Potter, director of policy at the Big Lottery Fund, is helping Campbell Robb, OTS's director-general, restructure the department and make it fit for purpose. A Cabinet Office spokesman confirmed: "Vanessa Potter will be helping Campbell Robb review the Office of the Third Sector to ensure it is best able to deliver its aims and objectives."

When Campbell Robb joined the OTS at the end of last year, he inherited a department still in its infancy. The OTS is comprised of the voluntary and community sector unit from the old Home Office Active Community Unit, and the Social Enterprise Unit from the Department of Trade and Industry. No job cuts have occurred at the OTS since Robb joined, but the review now being conducted may result in a restructure of roles.

Bulletin Briefs

More on Charities Act first provisions - Sandy Adirondack has added sections to her Legal Update web pages covering the specific provisions of the Charities Act (England and Wales) coming in from 27th February, of which we gave a brief overview last week. See items headed Charities Act 2006 at <http://www.sandy-a.co.uk/managing.htm>.

Ideas for Law Reform - The Law Commission, established to keep the law of England and Wales under review to achieve more accessible, intelligible and modern law, has set up an online forum. This seeks contributors help in identifying new projects for inclusion in their next work programme. The forum will be open until 30th March at <http://forum.lawcom.gov.uk>.

Recognising individual contributions - The 2007 Beacon Prize, for individuals who have made a significant charitable contribution, is now open for nominations. There are six categories of Leadership, Community Builder, Creative Giving, New Initiatives, Family Philanthropy and Young Philanthropist plus additional regional prizes for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Closing date 1st May. <http://www.beaconfellowship.org.uk>.

In depth on parliamentary scrutiny - In-depth information on five parliamentary select committees, defence, education & skills, international development, health and treasury, is available on a new web site hosted by ePolitix.com, with more to be added. Select committees hold Government to account and champion focused areas of policy and selectcommittees.co.uk aims to augment rather than replace the official committee web sites. <http://www.selectcommittees.co.uk>.

Delicious ways to help end poverty - Celebrate Fairtrade Fortnight with these six simple-but-sizzling Fairtrade recipes. Plus your chance to win a hamper from Divine Chocolate Ltd - just send us your own Fairtrade recipe! http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/fairtrade/index.htm?ito=2439&itc=0

AMBASSADORS PROGRAMME - The Office of the Third Sector (OTS) is working with the Social Enterprise Coalition and others to develop a new Social Enterprise Ambassadors programme in line with commitments set out in the Social Enterprise Action Plan published last November. The ambassadors, as role models, will play an important part in meeting the Government's objective of fostering a culture of social enterprise, raising awareness in key sectors and helping to attract new entrants to the sector. To kick off this new phase, OTS and SEC will host a workshop in late March. Further information will be available on the OTS and SEC websites shortly. http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/

UNLTD COMPETITION - UnLtd has launched its latest Level 2 Competition for social entrepreneurs developing significant projects to bring about social change. Level 2 Awards support individuals whose ideas are already off the ground and now want help taking them to the next level. Winners will receive business support and an award of between £10,000 and £20,000. The deadline for submission of completed 'Expression of Interest' is Monday 12 March at 5pm. Further information and the full application timetable are available here: http://www.unltd.org.uk/template.php?ID=33&PageName=level2_examples

White Paper: bringing the third sector to the fore - Strong leadership, user choice, cohesion and strengthened partnerships are all at the core of the Local Government White Paper. Read what these terms mean for councils' work with the voluntary and community sector. <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=5953419>

The Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGI) sees councils who have encouraged business growth in their area receiving an unringfenced reward from Government. This is the second year of a three year scheme which expects to see up to £1billion allocated to local authorities by 2007/08. Authorities have received more than two and a half times the £126m of grant paid last year, and 50 more authorities have received LABGI grant this year. Details of the grant payments to individual authorities, and of the LABGI scheme, can be found on the Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1136802

Tool, tip or technique of the week

Powerlessness – improving our practice so as not to compound these factors for those we work with & for, ensuring we don't become part of the problems & not part of the answer...

Powerlessness.pdf

Quote of the week

Power can be taken, but not given. The process of the taking is empowerment in itself.

Gloria Steinem

If you need further information clarification OR some 'quick & dirty' research/information collation doing please don't hesitate to contact me at

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