

sector, nor how they would relate to each other (for example, what the principles of the NHSU business model should be or, put differently, what levers it would have to deliver the ambitious remit proposed for it).

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF NHSU SINCE 2001

1.5 The development of NHSU's strategy and remit since 2001 has taken place in two main ways – through NHSU's own work, taken forward with the help of an extensive consultation and communication process, and through periodic discussions in a number of high level oversight groups with DH / NHSU membership, and with consultation of SHAs. This process was characterised by –

- *insufficient answering and tying down of the hard questions*, especially around the limits of NHSU's role and the boundaries with other organisations. There was discussion in the (DH-chaired) NHSU Strategy Board in mid-2003. This went some way towards setting out how NHSU would operate within the system and in particular how its provider role (where much of the early focus lay) could be squared with an influencing and commissioning role. NHSU followed this with a Strategic Plan (July 2003, approved October 2003). However, neither this work nor NHSU's consultation on its Strategic Plan fully overcame the fact that no rigorous analysis of the gaps in the system which NHSU should fill had ever been completed. Nor was there full resolution of the potential for overlap of role with a number of other players, in particular –
 - Skills for Health, the newly set up health Sector Skills Council, with a sector-wide role covering needs analysis, competence development and influencing an expansion of relevant training provision
 - SHA Workforce Directorates (formerly WDCs) whose regional role matched closely some of the roles NHSU hoped to play national level
- one high profile exception - where clarification of roles was achieved - was the November 2001 Memorandum of Understanding with Universities UK which ruled out a role for NHSU in pre-registration medical and nursing education. This severely limited the scope for NHSU to be involved in the provision of degree-level education – a prerequisite of any application for University status. We are not aware that the aspiration for University title was reviewed at the time as a result and certainly pursuit of it subsequently continued unabated
- *NHSU continuing to paint on the broadest possible canvas*: NHSU's developmental documents have described a wide role for the organisation. Its Strategic Plan describes its core purpose as “to contribute to the radical change and improvement in health and social care through the transformation of learning” (NHSU Strategic Plan, 2003). A number of discussions, including with DH, took place in 2003 about the possibility of NHSU's remit being widened further through absorbing the Postgraduate Deans and some DH R&D functions. NHSU's ambition is openly acknowledged - “Step by step NHSU is expected to assume an umbrella responsibility of all learning in health and social care” (Bob Fryer