



## 1. Overview

Dorset and Somerset Training Provider Network Ltd (DSTPN) is a company limited by guarantee with a membership consisting of a fee paying members who are training organisations, colleges and stakeholder bodies delivering and working in the post 16 education and training sector.

DSTPN has had a successful 2010/11 achieving;

- A good level of service to members,
- Accurate and timely communications in a time of change
- Strengthened relationships with stakeholder bodies
- Beneficial relationships with emerging bodies (ESB's etc)
- An increased number of high quality and geographically accessible development opportunities for members

The network vision for 2011/12 is to encourage and support providers to operate in a culture of collaborative working for the benefit of all whilst continually enhancing the experience, learning and achievement of learners and meeting employer and community needs.

The sector in which the network operates and the membership it supports is changing extensively due to the economic environment and the shift in the contracting, skills and investment policy. The number of potential member organisations may reduce due to mergers and acquisitions, organisations restructuring, reducing budgets and the refocus of funds.

DSTPN will react to the changing environment in which it operates by being aware of its membership needs and adapting its service accordingly. To this end DSTPN will adjust the structure, the skills set balance and the business model to suit.

DSTPN will operate a leaner business model with the capacity to deliver the services required and expected by the membership. The MD will be responsible for the operation, accessing support where appropriate and affordable or in the interest of the business or the service. The MD will work from a home office.

## 2. The network

DSTPN is a not for profit company limited by guarantee owned by its 43 independent provider, college and stakeholder members.

The network is governed by an elected Board of provider members and has full time Chair/MD.

The network vision is to encourage and support providers to operate in a culture of collaborative working for the benefit of all whilst continually enhancing the experience, learning and achievement of learners and meeting employer and community needs.

The network mission is to provide effective strategic and operational support to members through the networks aims.

The networks aims as determined by the membership are to provide;

### 1. Communication

Deploy an effective communication strategy to provide members with timely information relevant to the sector, resources where appropriate and an effective communication platform.

### 2. Support and development

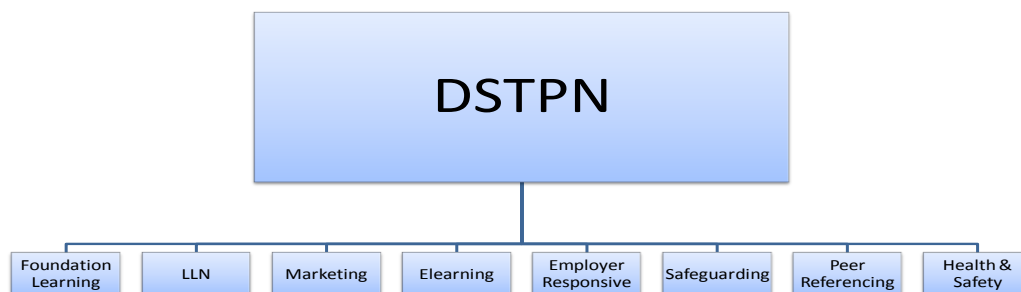
Provide a support and development service to the membership by sourcing, coordinating and delivering (where appropriate) initiatives that meet current needs and aid members to reach their objectives.

### 3. Representation

Provide strategic and operational representation for the provider membership where appropriate ensuring that the interests of the members are represented in a fair manner and members are consulted when required.

The network has quarterly meetings, an interactive website used for communication and information. It leads PRD groups and has 9 sub (focus) groups (8 shown below plus the new addition of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole ESB Provider Forum) with structured meetings create a development and support network to allow exchange of good practice and joint development. The diagram below identifies the sub group focus topics.

## DSTPN Sub Groups



DSTPN provides a vehicle for members to become a collaborative group to achieve:

- The outcomes required by learners, employers and communities;
- increased value for money and cost effectiveness through economies of scale;

- continually increasing quality of service delivery through peer referencing, and sharing of good practice and resources;
- improved customer service through improved quality and efficiency and access to a wider range of services and geographical coverage than can be offered by providers working individually;
- through the network the members have the opportunity to draw on the expertise available within Member organisations by seconding staff, short term contracting, or buying in/'trading' services on an on spec basis, as well as through the good practice sharing and peer referencing that will be inherent to company quality improvement processes.

### 3. The Sector

Current Government and funding body strategy suggest that the network will be operating in a landscape that will be changing extensively. The current sector landscape has nationally in excess of 500 colleges and training organisations delivering approximately £3.7 bn of Adult skills funding and approximately £688m of YPLA 16 – 18 funding for apprenticeships (rising by 16% in 2011/12). Over 50% of the colleges and training organisations delivering adult learning and skills have contracts with the funding body of £236k or less. Therefore the funding body is implementing a strategy to overhaul the commissioning and contracting model leading to a rationalised model with fewer but larger contractors.

The drivers for the strategy are:

- To improve the service to employers and learners through partnership working and a consolidated provision.
- To introduce the opportunity for the sector to rationalise and benefit from the efficiencies partnership working and shared services bring.
- To rationalise the Skills Funding Agency to provide the required cost savings to the Department of Business Innovation and Skills.

The aspiration promoted in the Government Skills Strategy – Skills for Sustainable Growth published in December 2010 is for apprentice volumes to increase and quality to improve and there is an additional aspiration of the accepted level of qualification becoming level 3. This is tempered with the Adult Skills Funding Strategy – Further Education – New Horizon, Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth moving towards a more focused and prioritised allocation of a decreasing budget over the term of the spending review and an expected increase in contributions from employers and learners.

The volume trend for Apprenticeships has shown a year on year increase as has the improvement in quality. The latest regional statistics show that the South West remains the highest performing region for apprenticeship success and achievement in all age groups in the country but the volume trend is showing signs of slowing, compared to other regions.

Commentators are suggesting that the increase in university fees proposed will lead to a rise in the number of Apprenticeships in the country.

The introduction of the Qualification Credits Framework has refreshed the framework of qualifications and offers increased opportunities for employers to access the specific training and development required in turn providing a commercial opportunity for providers.

The trend for the industry as a whole, is an increased targeting of funding for individuals with low level skills who are out of work, plus an increased requirement for employers and/or learners to contribute towards the cost of the service being delivered by providers to individuals outside of these categories.

## 4. The membership

DSTPN's key members are:

- Training organisations and colleges delivering education and training services in the sector;
- Stakeholder agencies and bodies engaged in the sector;
- Stakeholders and funding bodies, seeking cost effective, high value for money delivery of quality training that addresses government priorities and policies and meets the needs of local learners, employers and communities.
- Local communities seeking to ensure good levels of education and training;

All of the DSTPN Members are established training organisations, colleges or stakeholders with a long track record of delivering training services to meet the needs of learners and employers in the communities they serve and the requirements of the stakeholders and funding bodies.

As Local Enterprise Partnerships in the region are established and the outputs of the Employment and Skills Boards become available provider members will align their strategy and provision to ensure the requirements and priorities indicated by these bodies are met and the requirements of local communities are catered for.

As established providers in their communities and occupational areas, each member organisation has a strong existing customer base of learners and employers. In addition, the collective offer of the network will enable a wider range of services and geographical coverage to be offered both by each individual member to their existing customers and by the network as a whole to new ones.

Employers require flexible services delivered cost effectively and using delivery methods, modes and styles that accommodate their business patterns and needs. Small and medium enterprises in particular often require the assistance of government funding to be able to take up training offers and all employers will look to minimise costs in terms of cash payment or demands on their resources. They also prefer to minimise the number of providers they have to work with to access the full range of training services they need.

Similarly, learners need training services that suit their learning styles, needs and employment circumstances and are often reliant on the support of government funding to be able to access opportunities to upskill or get qualified.

The funding agencies want to contract with providers that offer reliable, good quality, value for money contract delivery supported by effective quality improvement, equality and diversity and health and safety management, and sound and robust data management with financial control.

All the member organisations already provide services designed and tailored to respond to these customer needs. The network will provide added value to its customers (members) to support them meeting the needs of their market through following the company's vision and mission and achieving the aims.

## 5. Membership

Membership runs from August 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup> following the academic contract year. Membership is £501 in year one (£1 to cover member liability of the limited by guarantee company as laid down in the company memorandum and articles) and £500 per year thereafter (subject to any change agreed by the membership) payable following an invoice.

All members have full access to all network activities, meetings, website and are welcome to utilise the network staff to support them where appropriate.