
RCN Policy Unit

Policy Briefing 04/2006

Nurse Led Social Enterprise

Introduction

What is Social Enterprise?

The Social Enterprise Unit (SE) was launched by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in 2001. In her speech from 26 February 2002, The Rt. Hon. Patricia Hewitt, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said: "There is no doubt at all that the potential of co-operatives and social enterprise is very firmly on the Prime Minister's radar screen. And the potential, in particular, of social enterprise to contribute both to our public

- Re-investing profits in the social aims of the business or local community;
- The ability to deliver on social objectives while delivering services.

Government is supportive of social enterprises because it sees them as addressing a number of public policy goals and as having an important role to play in service delivery – for example in areas of health and care and in education and training. They believe that the success of social enterprises is in the delivery of good quality, customer focused and good value services to local communities. They also believe that SEs have a key role in the promotion of social inclusion, that they bring goods and services into areas where others may not want or be able to operate. They provide employment and training opportunities in supportive business environments for hard to reach groups, including people with mental illnesses or disabilities, the homeless or the long-termed unemployed.

In July 2002, government launched a three year strategy (Social Enterprise: a strategy for success) setting out a programme of action to work towards this vision. The strategy identifies the issues that directly contribute to the success of the sector and seeks to remove the barriers that prevent its growth and development. The desirable outcomes are:

DTI's Social Enterprise Unit (SEnU) has the responsibility for carrying forward the strategy. The role is the SEnU is to:

- Act as a focal point and co-ordinator for poli

- The policy rationale for supporting social enterprise remains valid, based on evidence of the sector's ability to contribute to enterprise, service delivery and social inclusion.

In addition to raising awareness of the potential of the SE sector, the report went to identify a number of key factors relating to the future development of SEs including better access to finance; identifying the needs of the voluntary sector; identifying the social impact of SEs; and monitoring of SE development across all government departments.

commissioners of primary care and community care services. The White Paper insists that, as businesses, they will provide a more flexible service and that they can respond quickly and dynamically to changing need and consumer preference. No matter whether that view is valid or not, SEs will still need to demonstrate excellence as employers if they are to retain a suitably qualified and skilled workforce.

Case Studies

A number of social enterprises have been established in recent years to provide health and social care services. Although existing charities and other social enterprises could apply to become Community Interest Companies not all have done so. Some examples of existing social enterprises in the health and social care sector are;

- **Community Action Network** works with a wide range of individuals and organisations involved in the health service to promote and develop a culture of social entrepreneurship within the NHS.

www.can-online.org.uk

- **The Future Health and Social Care Association** supports the vulnerable members of the community by providing training, homes and education.
- **SELDOC** (South East London Doctors Cooperative) represents 90% of all GPs in the boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, serving 900,000 patients. Aiming to improve the provision of out-of-hours care, the co-op now operates a 24-hour answering service and provides a duty doctor service between 7pm and 7am on weekdays and 24 hour service on weekends and bank holidays.

www.seldoc.co.uk

- **Sunderland Home Care Associates** is a major service operator for Sunderland City Councils social services department, providing personal care and domestic services to hundreds of people in need.

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Social Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Nurses

"...I believe that in the next few years (existing social entrepreneurs) will be joined by new examples of social enterprise, emerging particularly among entrepreneurial clinicians within primary care."

Liam Byrne MP (2005), Under Secretary of St

- These future Social Enterprises must recognise value and support the development of nursing practice by offering professional education opportunities, career progression, benefits and rewards which are at least equivalent to those within the NHS.
- Where there is an intention to use social enterprise as a model for the provision of NHS services, a full consultation on the proposals and their implications must be undertaken to include staff members, staff side organisations and key stakeholders, including patients and carers.
- In April 2006, the RCN will be publishing the key principles which we believe must underpin the future provision of health services. Whilst supporting proposals for nurse-led primary care services and valuing opportunities for the development of nurse entrepreneurs, we must be

