

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The announcement of the setting up of a corporate university for the NHS took place in October 2001. The three main objectives were –

- *improving access to lifelong education and training*, in particular for the “non-professional” staff groups.
- *enforcing corporacy*, in other words helping unite the NHS round shared values (for example, customer care), and increasing the effectiveness of staff by improving their knowledge of the NHS system
- *improving value for money and quality from education and training procurement*: NHS expenditure on this currently runs at >£3bn. a year

1.2 The new organisation, which took the name NHSU, initially formed part of the Department of Health. In December 2003 it was established as a Special Health Authority.

1.3 Since its inception NHSU's priorities have been to –

- develop its strategic plan
- set up and test its delivery operations and processes
- establish an initial portfolio of learning products - a range of some 35 programmes is in development or at pilot stage
- launch a range of learning services to improve access to training and education for NHS staff
- identify the most appropriate route to obtaining University title (which would give it degree-awarding powers)

1.4 Since NHSU was announced a number of significant and relevant changes have taken place in the NHS and the education sector. These include –

- greater devolution of power and resources to the frontline
- the emergence of greater plurality of provision, including Foundation Trusts and independent sector providers alongside conventional Trusts
- a growing role for independent regulators (for example the Healthcare Commission) and standard-setting bodies
- the emergence of Skills for Health and SHA Workforce Directorates in the health education and training sector
- the recent Arms Length Bodies Review conducted by DH
- ongoing changes to the structure of higher and further education

1.5 The original vision behind the setting up of NHSU remains firmly in place. But the time is now right to review NHSU's objectives, ways of working and relationships