

## **National Hubs Review : A Programme for Change.**

### **1. Introduction**

At its meeting on 22 November 2006, the Board of Capacitybuilders made the following decisions (section 4) in relation to the provision of national support services to the third sector as a whole.

The Board acknowledged the central importance of providing a range of support services from a national level to complement the equally vital work being undertaken by infrastructure organisations at a regional, sub-regional and local level, and commended staff on the work undertaken to date.

### **2. Background : The Hub Review**

At its launch on 3 April 2006 I, as Chief Executive, confirmed that Capacitybuilders would be reviewing the national support services being provided by the national hubs of expertise.

The review would concentrate on identifying the need for the provision of nationally based services and whether they were being offered in the most effective way to support the sub-regional and local voluntary and community sector. The review was **not** intended to review the achievements of the various hubs as it was common ground that many of them were in the very early stages of their work.

The review has been in two parts – the first period over July, August and early September 2006 culminated in the production of a report by Jo Durning, a skilled and committed independent consultant. The Durning report was presented to the Board of Capacitybuilders on 5 September 2006 and the Board indicated, at that stage, that it rejected one of the proposed options – a full scale development function to be



adopted by Capacitybuilders – and requested more work and consideration around both the remaining options – continuing with the basic hub model but with greater strategic leadership from Capacitybuilders or pursuing the possibility of Capacitybuilders taking a more central position in the direct commissioning of national support services.

**This paper contains a set of recommendations on the way forward and comes from me, as Chief Executive, following careful consideration of all the major issues and reflects a new package of proposals which will encompass the best attributes of both options.**

### **3. Background : The ChangeUp Programme**

The ChangeUp programme, launched by the Home Office over 2003/04, is designed to invest in the infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector in order to transform its effectiveness and efficiency by 2014. Capacitybuilders took over responsibility for the management and administration of the ChangeUp programme from April 2006.

There are two principal delivery arms which Capacitybuilders can deploy – the 130 local, sub-regional and regional ChangeUp consortia and a set of national support services currently offered through the national hubs. In addition, we are building closer relationships with a range of specialist/functional bodies who offer support to particular constituencies and the public sector at national, regional and local level, especially through local authorities and local strategic partnerships.

This package of proposals is aimed at ensuring that Capacitybuilders, in its role as an “engaged” funder, and as an organisation led by a board and staff steeped in the interests of the voluntary and community sector, is able to offer a coherent and sensible approach to the future provision of national support services.

#### **4. Recommendations: The Way Forward for National Support Services**

##### **Capacitybuilders will:-**

- take a more strategic leadership role in pursuing all elements of the ChangeUp programme including the provision of national support services.
- set a series of objectives and outcomes relating to the delivery of national services following consultation with the voluntary and community sector over January/March 2007. Such objectives and outcomes will reflect the need to focus on supporting the infrastructure of the third sector for the benefit of front-line organisations, and will be aligned with the overall objectives and activities set out in the final strategic plan for the period 2006-2014.
- publish these sets of objectives and outcomes as tender documents for a commissioning exercise to be conducted from May to July 2007 with a view to agreeing contracts with main contractors by September 2007. The contract period will extend from April 2008 to end March 2011.
- ensure that there is an open, competitive tender process for the delivery of a range of national support services as indicated above. Capacitybuilders will invite applications from national bodies, regional/sub-regional organisations, social enterprises, community interest companies and the private sector – all of whom must be committed to the ChangeUp programme. All applicants for the role of main contractor must be able to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and experience of the third sector as a whole, the interests of a range of sub-sectors (such as mental health, elderly people, the role of sport and recreation etc) and equalities and diversity issues.
- develop further advisory mechanisms to ensure that it is receiving effective and timely advice from the voluntary and community sector as to the developing needs of the sector, and how they can best be met through the ChangeUp



programme. Capacitybuilders will consult with the Infrastructure National Partnership and other appropriate bodies or networks in January/February 2007 to determine the best way to access effective advice. A refreshed advisory mechanism will be in place by April 2007.

- New contracts will be negotiated with the existing accountable bodies and hubs for the period from 1 June 2007 to end March 2008 in order to ensure both continuity of service and the opportunity to further focus activity on supporting the infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector and social enterprise. Such new contracts will also include the need to introduce a common accounting framework, to move towards a common evaluation system and to ensure effective cross hub working and communications. Budget levels for the period June 2007 to end March 2008 will be determined in joint discussions.

Simon Hebditch

**Chief Executive, Capacitybuilders**

**24 November 2006.**

**End.**