

# **Review of Third Sector Organisations**

**Scottish Social Enterprise Academy  
2 August 2011**

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## 1. Introduction

In March 2011, the Scottish Government (SG) commissioned HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) to undertake a review of the Scottish Social Enterprise Academy (SSEA). HMIE and SG agreed the quality and performance indicators to be used in the review from the framework provided within the HMIE publication *How Good Is Our Community Learning and Development?*<sup>2</sup>.

The fieldwork for the review took place in May 2011.

HM Inspectors visited and interviewed stakeholders, including learners, in the work of SSEA in Inverness, Orkney, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Hamilton, East Kilbride and Kirkintilloch. They interviewed staff and board members. They analysed questionnaire responses from five stakeholder organisations. Inspectors began the review and based their evaluative activities on the self-evaluation provided by SSEA.

## 2. Context and background

SSEA was established in 2004 as a social enterprise. Although they make money, a social enterprise invests any profit back into the company to deliver services for a social purpose. It provides learning and development for people working in or towards a leadership role in the social economy. Its leadership, enterprise and social impact programmes encourage innovation and creativity by focusing on the personal development of participants. Their approach to learning is based on action learning, coaching and peer support.

Since 2008, SSEA has played a significant role in promoting and supporting social enterprise in schools. As part of the *Determined to Succeed* initiative they have provided courses in understanding social enterprise to 245 participants over three years. Twelve local authorities in Scotland now have schools engaging in social enterprise. Some are using it as part of their planning for the broad general education of Curriculum for Excellence. In two local authorities, around a third of schools are engaged in this activity. SSEA organise an annual Social Enterprise in Schools Award. SSEA has also worked with SG and the Scottish Qualifications Authority to develop a guide for teachers and others in using social enterprise as a means of achieving national progression awards in enterprise and employability. *Fresh Options*, a guide to social enterprise for schools, provides a very accessible introduction for those who are new to social enterprise.

## 3. Key strengths

- The action learning approach used in schools which contributes very well to developing skills, knowledge and attributes of Curriculum for Excellence in children and young people.
- Very effective training and development support in building the confidence of teachers to establish social enterprises with children and young people.

- The enterprise, leadership and social impact programmes provided by SSEA which are helping to improve the skills of social entrepreneurs.
- Leadership and management of SSEA.
- The contribution of SSEA which is highly valued by stakeholders.
- Skilled and very highly motivated staff.

#### **4. How well did Scottish Social Enterprise Academy meet the needs of its stakeholders?**

##### **How well does SSEA improve its performance?**

SSEA has very good arrangements in place for improving performance. The quality of provision is of a high standard and the organisation is highly regarded by partners and stakeholders. SSEA income has steadily increased over the past six years and this has made their work more sustainable. The number of learning days delivered has increased significantly in the past six years as has the numbers of learners. The schools programme, linked to the *Determined to Succeed* initiative, is developing very well with increasing numbers participating. SSEA are currently working with schools in twelve local authorities. They plan to increase this to all 32 authorities in the coming year. A Scottish school, Stonelaw High School in South Lanarkshire, which had been supported by SSEA, won the prestigious Young Person's Social Enterprise of the Year Award at the UK Social Enterprise Awards this year. Graduates completing leadership programmes are increasing. All courses and learning opportunities run by SSEA are monitored through pre and post course evaluations and action taken to address issues of concern. There are high numbers of return learners, indicating high levels of learner satisfaction. Ninety-five percent of learners say that they would recommend SSEA learning to a friend.

##### **How well are children and young people learning and achieving?**

SSEA is having a very positive impact on the learning and achievement of children and young people. P6 children in one primary school spoke very clearly and reflectively about their learning through social enterprise activities. They described significant impacts in improving their skills and knowledge in areas including problem solving, confidence building, team work, leadership and business skills. These children also spoke with enthusiasm about the active and collaborative approach to their learning taken by their teacher.

Young people in first year at one secondary school are learning through running their social enterprise as part of business education. They have written CVs, produced a business plan, advertised their goods for sale and written letters of application. They report being more confident having learned how to cooperate with others. Across local authorities there are several examples of young people learning and achieving against the attributes and capabilities of Curriculum for Excellence through Fair Trade initiatives, partnerships with community organisations, and making and designing goods for sale. Children and young people had a much better

understanding of global citizenship after they have participated in these enterprise activities. As a result, some young people are displaying positive changes in their behaviours and are more aware of the needs of others, notably of those in third world countries.

### **How well are adults learning and achieving?**

Teachers involved in the social enterprise in schools programme valued highly the support provided by SSEA that enabled them to support children and young people to develop social enterprises. They were very enthusiastic about the benefits to children and young people of their enterprise experience. They were also very positive about the style of learning they had experienced with the Academy and the impact it had on their classroom practice. Development staff in local authorities commented that the high level of engagement of schools with social enterprises in their authorities would not have happened without the support of the Academy.

Participants in the SSEA leadership, enterprise and social impact programmes valued highly the action learning approach taken by SSEA staff. As a result, they are improving their understanding of social enterprise and their capacity to become sustainable. Participants in the Highlands and Islands valued highly the capacity of SSEA to bring learning to their communities, especially to the more remote island communities. Learners thought very highly of SSEA tutors who were viewed as being very knowledgeable, experienced and competent in facilitating learning. Staff in SSEA should consider how better to support participants in sequencing their learning and how to provide their programmes in ways that best address the time constraints experienced by active volunteers.

### **Staff**

All staff in SSEA are very highly motivated by the organisation's vision and mission. They are dedicated to the promotion of social enterprise as a vehicle for economic and community development. They are also highly skilled and generate enthusiasm and energy amongst those they work with. Managers offer a very high standard of support to staff to continue their own learning and personal development. Staff are very happy in their work and consistently report that their learning and development needs are very well met.

## **5. How effective was Scottish Social Enterprise Academy in key aspects of management?**

### **Inclusion, equality and fairness**

SSEA engage very effectively with a wide range of stakeholders. They effectively target their resources to offer services to rural areas. They now provide programmes in 15 island communities in Scotland. SSEA strive to ensure their services as accessible as possible and there is no prior academic achievement required. A European Social Fund project is targeting excluded groups such as long term unemployed and young people in the Highlands and Islands. SSEA routinely collect and monitor ethnic minority and disability participation. These compare favorably

with national figures for levels of participation. Schools programmes are inclusive and include areas of disadvantage. SSEA take care to ensure that as far as possible buildings used are accessible and suitable for learning. Their flexible approach to charges for programmes is helping to encourage as wide a level of participation as possible. Policies and procedures are regularly updated and comply with equalities legislation.

### **Participation of service users and other stakeholders**

SSEA ensure that stakeholder involvement including staff and tutors is of a very high standard. Tutors report high levels of satisfaction with SSEA and they feel valued. There is a strong sense of ownership within the culture of the organisation. The SSEA board of directors meet regularly, establishing sub groups for finance and business development. This is an effective method of ensuring that board members and staff work well together. Board member skills are valued and gaps in experience and knowledge are addressed pro-actively by SSEA managers. Young people were actively involved in the production of the *Fresh Options* guide for schools. This high quality publication helps school staff and young people be clear about the benefits of social enterprise and its connections with their learning as a whole.

### **Operational planning**

Arrangements for planning within SSEA are very strong. A very clear connection between the marketing and operational plans is helping to drive improvement. Performance information is used very effectively to plan and target resources. All staff are clear about their roles in planning and evaluation. SSEA regularly commissions high quality external reports and acts on the recommendations. Programme proposals for working with groups are very well considered. They are robust and clearly outline expectations in terms of costs, outcomes and evaluation. Plans for the establishment of a Quality Sub Group and a new post of quality manager are well in hand.

## **6. How effective was the leadership of Scottish Social Enterprise Academy?**

SSEA benefits from very effective strategic leadership from board members and senior staff. They demonstrate high quality strategic planning and the capacity for sustainable development. All staff are clear about the SSEA mission and staff at all levels are highly committed to the organisation's success. Senior managers and board members take considerable care to ensure that resource acquisition and deployment supports progress towards their goals. They continually reflect on business risks and manage risk very well. They are very effective at engaging all staff in developing and growing the business.

## **7. What is Scottish Social Enterprise Academy's capacity to improve?**

SSEA is very well led and managed. Board members, managers and staff are very clear about its vision and purposes. It has developed a very strong reputation for providing successful programmes of learning and development in a relatively short period of time. Staff and managers demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous improvement. SSEA clearly has the capacity to continue to improve.

## **8. Main points for action**

SSEA should take action to address the following main points for action.

- Continue to expand the *Social Enterprise in Schools* programme to extend its benefits to more teachers, children and young people in Scotland in line with the principles and aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence.
- Further improve its capacity to demonstrate the considerable impacts and outcomes of the work for individuals, organisations and communities.

## **9. What happens next?**

There will be no further action by HMIE as a result of this very positive report. We recommend that SSEA take forward the main points for action from this report.

Jim Rooney  
HM Inspector  
HMIE

## **Appendix 1: Quality indicators used to evaluate Scottish Social Enterprise Academy**

HM Inspectors use performance measures and quality indicators when making judgements in their reviews of national voluntary organisations. The quality indicators used were selected from those published in June 2006 in the publication *HGIOCLD?2*. This publication is available on the website [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

Improvements in performance	<b>very good</b>
Impact on participants	<b>very good</b>
Impact on paid and voluntary staff	<b>excellent</b>
Inclusion, equality and fairness	<b>very good</b>
Participation of service users and stakeholders	<b>excellent</b>
Operational planning	<b>excellent</b>
Leadership and direction	<b>excellent</b>

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

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