

## **Foreword**

This research was funded by the Yorkshire Forward Skills Development Fund and undertaken by staff from the six Councils for Voluntary Service and Voluntary Action in the Humber sub-region (the consortium steering group). Namely;

- Hull CVS
- Voluntary Action North Lincolnshire (Scunthorpe / Barton)
- Voluntary Action North East Lincolnshire (Grimsby)
- East Yorkshire CVS (Bridlington)
- East Riding (Central) CVS (Beverley)
- Boothferry CVS (Goole)

From the outset the group chose to adopt a capacity-building approach to this piece of work. The staff of the six LDAs shared the workload and helped each other with the questionnaire and the sub-regional seminars. It gave us an opportunity to develop our own understanding and skills and enabled us to develop networking and partnership working between the LDAs in the sub-region. The experience has been a very positive one.

### **Councils for Voluntary Service & Voluntary Action**

Councils for Voluntary Service / Voluntary Action (often referred to as “local development agencies” or “LDAs”) are independent charities set up by local voluntary organisations to promote, develop and support the sector.

A board of trustees elected from the membership manages each CVS or VA.

## Background To The Research

The aim of the research was to explore the training that takes place in voluntary & community organisations in the Humber sub-region.

### Key Objectives

1. To identify the types of training organisations offer their staff, volunteers and management committee members.
2. To identify the forms this training takes, where it takes place and how it is funded.
3. To identify the barriers to training faced by organisations.
4. To identify the level and type of training offered to people outside the organisation and how this is funded.
5. To gather the sector's views on how a consortium could help voluntary & community organisations.

### The Methodology

- Firstly a postal questionnaire was sent out by each LDA to its member groups. This was intended to provide information on training taking place in the sector (objectives 1-4) and to serve as the basis of the mapping exercise. The mailing list was checked to remove duplication as far as possible. A copy of the questionnaire is appended to Annex A.
- In all, 1171 questionnaires were distributed and 304 responses were received, a return rate of 26%. The six locality responses were collated to provide a sub-regional overview and further disaggregated to provide information at Learning Partnership level, of which there are four in the sub-region. All the tables in this report are based on the analysis of these responses. However it is possible to extrapolate data obtained from the groups responding to the questionnaire, in order to provide estimates for the voluntary & community sector in the sub-region as a whole.
- 8 seminars were held across the sub-region by each LDA to outline the new learning agenda, to seek views on how a consortium could help groups and to seek views on how it should be run (objective 5). The seminars were held throughout February and March 2001 in:
  - Bridlington
  - Driffield
  - Goole
  - Barton On Humber
  - Scunthorpe
  - Grimsby
  - Hull
  - Beverley

- Information was collected about emerging voluntary & community learning consortia elsewhere in the region and nationally.
- A working group was established to address quality assurance issues with respect to the anticipated auditing and inspection requirements. A section outlining quality assurance activities being carried out by LDAs in the sub-region and the QA context is contained later in this report.

### Joint-working

There is a history of collaborative work amongst the Humber LDAs in the sphere of training and development. For example:

- Over 4000 copies of “Training News”, a bi-monthly newsletter produced by Hull CVS are circulated throughout the Humber by all LDAs using their own mailing lists.
- For the last two years Hull CVS and Boothferry CVS have successfully co-ordinated a joint programme of around 30 short courses per annum aimed at developing capacity in voluntary & community groups. Both are currently in the process of planning for 2001-2002 and the other LDAs have expressed an interest in joining and expanded this programme Humber-wide.
- Almost two years ago the Humber LDAs produced a training strategy, which to some extent pre-empted the advent of the LSC. This report and the collaborative nature of the survey and seminars can trace their roots back to that initial piece of work.

## **Policy context**

Major changes are occurring to the post-16 education and learning environment in the UK. There is a recognition and concern that the nation now lags behind some of our major global competitors in terms of workforce skills and knowledge.

The government set out its vision for change in the Green Paper “The Learning Age” (1999), which viewed learning as the major driving force behind economic success and a vehicle for re-engaging disadvantaged people and communities into mainstream society. The government feels that in order to achieve this, learning must become more demand-led and responsive to need.

A new body, The Learning & Skills Council is now responsible for planning, funding and inspecting all post-16 learning in England. Responsibility for policy implementation and responding to local need is devolved to 47 sub-regional LSC.

The Humberside LSC, based in Hull, is charged with responding to our sub-region’s learning & skills needs and will rely upon information provided by the Learning Partnerships in each of the 4 unitary authorities in The Humber to do this effectively.

The government has stressed that the voluntary & community sector will play a key role in the delivery of its policy objectives. As a consequence of the changes to the post-16 learning environment, new voluntary & community learning consortia are emerging across England to enable the sector to establish relationships with its respective local LSC and Learning Partnerships.

## **The Voluntary & Community Sector**

(Source: NCVO Workforce Development Plan 2000)

### Definition of the Sector

Voluntary & community organisations are active in a broad range of fields. This includes: social care, housing, childcare, disability, health, the environment, cultural heritage, the arts, advice, counselling, guidance, education and many more. They are characterised by having independent volunteer governance and do not distribute profit to shareholders. Voluntary & community organisations have a wider public benefit and various forms of constitution. Many but not all are charities.

### Nature Of The Sector & Its Organisations

There are approximately 136,000 registered voluntary & community organisations in the UK. The sector is large and complex, ranging from small community-based organisations with no paid staff to large household-name charities with thousand of paid staff. In the smaller organisations one person (paid or unpaid) is often responsible for a wide range of functions from management to fund-raising and day-to-day administration.

The sector is increasingly a significant social and economic force in society. Westminster and the parliaments of Scotland and Wales have recently publicly recognised the role of the sector as a force for economic growth and social inclusion. The EU commission describes the third sector as contributing to employment creation as well as active citizenship, democracy, social services and promoting and safeguarding human rights.

### Growth Of The Sector

The voluntary sector paid workforce grew by 60% between 1990 and 1997. The sector currently employs approximately 500,000 paid staff and 3,750,000 volunteers and trustees, contributing £12.8 billion annually to the UK economy.

Much income is related to specific projects and is often short-term. This means voluntary & community organisations have to meet the often differing demands of various funders. It also means organisations face difficulty in securing funding for core costs, including training costs of staff, volunteers and management committee members.

## Skills And Qualifications Of The Workforce

The voluntary & community sector has a high concentration of paid staff in the following Standard Occupational Groupings:

- Managers and administrators (20% total employed staff in sector)
- Associate technical and professional occupations such as, technical staff, nursing staff, development workers, housing officers, advisors and counsellors (36%)
- Clerical occupations (18%)
- Personal services occupations, such as catering, health, childcare, and other personal services (10%)

A high proportion of workers in the sector, 27% across the UK, are educated to degree level, compared to 23% in the public sector and 10% in the private sector.

(To Boldly Go: RSA report, 1998)

Provision of information is key to many organisations in the sector and IT skills are crucial.

The sector offers opportunities for skills development for volunteers. In 1997, 59% of volunteers surveyed reported that the chance to learn new skills was important (especially for younger volunteers). The figure in 1991 stood at 47%.

The sector is emerging as a key agent in developing the kind of skills that increase employability of individuals and groups of individuals. For example, a survey of Millennium Award volunteers showed that as a result of volunteering:

- 79.8% developed confidence
- 72% developed team-working skills
- 69.5% developed their communication and public speaking skills
- 49.3% developed negotiation skills

(Social Impact Study of Millennium Awards – Annabel Jackson Associates, 2000)

## A Sub-regional Overview

Humberside TEC has identified over 1700 voluntary and community groups in the Humber sub-region and furthermore views this as a substantial underestimate.

(Valuing The Voluntary Sector – Humberside TEC, March 2000)

There is evidence to suggest that there are 1100 voluntary & community groups in North Lincolnshire alone, a statistic that adds credence the TEC contention that 1700 sub-regional groups is a figure erring on the side of caution.

(Capacity Of The Voluntary Sector In North Lincolnshire – Ann Hindley 2000)

The TEC report also suggests that the voluntary & community sector in the sub-region employs over 7500 paid full or part-time employees and almost 20,000 volunteers. This represents a total annual income for the sector of £86 million.

## Humber Sub-regional Results

Number of responses = 304 out of 1171 (25.96%)

### Section A: About your organisation

#### 1. The organisation

a. What is the status of your organisation?

Registered charity	209	67%
Other e.g. IPS	42	14%
Don't know / no response	53	19%

b. What is the geographical area covered by your organisation?

Local / borough level	157	52%
County-wide	63	21%
Sub-regional	20	6%
Regional	14	4%
UK	18	6%
International	8	3%
Don't know / no response	24	8%

More than two-thirds of the respondents were registered charities. Almost 4 out of 5 groups stated that their area of benefit (the area in which they can legally operate under charity law) did not extend beyond the sub-region and more than half operated solely at a local level e.g. neighbourhood, village, town, or former borough council area.

c. Does your organisation have e-mail access?

Yes	118	39%
No	186	61%

E-mail is viewed as a potential consultation / information-sharing medium. Connectivity varied from 54% in Hull to 32% in Bridlington and Driffield. It was felt that as the larger and better-resourced groups responded more readily to the questionnaire, the "Yes" figure would be lower if extrapolated sub-regionally.

## 2. How many people work within your organisation at present?

### a. Number of paid staff

	Humber audit total	Average per organisation
Full time	897	2.95
Part time	1065	3.50

### b. Number of volunteers at present

	Humber audit total	Average per organisation
Volunteers	7333	24.12

The questionnaire responses and information from the LDAs suggest there was a higher return rate from staffed organisations. However, there is also sufficient evidence from the individual LDAs to suggest that some major organisations in their area (in employment terms) did not return questionnaires. It was felt that the employment figures obtained from the questionnaire could be doubled for full time staff and quadrupled for part-time staff.

This would give an extrapolated figure for the sub-region of 1,794 full-time and 4,260 part-time paid staff – a total of 6,054 paid staff in the sector.

Bearing in mind that not all voluntary organisations are LDA members, and most LDAs indicate that the number of groups they are in contact with is at least twice the size of their actual membership, this figure is likely to be a substantial underestimate. The real level of paid employment within the sector is probably quite close to the Humberside TEC estimate of 7,500.

The figure for the number of volunteers (7,333) does not include the plethora of less formal volunteer-only groups who are not in membership of their local LDA.

Using the TEC survey estimate of 1,700 groups and the average number of volunteers per group from this report (24.12) the total volunteer figure for the sub-region would be in excess of 41,000.

Again, if the number of organisations in North Lincolnshire (1,100) is used as an indication of a truer level of voluntary & community sector activity, a figure of 41000 volunteers in the sub-region can certainly be viewed as a cautious estimate.

## Section B: Training for those working in your organisation (paid & unpaid).

3. Does your organisation have;

a. A training policy?

Yes	170	56%
No	115	38%
Don't know	19	6%

b. A system for identifying staff training needs?

Yes	181	60%
No	105	35%
Don't know	18	5%

c. A training budget?

Yes	145	48%
No	133	44%
Don't know	26	8%

d. Please estimate how much your organisation spends on training it's own staff (paid or unpaid) in a year

Zero	60	20%
Less than £500	68	22%
£501 to £1000	26	9%
£1001 to £2000	27	9%
£2001 to £5000	12	4%
More than £5001	14	5%
Don't know	73	24%
No response	23	8%

Over half of the respondents have a training policy but insufficient resources to carry it out. 51% of groups have between zero and £1000 per annum to train and develop staff and volunteers. Given that the average number of people (paid & unpaid) in a voluntary organisation is 30.5 then over half of the groups appear to be spending less than £33 per person per year on training (and frequently nothing at all).

This is not to say however that they are not investing in developing their people. Groups said that they train from within their own resources and do not count the staff and volunteer time required to deliver training as a direct cost.

e. How is the training funded?

Don't know / did not say	104	34%
From funds / own pocket	87	29%
By making use of free courses	49	16%
Charitable trusts	30	10%
Other	27	9%
Donations	22	7%
Local authority funding	19	6%
National lottery	18	6%
Other government funding (E.g. Home Office)	8	3%
European funding	4	1%
Charging fees	4	1%
PROSPER	2	0.7%
Individual Learning Accounts	1	0.3%
Other government initiatives (E.g. New Deal)	1	0.3%

The responses revealed that few groups relied on one source of funding for training their people. The table reflects which funding methods were used the most by the groups. There appears to be a lack of awareness about how training is funded, which may partly reflect the respondent's level of involvement with their groups training function and could also reflect an ad-hoc approach to training & development within an organisation.

However, almost half of the groups do have a training budget and many appear to be funding / part-funding training using their own funds (reserves, income). Significantly, people appear to be funding training from their own pockets.

Despite the promotion of Individual Learning Accounts by LDAs, the take up by voluntary & community groups has been tiny. Anecdotal evidence suggests that groups were under the impression that ILAs were aimed at private / public sector organisations and additionally, the necessity to be in paid employment precluded many volunteers from applying.

**4. What sort of training do your people receive?**

One or half day courses	207	68%
Short courses (more than one day)	152	50%
Induction	149	49%
Accredited	138	45%
One-to-one	111	37%
Distance Learning	46	15%
Other*	29	10%
Don't know / did not say	27	9%

A recurrent theme from questionnaires and the seminars was the lack of time managers could devote to training for themselves and their staff and volunteers (a factor referred to in the NCVO workforce development plan). Many paid staff work alone or in small teams where time taken off for training seriously impacts on the running of the organisation.

Similarly, many management committee members (who are all by definition volunteers themselves) are often in full-time employment. This necessitates the taking of annual leave or lieu-time from their day jobs to undertake training on behalf of the voluntary organisation they help to manage.

Both reasons could account for a widespread preference within the sector for shorter courses.

Almost half of all organisations responding to the questionnaire provided accredited training, countering the belief that most training in the sector is “informal and not accredited” (Valuing The Voluntary Sector In Humberside: 2000: p 2).

Considering that time is a major issue, distance learning does not appear to be particularly popular with organisations (15%).

Concern was expressed in the seminars at the lack of progression routes available at level 4 and 5, i.e. management development and professional courses specifically developed for the sector.

## 5. Who delivers the training?

Your own organisation	216	71%
Another voluntary or community organisation	132	44%
A development agency (e.g. CVS / VA / RCC)	109	36%
Private training provider	98	32%
FE College	78	26%
Other*	43	14%
University	35	12%
Don't know / no response	30	10%

The responses revealed a mixed economy of provision with little reliance upon single providers. A picture was painted of high levels of self-sufficiency in the sector with regards to training. The three most popular providers all came from within the sector itself. Organisations appeared willing to open up their courses and venues to other group's staff and volunteers, providing an informal network of mutual training.

Whilst over half of all paid staff in the sector are managers or technical staff and 27% possess a degree, university provision represents only 12% of take-up. This reinforces views that *voluntary sector specific* progression routes at levels 4 and 5 (degree and post-graduate) are overlooked in terms of workforce development – as one respondent put it “we’re good at attracting high quality people, but poor at developing them once they’re in”.

## 6. Where does it take place?

On your premises	169	55%
At another voluntary / community group	164	54%
At a college	81	27%
At a private training provider	72	24%
Other*	41	14%
Don't know	31	10%
At home	27	9%

The majority of groups utilised their own or another voluntary organisations premises for some / all of their training. Groups stated that this was not only a low cost method of delivery, but familiarity with the venue lent itself to the informal training preferred by many of their learners.

## 7. Please give examples of the sort of training delivered

Please refer to each of the four Learning Partnership level reports

## 8. What are the barriers to training for your organisation?

Cost of courses	154	50%
Can't spare the time	115	40%
Courses not local enough	98	32%
Available courses not suitable	72	24%
Time of day	56	18%
Lack of information about what is available	52	17%
Don't know / no response	36	12%
Lack of public transport	35	12%
Caring costs not met (e.g. crèche etc.)	33	11%
Don't know what training we need	30	10%
Other	23	8%
Lack of confidence	15	5%

The overwhelming barrier to training was cost, coming out as the number one barrier in all 4 learning partnership areas of this study. Almost 72% of groups in North-East Lincolnshire put cost as a major barrier with the lowest figure 50%, being in the East Riding. Time and access were the other major concerns whilst one in four groups stated that unsuitable courses presented a problem.

## SECTION C:

### YOUR ORGANISATION PROVIDING TRAINING FOR OTHER ORGANISATIONS & INDIVIDUALS (groups not answering this section moved on to section D)

Number of groups completing this section	149	49%
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#### 9. Type of training provided

a. Who are your “customers”?

Service users of your organisation	85	57%
Members of the public	85	57%
Volunteers of other voluntary & community groups	65	44%
Socially excluded groups and individuals	64	43%
Paid staff of other voluntary & community groups	59	40%
Other	7	5%
Don't know / did not say	4	3%

b. What topics or areas do you train in?

Please refer to each of the four Learning Partnership level reports

c. Is any of the training you offer accredited?

Yes	47	32%
No	69	46%
Did not say	33	22%

#### 10. How is the training funded?

Charging fees	51	34%
Charitable trusts	46	31%
Local authority funding	41	28%
Other	35	23%
National Lottery	29	20%
FEFC (franchise with a college)	24	16%
Don't know / did not say	17	11%
European funding	15	10%
Individual Learning Accounts	14	9%
Other government initiatives	10	7%
Other government funding	9	6%

Almost half of all respondents (149 groups) provide training for people outside their organisation and a third of these (47) provide accredited courses. The main customers were service users and the general public (58%). Groups indicated that in common with funding for training their own people, funding for training people outside the organisation was difficult to obtain.

Responses revealed low levels of European and government support.

Interestingly more than a third of organisations needed to charge fees to make their courses viable. The necessity to charge came about despite the fact that many groups were dealing with disadvantaged learners. Groups responded to this situation by setting differential charges according to the learners (or their organisation's) ability to pay, or more often than not by using different funders to fund a single course – a way of working that is both resource and time-consuming.

## SECTION D: THE ROLE OF THE CONSORTIUM

	Essential	Desirable	Not Applicable
Obtaining funding for training	154 (51%)	86 (28%)	64 (21%)
Quality assurance	137 (45%)	85 (28%)	82 (27%)
Enabling the provision of affordable courses	158 (52%)	81 (26%)	65 (22%)
Helping organisations to identify their training needs	84 (28%)	135 (44%)	85 (28%)
Providing assistance with developing courses	60 (20%)	144 (47%)	100 (33%)
Providing assistance with getting your courses accredited	42 (14%)	109 (36%)	153 (50%)
Providing information about training opportunities	134 (44%)	104 (34%)	66 (22%)
Helping to develop accredited courses	56 (18%)	125 (41%)	123 (41%)
Providing a voice on training issues for the members	81 (27%)	128 (42%)	95 (31%)
Negotiating with government Agencies	85 (28%)	115 (38%)	104 (34%)
Developing distance learning Materials	28 (9%)	121 (40%)	155 (51%)
Providing information about new government initiatives	101 (33%)	115 (38%)	88 (29%)
Working with existing providers to make training more accessible and relevant	122 (40%)	100 (33%)	82 (27%)

From the responses, the key areas of work for a consortium appeared to be:

- Funding
- Quality assurance
- Enabling the provision of affordable courses
- Working with existing providers to make training accessible
- Providing information about training opportunities

Interestingly, help with accreditation scores a much higher combined “essential” and “desirable” rating in Hull (75%) than the rest of the sub-region (see above for the total figure). This is almost certainly due to the presence of the Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team, which has been helping Hull groups to accredit their own training for a number of years.

Despite the heavy promotion of the Ufl and Learn Direct brands, there was a significant lack of interest in distance learning, which most groups disliked because of the absence of tutor input.

Some groups left whole section blank in which case their response was classed as “not applicable” across the board. The failure of some of the groups to attempt section D may reflect their lack of understanding (or interest) in the current learning agenda. There was evidence to suggest at the seminars that some groups would have completed this part of the questionnaire had they been more *au fait* with the contextual issues prior to the questionnaire being distributed.

## **Quality Assurance Activities**

Voluntary organisations in Hull and the Humber region share the same difficulties as the sector does nationally when they try to address quality assurance issues. They are already used to inspection by a variety of audit and monitoring regimes. This process is fragmented at present. With the need to satisfy different funders such as SRB and ESF, as well as the demands of the Training Standards Council, the sector is currently subjected to seven different inspections with seven different sets of standards. They are faced with a variety of self-assessment packages and processes, some of which lead to coveted kite marks. There is no clearly accepted voluntary sector system of quality assurance. The diverse nature of the sector means that there is no certainty that a single system would meet the needs of every organisation. This conclusion was expressed in a meeting of voluntary organisations at Humberside Training and Enterprise Council on 8th June 2000, and has been endorsed by a series of national publications.

### The NCVO Quality Standards Task Group

NCVO produced a report and an “Agenda for Action (March 2000) to supplement its Map of Quality Standards” (Sept 1997).

The Map of Quality Standards provides voluntary and community organisations with a clear overview of twelve different approaches to quality assurance:

Investors in People; The Business Excellence Model; The ISO 9000 Family of Standards; Management Charter Initiative; Social Auditing; PQASSO; Charter Mark; Towards Voluntary Sector Codes of Practice; Value for Money Audits; Accrediting Bureau for Fund-raising Organisations Seal of Approval; Guidance Quality Standards for Learning and Careers Advice Work; and Charity Commission Guidance

It lists the parent bodies, the ways of using the standards, and gives an idea of the cost involved. There are some case studies and a selection of relevant references and addresses.

The comprehensive range of this mapping document is such that it is likely to contribute to the lack of confidence among smaller voluntary and community organisations.

### THE NCVO GQSTG Report and Agenda for Action ("In Pursuit of Excellence")

The two main lessons from this research are that the voluntary sector has already developed appropriate quality models, but the diversity of the sector and the proliferation of systems can push organisations into inappropriate quality improvement activities.

The research also found that voluntary organisations are adept at adapting off the shelf systems to meet their own needs, but this results in some blurring of standards and reduction in transparency.

The report expresses concern that terminology within quality systems varies considerably and can cause confusion.

The report registers some scepticism about accreditation within quality systems, and the pressure for accreditation from within the sector itself.

The report notes that funders and voluntary organisations are not accepting responsibility for developing mutually acceptable quality indicators

The report acknowledges some use of national occupational standards by voluntary organisations.

The report emphasises the link between core voluntary sector values such as equality, and implementing quality systems.

## NIACE

Have also published their findings on “Quality Improvement Support for Adult and Community Learning Providers” (January 2001).

They found that clearly defined and appropriate frameworks are widely used in the voluntary sector at different levels, but there is some confusion and lack of coherence. This is due to the multiple standards that are available and a lack of consensus about the desirability of moving to a single overall framework. There is a consensus that we need to link the existing options to provide clearer progression routes through a "quality ladder" (for instance from PQASSO to the Excellence Model). They found no evidence that the current generic models are being applied to learning or training. They did have concerns about the imposition of inappropriate standards, for example when local authorities were seeking best value or a particular "Quality Mark". Voluntary and community organisation were seen as having the potential to engage with quality assurance providing that they were properly resourced and supported, and that appropriate consultation is built into any development process.

The two systematic approaches to evaluating quality within an organisation that are most frequently adopted by voluntary organisations are PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance Systems for Small Organisations), and the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Excellence Model.

## PQASSO - Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations

PQASSO was first produced by the Charities Evaluation Service in 1997, and is now in it's second edition, based on feedback over three years.

It provides a series of self-assessment statements at three levels, so that an organisation can evaluate its own performance and set itself targets in the twelve core areas of activity.

PQASSO looks at twelve areas of operation:

Planning for Quality; Governance; Management; User-centred service; Staff and volunteers; Training and development; Managing money; Managing resources; Managing activities; Networking and partnership; Monitoring and evaluation; and Results

PQASSO is benchmarked against Investors In People and can be used as evidence if an organisation wishes to implement IIP.

Level three of PQASSO is closely linked with the EFQM Excellence Model to facilitate transition, and special attention has been given to linking PQASSO to EFQM, to allow small organisations to progress from a simple and manageable process, to one which has wider recognition.

CES is currently looking into the accreditation of PQASSO.

### THE EFQM Excellence Model

This quality system, which is currently being widely adopted across the voluntary and community sectors defines "excellence" as outstanding practice in managing the organisation and achieving results, all based on a set of eight fundamental principles:

Public responsibility; Results orientation; Customer focus; Leadership & Constancy of Purpose; Management by Processes and Facts; People Development & Involvement; Continuous Learning, Improvement & Innovation; Partnership Development

Through its publication "Excellence in View" the EFQM has provided a simple and clear guide to the model, specifically aimed at voluntary and community organisations. The guide emphasises that this is not a set of standards or a model in itself, but a broad framework within which organisations can identify their own priorities for improvement. The guide tries hard to explain common jargon related to quality, and includes helpful diagrams and charts to exemplify key ideas. There is also some useful case study material to show how the model works effectively within the voluntary sector.

Hull Council for Voluntary Service has established a series of arrangements to support organisations to evaluate their own performance, supported by funding from the Regional Development Agency.

A member of Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team has been working with a member of Boothferry CVS. BCVS are currently involved in a CES lottery- funded 3- year project. The project is to work across nine regions, bringing three regions on board each year. In the first year six Councils for Voluntary Service will be involved in each of the first three regions - Yorkshire, the North East, and East Midlands. In Yorkshire these will be York, Craven, Sheffield, Boothferry, North Yorkshire Forum and additionally CVOS Durham.

Each CVS will be given four days training in PQASSO, and will then cascade to six further organisations with two days of formal training and eight hours of follow-up support. Members of staff from East Yorkshire CVS and Voluntary Action North Lincolnshire have already completed the two days implementation training.

As part of Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team's own quality assurance action plan a need has been identified for someone trained up to work with groups to continue the cascade in the local area. The framework for this cascade will need to be negotiated with CES.

Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team has now purchased copies of all the standard quality framework documents and they are available for loan to voluntary organisations,

including those produced by NCVO and EFQM, as well as the Ofsted / ALI Common Inspection Process. Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team works regularly with member organisations to support them to implement quality assurance procedures, or to assess the quality of training provision.

Member organisations of Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team have already experienced an FEFC Inspection, during the preparation for this the Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team was involved in producing its own self-assessment report with the support of Beverley College. In partnership with Beverley College work is currently under way to explore how a Quality Assurance framework can be integrated into the strategic and self-assessment calendar to show the relationship between observation, appraisal, review and strategic planning. Paul Smith, an external quality consultant employed by Beverley College is working closely with a member of the Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team, to evaluate the training provided under franchise.

Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team has conducted discussions with the Open College and a sub-regional agreement on quality assurance is planned for OCN provision within the voluntary sector. Exemplar guidance has been provided from Rotherham College of Arts and Technology to indicate the nature and timings of review and appraisal activity, and the relationship with organisational action plans

A member of Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team has worked over a 6 month period with Humber Community Partnership to support their self assessment of training within the voluntary sector option of the New Deal 18-24, prior to formal inspection by the Training Standards Council.

Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team has purchased 16 copies of the most recent version of PQASSO (a quality assurance system for small organisations), and circulated them to the sub regional CVS' to Humber Community Partnership (a sub-regional strategic body), and to a local voluntary sector training provider IT in the Community.

With Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team support, the PQASSO self-assessment system has been piloted by a local voluntary sector worker, looking at the training provided for the "SMARTMOVE" project on behalf of The Hull Hostel Forum. Using section 6 of PQASSO he found that they could satisfy the quality statements at level one, but could not meet the requirements at level two. On this basis PQASSO is judged to provide useful targets, and the group is currently working to meet the requirements at the next level.

Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team has been engaged in discussion with the Director of the new Learning and Skills Council, who has included quality assurance as one of the strands of work which she is looking to fund within the voluntary sector.

## **Towards A Humber Voluntary Sector Learning & Skills Consortium**

Voluntary & community sector learning consortia are emerging nationally and regionally in response to the opportunities the LSC offers the sector. These consortia vary in their form and function. Groups have given their views to the six LDAs about how a Humber consortium might look and operate. The response to a consortium was a very positive one and the key themes emerging from the seminars across the sub-region were that groups wanted a consortium to be:

- Run by the sector for the sector
- Democratic
- Representative
- “Politically” independent
- Accountable

The messages from the questionnaire were that Humber groups saw a consortium as a vehicle for driving forward learning & skills development in the sector and that it could do this in 5 key ways:

- By helping groups to obtain funding for their training activities
- Guiding groups through quality assurance frameworks
- Enabling the provision of affordable courses
- Working with existing providers to make training accessible
- Providing information about training opportunities

The seminars were an excellent opportunity for voluntary & community groups to get to grips with the new learning agenda and consider how the sector and individual organisations could begin to engage with it. There was a recognition that the sector needs to be brought up to speed and that the seminars had been valuable in shedding light on important new developments.

Groups felt that they would like more information on which to base their views and decisions and have requested that the LDAs return to facilitate more seminars before the consortium is formally established.

## **Infrastructure To Support The Work Of A Voluntary Sector Consortium**

A Humber voluntary & community learning consortium would be able to draw upon support at national, regional and sub-regional level. Organisation such as:

### National Council for Voluntary Organisations - Voluntary Sector NTO

Aims to develop a broad strategy for the voluntary and community sector covering workforce learning and development.

### National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE)

Has applied for funding from the DfEE to support a national network for emerging voluntary sector consortia that wish to engage with the LSC and the new learning agenda. It is intended to keep the consortia briefed with the latest information on national policy and to organise seminars for them to share information and any good practice about their development.

### Yorkshire & The Humber Regional Forum

Will continue to support the Sharing Credit network of voluntary sector training providers. Quarterly seminars with speakers will be organised to keep members informed about innovations, new projects, funding opportunities, good practice etc.

This is also likely to be the body taking a co-ordinating role, regionally, on behalf of the four sub-regional consortia, encouraging a sharing of their practice.

### Regional Skills Commission

The voluntary sector has representation on this body, which informs the writing of the Regional Skills Action Plan. The Commission also organise regular consultation seminars to which the four sub-regional consortia are invited.

### Local Learning Partnerships

The Humber consortium aims to have representatives on all four of the LLPs in the Humber sub-region. The nominated members will meet regularly to ensure that there is a consistency about the voluntary sector voice and the input into the four strategic learning plans.

### Humberside Learning & Skills Council

At the time of writing there is no voluntary sector “voice” on the Humberside Learning & Skills Council board. The consortium aims to have suitable and effective voluntary sector representation as soon as possible on this strategic body.

## Conclusions

The response received to the questionnaire was just under 26%. However it is reasonable to extrapolate for the sector as a whole by quadrupling the information received from the respondents. The justification for this is that each LDA has an in depth knowledge of it's membership and they felt that many of the needs / barriers etc. are common to all voluntary & community groups. However, it was felt that a figure for full-time staff ought to be doubled. The justification for this was that the better-resourced organisations appeared to respond more readily to the questionnaire.

Whilst the questionnaire covered all groups in membership of the six LDAs, it by no means covers all voluntary & community groups in the Humber sub-region. Therefore, all figures in this report should be viewed as erring on the side of caution, at times significantly. The TEC estimate of 1700 groups in Humberside was occasionally referred to, but again this figure is likely to underestimate the true number of groups in the sub-region.

The research paints a picture of a robust voluntary sector in the Humber sub-region. The average voluntary organisation in this study employed 2.95 full-time staff, 3.5 part-time paid staff and 24.12 volunteers.

In the audit itself the sector employs 7,333 volunteers. A simple extrapolation to the full LDA membership reveals over 28,000 volunteers at work in the sector. However, if the figures are extrapolated using the TEC estimate of 1,700 voluntary & community groups, the figure rises to more than 41,000 volunteers for the sector as a whole. This statistic represents a huge army of people both enabling the sector to carry out its work and in turn themselves benefiting from the skills development opportunities offered by voluntary & community groups.

The responses revealed that the sector employs 897 full-time paid staff and 1,065 part-time paid staff. Extrapolated to LDA membership the figure rises to 1,794 full time paid staff and 4,260 part-time paid staff. NB. These figures have been multiplied by 2 and 4 respectively. The justification for this is that the profile of non-respondents is sufficiently well known by the LDAs to suggest such extrapolations are appropriate.

There was agreement amongst the LDAs that the TEC's estimate of 7,500 paid staff in the Humber voluntary & community sector was appropriate.

The majority of groups have training policies and systems for identifying training needs within their organisation, but many have little in the way of cash to actually fund training. Over half of the respondents spend under £1000 per annum training their people – a figure that equates to somewhere between zero and £33 per person, per year.

Where groups have obtained financial resources for training, they use a multitude of funding methodologies, significantly reserves, income, or their own pockets. Charitable trusts and the lottery are the next most common ports of call for funding, with central government and European funding being the least likely to be accessed. Groups cited complex application and audit requirements and cash-flow problems when dealing with these funders as major considerations.

Low staffing levels and the cost of training militates against releasing personnel from groups. As a result shorter bite-size courses of one or half days are especially popular within the sector.

The voluntary & community sector would appear to have a high degree of self-sufficiency in relation to who delivers it's training and where. Groups use a mix of providers and venues for learning, but almost three-quarters deliver some or all of their own training at venues within the community itself. This seems to be a pragmatic response to the major barriers groups face when delivering or attending training, namely cost, time available and the requirement to travel.

Half of groups in the sub-region deliver training and learning opportunities to people outside their organisation, predominantly to members of the public and their service users. Again, there is little evidence of support for this training from central government and European sources. Groups tend to access charitable trusts and local authority funding. Interestingly, a third of groups have to charge some kind of fee - even some of those who deliver informal first step training to disadvantaged learners.

The response from groups to a voluntary sector consortium was very positive. The key areas of work identified for a consortium in the Humber sub-region were:

- Obtaining funding for training
- Quality assurance
- Enabling the provision of affordable courses
- Working with existing providers to make training accessible
- Providing information about training opportunities

Groups stated that they wanted a consortium "run by the sector for the sector". Feedback from the seminars indicated that the consortium would need to be democratic with representation from across the sub-region. The general view was that this could be achieved using the CVS model of democratic engagement and accountability. Further debate and discussion was requested before any decision on the consortium was taken.

Hull CVS Lifetime Learning Team has demonstrated a clear understanding of the issues facing voluntary sector organisations in relation to quality assurance. They have adopted a coherent approach - promoting a transition to the Excellence Model via the stages of PQASSO – and have established networks both locally and across the region to ensure that their advice and support are both timely and up to date. They have developed a particular expertise in relation to Open College Network provision – having representation on local accreditation panels and a close working relationship with Beverley College. They are well placed to work with the new LSC to promote a more confident and coherent approach to quality assurance across the whole spectrum of voluntary sector activity.

## Recommendations

The sector is increasingly recognised as a significant employer in addition to its traditional role as a delivery mechanism for hard to reach learners. Both strands have implications for government agencies, funders and contracting bodies, as well as voluntary & community groups themselves.

- Quality services rely upon well-trained staff, volunteers and effective management committees. Funders need to be aware that high quality delivery under grants, contracts and service level agreements requires realistic funding of groups particularly with regard to their training budgets. The compacts should be used to ensure there is a clear policy towards the sector in this respect.
- The sector needs to remind “funders” of its centrality to the learning agenda, it’s growing importance as an employer and deliverer of key skills. There is a clear “reminding” and labour market information role for strategic bodies at national, regional and sub-regional levels.
- Funders need to consider the value of well-established and effective learning delivery by voluntary & community organisations. Projects that are examples of good practice frequently have to “develop” their services, not in response to need, but as a requirement to gain continuation funding.
- There is an awareness that the voluntary sector has a major part to play in improving basic skills. Such a role will require more, not less resources. Funders need to be aware that community-based learning is not a cheap option.
- Funders need to be sensitive to the trusting relationships many groups have with “disadvantaged learners”. Policies and programmes should not “encourage” inappropriate basic skills activities that could negatively impact upon the close client-organisation relationships common to the sector.

The sector will need additional capacity-building support in order to engage effectively with the learning agenda, the LSC and the Learning Partnerships.

- Through Volcom in Hull, the sector has enabled the learners voice to be heard on the learning partnership (City Learning). Similar learner fora should be established to feed in the learners view to the planning process and support learner representatives on the other three sub-regional Learning Partnerships.
- There should be funding for a sub-regional roll-out of the short course programme of accredited and non-accredited courses currently run by Hull CVS and Boothferry CVS. These courses are aimed at developing people & organisations and attract participants from across the Humber area.
- There is a higher level of capacity-building activity and information about needs in the local sector where a LDA has a training & development worker. Consideration such be given to funding a dedicated T&D worker in each LDA.

- There is evidence of higher accredited learning within groups where LDAs (i.e. Hull CVS) provide support to groups. The sector may wish to consider extending accreditation support sub-regionally.
- Consideration needs to be given to developing a range of *local and flexible* level 4 and 5 voluntary sector qualifications. This is a particular area of need identified by senior staff within the sector.

Voluntary & community sector organisations are recognised for their increasing contribution to the learning agenda. However, in the main they will be unable to access “formula funding” through the LSC for at least the next year and probably two to three years, given their immediate capacity-building requirements.

- The Humberside LSC should prioritise voluntary & community groups for initiative funding in the first two to three years of operation, particularly in the spheres of trainer development and quality assurance issues. This will encourage the emergence of new providers on to the market and enable voluntary groups to demonstrate their ability to deliver high quality community-based learning.
- The importance of non-accredited learning and non-linear routes that many people use to get back into learning needs to be recognised by funders and providers alike.
- The level of auditing and inspection should reflect the “risk” a group represents to a funder. Present levels can be overly bureaucratic and importantly, impact upon the resources required for learning delivery.
- The voluntary sector utilises two major QA systems, PQASSO and EFQM Excellence Model. Funders such as the LSC and local authorities need to recognise the value and track records of these systems and avoid imposing inappropriate ones on voluntary organisations.
- PQASSO and the EFQM Excellence Model should be cascaded to voluntary organisations wishing to deliver training using LSC funding.

Timely, accurate information is key to ensuring groups maximise training opportunities for their staff, volunteers and committee members. Groups have prioritised the dissemination of information on training opportunities as a major role for a voluntary sector consortium.

- A mechanism already exists in the form of the Hull CVS-produced “Training News” which has a bi-monthly circulation of 4000 copies. The newsletter is highly valued by voluntary & community groups and should continue to be funded. Development funding could be sought to enable the newsletter to carry articles and establish a web presence.
- There is scope to develop the current level of connectivity in the sector through an e-mail training network. Pilots should be established to test the feasibility of low cost “hire-purchase” computers, with in-house training and technical support.

Such a network would eventually allow a two-way flow of information between learner and provider. The sector has the capacity to deliver this.

- Individual Learning Accounts should be de-mystified and actively promoted to voluntary groups as a way of adding value to their workforce development role.

Voluntary & community sector learning consortia are now emerging nationally and across the region in response to the opportunities offered by the LSC. The seminars revealed that groups in the Humber sub-region had firm views on how a consortium could help them. However, they asked for more information and a substantive debate before a Humber consortium was established.

- Before the consortium is formally established the LDAs should go back to consult groups through a series of workshops in the 8 localities used for the LSC seminars. This consultation exercise should be resourced and given the highest priority. The consultations should aim to be completed by June 2001 at the latest. The consortium will need to be operational before Autumn 2001 to address LSC planning schedules for 2002.

There are general issues to be addressed in terms of voluntary & community sector representation in the planning process.

- The Humberside LSC needs to appoint a voluntary sector representative as soon as possible to enable the sector to have a “voice” at the table.
- Each learning partnership must have voluntary sector representation. The representative must be viewed as more than just a “reminding face” and should be given capacity-building support from the relevant Learning Partnership Manager.

## **Glossary**

<b>CVS</b>	Council For Voluntary Service
<b>ILA</b>	Individual Learning Account
<b>LDA</b>	Local Development Agency (e.g. CVS / VA)
<b>LSC</b>	Learning & Skills Council
<b>PQASSO</b>	Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>T&amp;D</b>	Training & Development
<b>VA</b>	Voluntary Action

## **Bibliography & Further Reading**

## **Annex**

- A. North Lincolnshire Audit Results
- B. North East Lincolnshire Audit Results
- C. East Riding Of Yorkshire Audit Results
- D. Kingston Upon Hull Audit Results

Questionnaire