

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 NHSU's reliance on influencing and on delivering in partnership with others means that constructive stakeholder management is crucial. NHSU has made extensive efforts to obtain the views of a full range of stakeholders and develop partnership working throughout its period of development –

- its key developmental documents were all subject to wide-ranging consultation
- it is clear, from our discussions with NHSU, that significant senior management time has been invested in developing working relationships with key partners
- one of the roles of the NHSU regional structure is to build partnerships with the NHS at SHA and local level. There are signs that it is beginning to make a difference
- NHSU has developed a network of academic partners and engaged with organisations (eg. Learning Skills Council) involved in wider education and training provision

5.2 Despite this, NHSU stakeholders, in particular in the NHS but also in social care and the education sector, have voiced major concerns -

- about the quality of their relationships with NHSU. They consider that debate has frequently failed to shift from generalities to substance, that views have not been taken on board and that they have been left out of key decisions (for example SHAs with respect to recruitment of NHSU's Local Learning Co-ordinators). A stark illustration was the resignation last year of two NHS representatives on the stakeholder group for the virtual campus procurement on the grounds that key meetings had been cancelled at short notice and they had been left out of significant decisions. NHSU has acquired a reputation as an organisation that "does not listen"
- relationships have suffered from the widespread confusion about the role of the NHSU and suspicion at what are seen as its efforts to encroach on the functions of others. An example, already quoted, is the setting up of the NHSU regional structure and the role of SHA workforce directorates. The situation is exacerbated by NHSU's own positioning. NHSU describes this as being of the NHS but with autonomy. The perception is that in reality NHSU has insufficient meaningful links with the NHS and that its organisational culture and way of working mark it as separate
- the higher education sector is confused about the purpose of NHSU's academic partnerships and frustrated at the lack of action. In addition it is concerned about NHSU having a privileged position as both commissioner and provider
- social care providers do not understand the relevance to them of NHSU
- there is little evidence that NHSU has recognised the importance of the future roles of NHS regulatory and standard-setting bodies and built relationships with them