

ANTI-POVERTY

25 AUG 2005

RECEIVED

EGSA Connecting Adults with Learning  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 40 Linenhall Street  
Belfast BT2 8BA

Liz McMeekin  
Anti-Poverty Unit  
Room E3.19  
Block E  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast BT4 3SR

26<sup>th</sup> August 2005

Dear Ms McMeekin,

RE: New TSN - the way forward - A consultation document Phase 2

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above Consultation. Please find enclosed a response on behalf of EGSA Connecting Adults with Learning.

Please contact me if you need further information or if you wish to clarify details within our response.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhan Doolan  
Information Officer



## RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION: NEW TSN - THE WAY FORWARD: PHASE 2

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- EGSA is a long established, independent organisation, which receives most of its funding from the Department for Employment and Learning. The aim of the organisation is to Connect Adults with Learning, and we deliver a range of services to meet this aim:
- EGSA delivers quality, independent information, advice and guidance on learning for life and work.
- EGSA promotes the impact of information, advice and guidance on learning for life and work.
- EGSA, in partnership with NUS/USI, operates the Adult Learner Finance Project, which provides an information and advice service on financial support for adult learners/mature students and their advisers.
- EGSA promotes the value of learning for life and work.
- EGSA is an IFB in Peace II and is responsible for administering part of Measure 3 - New Skills and Opportunities - of Priority 1 - Economic Renewal - which aims "to develop a culture of lifelong learning by promoting and improving adult literacy and numeracy, pre and early vocational training activity for men and women, particularly those who have been affected by the conflict".
- EGSA's services are available to all adults and we are particularly keen to reach those who have benefited least from formal learning.

### PREAMBLE

EGSA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the second phase of this consultation which it regards as an important step towards tackling poverty and related issues. Our comments are brief and are primarily drawn from our experience of engaging adults in learning and of



delivering information, advice and guidance to adult learners and potential learners. EGSA's partnership with NUS/USI through the Adult Learner Finance Project over the past three years has increased our awareness of finance issues and of the difficulties faced by adults wishing to access Higher Education. Through our work as an Intermediary Funding Body, we have developed an acute understanding of the issues facing voluntary and community groups especially those in urban and rural areas of low socio-economic standing.

## RESPONSE

While EGSA broadly welcomes New TSN phase 2, we are concerned that the consultation document focuses too strongly on 'economic' factors to the detriment of social. EGSA would like to see more emphasis on social inclusion as a way out of poverty. We stress the role that learning can play in this. Non-vocational education has an important role to play in raising confidence, increasing participation and community involvement as well as acting as a 'hook' to vocational education.

EGSA argues strongly that information, advice and guidance (IAG) will be crucial in an effective anti-poverty strategy. Recent research provides valuable evidence: in relation to engaging marginalised groups. A recently published Guidance Council research report 'IAG: perceptions and outcomes' (DfES, 2005), indicates:

- IAG services can have a positive impact in terms of 'soft' outcomes (e.g. greater confidence, motivation and awareness of learning/training/work opportunities);
- Intermediate outcomes often follow IAG interventions (e.g. gaining qualifications or enrolling on a course, improving reading/writing skills, updating or learning new skills);
- One-to-one in-depth support, in the shape of advice and particularly guidance services, appears to be more successful in generating both soft and intermediate outcomes.

This research supports the case for the role of IAG in relation to helping individuals overcome the barriers to participation in learning, gaining the 'soft skills' and qualifications to assist them out of poverty.



EGSA advocates strongly for safety mechanisms for those individuals who are not able to work. Regardless of whatever actions are proposed within an anti-poverty strategy, many individuals will remain unable to work. Support must be available to those individuals through a robust social security system. EGSA works closely with the Social Security Agency in supporting Targeted Initiatives clients who wish to address Essential Skills difficulties.

In terms of accountability, we would urge there to be transparency for every department in carrying out their New TSN actions.

In conclusion, we would be happy to offer oral evidence in respect of any of the content of this response.

August 2005