

6.0

Sustainability and future development

Background

The question of sustainability in relation to the Sussex Learning Network looks beyond the scope of this 2-year plan. The SLN itself is a 'network of networks' so in working to sustain the SLN we are seeking to continue the connectivity between those networks and the relationships that are developed between them. Our objectives will only be achieved through better ways of working between the networks and institutions in Sussex.

Issues of sustainability for the SLN relate to both the short term and the medium to long term. There are various factors influencing the development of the SLN in the short term (to 2010). One such factor is the fact that as one of the first Lifelong Learning Networks to receive HEFCE funding, the SLN has not, in its initial period, been in a position to benefit from the learning of other LLNs as they develop. However, many useful lessons are beginning to emerge. Sustaining the SLN in its current form for a further two year period, beyond the initial three years of funding, would allow for the learning to be integrated into the SLN, resulting in a model more likely to be effective in the medium to long term. We will therefore seek to secure additional funding to support our structures until 2010. This would include support for the core team, curriculum groups and the board.

Targets

1 Sustain the long-term positive impact of the SLN beyond the period of initial funding

1.1 Establish SLN sustainability plan
August 2007

1.2 Processes to maintain any SLN branded resources (e.g. website) post 31 July 2010
January 2008

1.3 Funding for continuation of infrastructure to 31 July 2010
January 2008

1.4 Integrated progression agreements into partner organisations' delivery, and identified lead organisations
July 2008

1.5 Partner organisations committed to operating joint credit framework to support progression
July 2008

Activities 2006-08

The SLN will explore a number of options for generating this additional funding, including:

- Developing the SLN as a membership organisation with membership fees
- Top slicing of the income generated via additional student numbers (ASNs)
- Charging a fee for attendance at SLN events and conferences
- Income generated through fees for any SLN courses developed e.g. Continuing Professional Development modules
- Links with external bodies or initiatives, for example Economic Development contacts within the three local authorities.

In addition, we will explore with HEFCE the possibility of investment beyond the initial three-year funding period.

The long term vision for sustainability of the SLN is that HEFCE's aim 'to make the whole higher education offer available to vocational learners across a lifetime of work and study' will continue to be driven forward in Sussex through the networks and ways of working that we are developing. This will require continued commitment from all those engaged in working with us and, initially at least, strong leadership from one or more of the key institutions. From 2010 onwards the focus will be on sustaining the relationships and ways of working developed within the SLN. We will need to establish whether the SLN will continue as an identifiable body after 2010. Maintenance of governance structures and a web presence, for example, will require continued investment, and any SLN branded materials would need to be kept up to date. Should we choose to phase out the SLN's identifiable presence, clear communication with partners and those who use our resources would be essential.