



# Training and Learning Opportunities for the Voluntary Sector in Humberside

**An Evaluation of the Voluntary  
Sector Skills Brokerage Scheme  
run by Humberside Learning  
Consortium**

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## **1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Consortium Solutions would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who supported us in this study.

We would also like to thank the Humberside Learning Consortium for their assistance in providing contact details and sending out the postal questionnaires.

## **2. INTRODUCTION TO REPORT**

This research was carried out by Consortium Solutions, Goodwin Community Trading Company Ltd on behalf of the Humberside Learning Consortium.

Consortium Solutions is an independent not-for-profit research and development agency based in Hull. The research commenced in March 2005 with the completion date being mid June 2005.

This report begins by setting out the context in which the Voluntary Sector Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme offered by the Humberside Learning Consortium has been developed and provides an overview of the workings of this scheme. For the remainder of this report, this scheme will be referred to as the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme.

The report then highlights the views of a sample of organisations throughout the Humber sub-region regarding training and learning opportunities. This includes an exploration of the awareness and experiences of the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme. This is followed by an analysis of feedback gathered from individuals working within the sector who have accessed courses offered by this scheme.

Finally the report concludes with a discussion and a summary of recommendations which will assist the Humberside Learning Consortium to develop their Skills Brokerage scheme and in so doing to further support the development of training and learning opportunities for the voluntary sector of the Humber sub-region.

### **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This research aims to explore the broad topic of training and development for the voluntary sector within the Humber sub-region. More specifically, it aims to provide an indication of the impact of the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme on this section of the voluntary sector and to identify potential areas for improvement. This research will compliment work already completed by The Humberside Learning Consortium itself, looking at achievement of targets and objectives.

The research has four main objectives which are set out below.

- a) To construct a profile of organisations accessing the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme
- b) To investigate reasons why some organisations are not using the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme
- c) To identify the outcomes resulting from accessing this scheme for those working within the voluntary sector
- d) To identify trends occurring within the areas of training delivery and access to training as identified by voluntary organisations. These could include aspects such as training budgets, quality assurance, numbers and types of learning opportunities, the use of training consultants and the use of e-learning.

This research has taken a comprehensive approach acknowledging that many of those engaging in training will in fact also be trainers and encompasses both those who have and have not accessed the scheme. It is hoped that it will aid in highlighting the issues facing the sector and assist key organisations in tailoring their services to meet the needs locally, while working in line with national strategies.

## **4. THE CONTEXT FOR SKILLS BROKERAGE FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

### **The Role of Skills Brokerage**

The Learning Skills Council (LSC) has identified that a key challenge and need facing employers today is to have and develop an appropriately skilled workforce, in order for businesses to improve productivity, increase social inclusion and aid the success of local and national economy.

Specialist brokers have therefore been appointed by the LSC within identified clusters and sectors in order to address the skills needs within these. Emphasis has been placed on skills development in the generic areas of management and leadership, customer service, languages, e-learning and ICT, and basic skills.

Skills Brokers aim to offer the following to employers:

- Assistance in identifying workforce development needs
- Advice and support related to training issues
- Information regarding and signposting towards training providers
- Information on other business support services
- Financial contributions towards training costs

In a report entitled *The Evaluation of Cluster and Sector Skills Development in Yorkshire and Humber: Second Stage Report*<sup>1</sup>, brokers identified their role as researching the needs of the sector, helping employers to identify their learning needs, organising provision to meet these needs, improving learning provision and reporting on the appropriateness of the provision. The latter was done through monitoring, evaluations and the broker's knowledge of providers.

### **Skills Brokerage in the Humberside Sub-Region**

Several clusters and sectors have been identified as key drivers for economic growth within the area. Clusters are defined within *A Prospectus for Cluster and Sector Skills Development in Humberside. Skills for Growth*<sup>2</sup> as groups of organisations which trade with each other, have a common customer base, or rely on the same support services and skills. Typically a cluster would cover a number of sectors and includes educational, research, business and finance institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> GHK (October 2004) *Evaluation of Cluster and Sector Skills Development in Yorkshire and Humber. Second Stage Report. Executive Summary.*

<sup>2</sup> Learning Skills Council and Yorkshire Forward (2003) *A Prospectus for Cluster and Sector Skills Development in Humberside. Skills for Growth.* LSC, Hull.

Within Humberside the six clusters are:

- Advanced Engineering and Materials
- Agri-Food
- Bioscience
- Chemical
- Digital
- Ports and Logistics

Sectors include other industries that are especially significant for Humberside due to their size, growth potential or strategic importance. There are nine sectors in Humberside and they are:

- Voluntary and Community
- Retail
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Health
- Social Care
- Early Years
- Generic

Within Humberside the aim of the LSC's workforce development plan is to increase economic prosperity of the area and enable local people to compete for the employment within the above clusters or sectors. Skills Brokers are anticipated to facilitate this by improving workforce development through stimulating demand, providing information, ensuring access to skills and responding to changing skills mix. A strategic partnership between LSC and Yorkshire Forward has resulted in an integration of funding streams (such as the LSC Workforce Development Budget, Yorkshire Forward Single Pot, Co-financed ESF Objective 3 Funds and Local Initiative Fund) thereby enabling opportunities to address issues of workforce development. Humberside Learning Consortium has been recruited to act as Skills Broker for the Voluntary and Community sector within Humberside.

## **Elements of Successful Brokerage**

Current literature points out that there are different forms of skills and learning brokerage with a variety of methods being used to meet the needs of employers. These methods include signposting to existing provision, commissioning provision, developing customised training and using collaborative approaches.

*The Evaluation of Cluster and Sector Skills Development in Yorkshire and Humber: Second Stage Report*, which sets out progress in the Yorkshire and Humber sub-region since the initiative began in 2002, notes some common principles of Skills Brokerage schemes despite differences in the models used. These were identified as:

- increasing employer engagement in learning
- using research, management and information in the design and development of the service
- networking and flexibility of models in order to meet the needs of the sector served

The above-mentioned report highlights key elements of successful delivery as impartiality and credibility of the service. Other elements which contributed to successful brokerage were a single sector focus, employer driven approach, clarity of focus, sufficient support, and links with local strategy. Strong features of good practice included collaboration which aided understanding of employer needs, and partnership working which improved service delivery through increased understanding of sectoral needs, mapping provision and access to relevant funding.

The Learning Brokers Research Project<sup>3</sup> stated that successful brokerage was dependent on the context in which it takes place. However, it supported the above findings by identifying that brokerage is more successful when the broker was autonomous from organisational needs, employee relations were good, learners were given space to talk informally about their experience of the course, and where the broker was from a similar occupation grouping and level to the learners.

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<sup>3</sup> The Learning and Skills Research Centre (2004) The Learners Brokers Research Project

## **Benefits and Barriers to Skills Brokerage**

The advantages of skills and learning brokerage in the workplace have been identified in the literature already cited as:

- Encouraging a learning culture
- Improving confidence and self-esteem of participants in learning
- A point of entry to learning for some individuals who would otherwise find it difficult to negotiate
- Provision of impartial and useful advice where the broker is independent.

Barriers to developing effective learning brokerage in the workplace were mainly related to:

- Operational factors (such as workplace relations, levels of trust, management commitment to learning and the nature of work and work patterns e.g. shift work)
- Attitudes to learning
- Tensions within the broker's role (power and autonomy of the broker)

## **Issues for the Future**

Much progress has occurred within the area of Skills Brokerage but there were some issues identified by the literature that could be further addressed.

The GHK report suggested that developments could be made in the particular areas of dissemination of good practice and cross-sector working while the authors of the Learners Brokers Research Project recommended that a conceptual framework for understanding the different forms of brokerage would be helpful. They also proposed that commitment to learning at all levels of organisational management was crucial in the development of learning brokers in the workplace. Other issues for the future included the broker's role in an informal learning context, strengthening of trade union learning representatives, and introduction of programmes of training for individuals taking up the broker role.

## **5. THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR SKILLS BROKERAGE SCHEME PROVIDED THROUGH HUMBERSIDE LEARNING CONSORTIUM**

In January 2004 the Learning Skills Council appointed the Humberside Learning Consortium as the Skills Broker for the voluntary sector in the Humber sub-region. It was initially awarded as a 15 month contract but then extended to become a 3 year contract finishing in March 2007. It acts as an intermediary for the voluntary sector and incorporates an element of delivery as well as brokerage.

The aim of this scheme is to improve workforce development by supporting staff within the sector to access quality training opportunities. It does this by working towards the following objectives:

- Improve access to funding (through provision of information and advice, signposting employers to business support agencies, carrying out assessments with employers and assisting production of training and development plans)
- Improve the skills and knowledge of voluntary sector trainers (through promotion of basic skills, promotion of quality standards and provision of support for capacity building activities)
- Improve access to appropriate learning opportunities (through identifying and agreeing priorities, gathering feedback from all parties, provision of advice and information re training provision, provision of support and promotion of learning among employers)

Five priority areas for skills development were identified and a range of subsidised training courses and other services were made available to voluntary sector staff in order to achieve the above objectives. An outline of the areas and training is given below.

<i>Area of Training</i>	<i>Name of Course</i>
<i>Management and Leadership</i>	Institute of Leadership and Management Awards University Certificate in Voluntary Management Non-accredited short courses
<i>Trusteeship and Governance</i>	Management Development Awards Non-accredited short workshops Access to website

<i>Trainer Development</i>	1-day Introduction to Training Workshop OCN Training the Trainer City & Guilds stage 1&2 Teaching Awards Quarterly trainers network meetings Trainers conference Access to library of materials
<i>Community Development Work</i>	OCN Community Development Programme (pilot from September 2004)
<i>Fundraising</i>	OCN Fundraising Non accredited short workshops

The scheme operates an open referral process although organisations must meet eligibility criteria set out by the ESF funding (brokerages primarily support small to medium enterprises). In order to generate interest 6000+ leaflets were sent out with the Humberside Learning Consortium Training News in early 2004. Thereafter ongoing promotion was achieved via regular slots in Training News, features on the Humberside Learning Consortium website, generic advertising of all brokerages by the LSC, attending network meetings and giving presentations and talks.

The process followed by an organisation wanting to access the scheme or seeking more information is simple and involves only a telephone call or email to the scheme's coordinator, or completion of the reply slip attached to the leaflet.

The scheme has a steering group that helps set the strategy for the brokerage and oversees its activities. This has a mix of representation including the business community, the education sector and business support agencies.

## **6. METHODOLOGY**

The aims of the research were achieved via a multi method staged approach collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The research proceeded through the following stages:

### **Stage 1: Developing the Background**

Initial consultation occurred with the project manager of the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme to gain an understanding of the scheme as well as the aims and objectives of the study. This was followed by a review of the literature in order to develop a policy context for the study and to explore the issues and constraints associated with investigating the needs of the sector.

### **Stage 2: Obtaining the views of Organisations**

A postal questionnaire was developed in line with the outcomes of Stage 1. This was to provide quantitative data as the basis of developing a profile of organisations that were and were not accessing the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme. It also allowed opportunity to gather quantitative data relating to organisational staffing levels, budgets and training activities. Qualitative data was also gathered regarding learning opportunities, barriers to training and experiences of the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme.

Following approval of the questionnaire by the Humberside Learning Consortium, the questionnaire was distributed to 97 voluntary and community groups based within the Humber sub-region which includes North and South Humberside. A leaflet describing the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme was sent together with the questionnaire.

The sample of organisations was split into two parts:

- a) Organisations that had accessed the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme as indicated by the registration records held by the scheme
- b) Organisations that had not accessed the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme

The sample size was chosen on the basis of the number of organisations registered with the scheme. It was estimated that these would equal approximately 50 and

therefore it was decided that the number of organisations contacted that were not accessing the scheme would also be 50.

When the mailing list was finalised it was determined that there were 47 organisations for which Humberside Learning Consortium held registration records resulting in a total of 97.

As all organisations that were on record as accessing the scheme were to be contacted this part of the mailing list did not need to be sampled.

The remaining 50 organisations were randomly selected using the following procedure:

- Organisations listed under “Charitable and Voluntary Organisations” from three volumes of the Yellow Pages were used as a base. These three volumes were Hull & East Riding, Grimsby & Scunthorpe and York & Scarborough Yellow Pages 04/05
- Those organisations that had accessed Humberside Learning Consortium were removed. This was the only exclusion criteria
- The remaining organisations were split into North and South Humberside
- A computer based random sample generator was used to select 50 organisations with the proportion of North and South Humberside based organisations equal to that of group of registered organisations

The questionnaires were posted and organisations were given 4 weeks to return it. A single reminder telephone call was made to all organisations in the last week requesting all questionnaires to be returned with an extension of 1 week.

Of the 97 questionnaires, 30 were returned, resulting in an overall return rate of 31%. 19 of these were from organisations registered with the scheme (19 of 47 = 40%) The remaining 11 were from those who had been randomly selected (11 of 50 = 22%). Possible reasons for these return rates are discussed further in Chapter 10. An additional 2 questionnaires were received back blank with statements that the organisations had either disbanded or were not known at that address.

Responses were entered onto computer and analysed using the computerised statistical analysis package SPSS. Responses to certain questions were also categorised into themes to provide a more in depth perspective.

### **Stage 3: Obtaining the views of Students**

A questionnaire to be sent via email was developed in line with the outcomes of Stage 1. Ease of completion, possible variations in confidence of using IT of individuals and time needed to complete the questionnaire were factors considered in design.

This questionnaire aimed to provide a simple profile of individuals accessing the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme and collect the views and experiences of these individuals regarding training and learning opportunities and aspirations. The majority of the data was qualitative in nature.

Following approval of the questionnaire from the Humberside Learning Consortium the decision was made to send this questionnaire to all those who had provided an email address when undertaking a course. The initial list contained 257 addresses. On investigation it was found that 7 were not email addresses and 31 were duplicates leaving a total of 216.

Emails were sent out on the same day as the postal questionnaire again with 4 weeks for completion. Three reminders were sent on a regular basis. Each email had the greatest response in the first few days.

A total of 56 were returned resulting in a response rate of 26%. However, if this is recalculated out of 188 (taking into account the 28 undeliverable emails) the response rate was 30%. Again, reasons for this are discussed further in Chapter 10.

Returned responses were entered onto computer and analysed using SPSS with comments also being categorised into themes.

## 7. PROFILE OF THE ORGANISATIONS WHICH RESPONDED

This information is drawn from the returned questionnaires and refers directly to the sample which responded by the deadline, totalling 30.

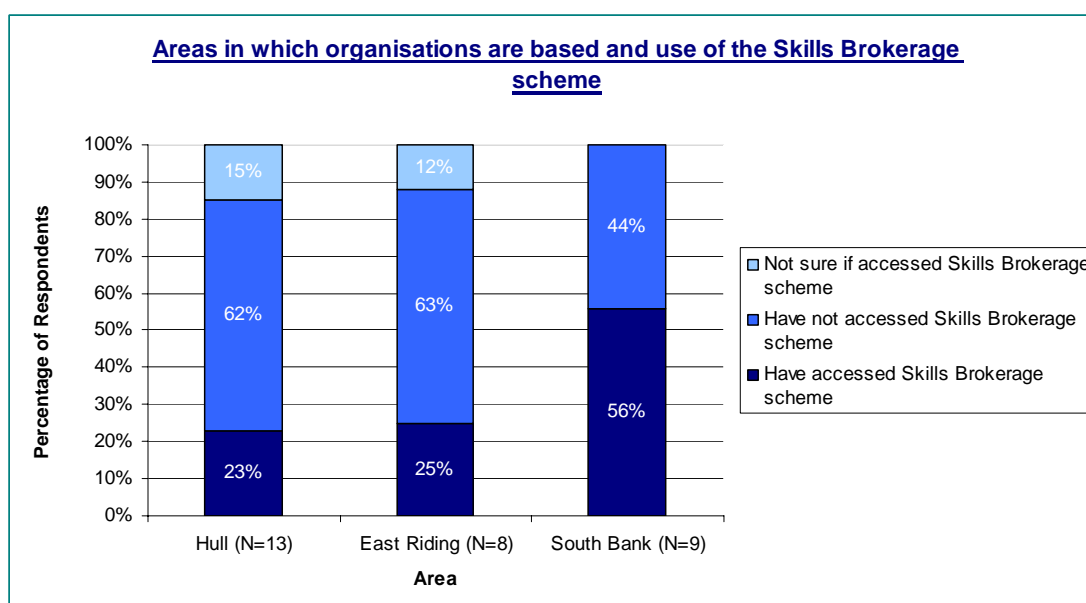
### Organisations and their activities

90% of the organisations which responded were registered charities. Just under half also indicated that they were local voluntary groups while 2 organisations were a branch of a national organisation and 2 were informal groups with a written constitution.

Organisations which responded were located in different areas as follows:

Hull	13
East Riding (including Beverley, Bridlington, Flamborough, York and Goole)	8
Grimsby	5
Other towns on the South Bank (including Barton, Scunthorpe and Immingham)	4

This was cross tabulated to compare locality of organisations which had and had not accessed the Skills Brokerage scheme as demonstrated on the graph below.



Areas of work were diverse and covered accommodation/housing, arts, environment/conservation, economic and community development, training, health, overseas aid and sports/recreation.

Main activities were the provision of services and provision of advice/information and advocacy.

### **Service User Groups**

The above activities were mainly targeted towards specific groups such as asylum seekers/refugees/ethnic minorities, substance abusers, carers and those with a disability or illness. There were also several organisations that provided services specifically for children and young people, women or the elderly.

Numbers of service users in one year ranged from 30 to 15,000 with 59% of organisations having less than 500 service users in a year. Only 4% had 10,000 or more service users in a year.

Numbers of attendances in one year ranged from 100 to 22,000 with 73% of the organisations having over 1,000 attendances per year.

90% of organisations stated that the number of episodes of service offered per year had increased since 2003.

### **Staff Resources**

93% of the organisations employed paid staff with numbers ranging from 2 to 32 staff members. The majority of organisations employed fewer than 10 members of staff with the average number of paid staff being 9. 52% of organisations felt that the number of paid staff had increased since 2003. No change was noted by 38% of organisations.

93% of the organisation employed volunteers and numbers ranged from 1 to 500 with the majority of organisations employing less than 20 volunteers. The average number of volunteers per organisation was 37. The vast majority of volunteers were part-time. 52% of the organisations felt that the number of volunteers had increased. No change was noted by 35% of organisations.

All organisations had trustees with numbers ranging from 3 to 15 and half of the organisations had 10 or more trustees. Half of the respondents felt there had been no change in numbers of trustees while the remainder were evenly split between increased and decreased numbers.

## **Quality Assurance**

51.4% of organisations either used a recognised quality assurance (QA) system or were working towards one and several organisations used more than one system. The main ones listed were PQASSO (8), Quality Mark (4), Investors in People (2), Matrix Accreditation (1), Quality Assessment Framework for Supporting People (1) and Croquet (1). Other ways in which organisations monitored quality were through monitoring forms, internal and external audits, supervision and appraisal, observation of service delivery and feedback from service users.

Of those who did not use a recognised quality assurance system there was an even split between wanting to implement one and not being sure at 45.5% each. Only one organisation did not want to implement a QA system.

As expected, the challenges in implementing a system included time and resources with several people commenting on the costs of the programmes and the difficulties in keeping up to date with it once achieved. Other challenges included lack of knowledge and support, lack of motivation of volunteers as they *“join “to do” not to develop portfolios and be assessed”* and staff attitude to change.

Ways in which organisations felt they could be assisted in the process included having increased money, time and energy. Some organisations felt that consultancy and more information about the different systems and what they involve would be useful especially if provided in house at minimal cost. A few organisations stated that due to the time involved they would require a member of staff who could dedicate their time to this work.

## **8. VIEWS OF ORGANISATIONS REGARDING TRAINING AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR SKILLS BROKERAGE SCHEME**

### **Training Budgets and Delivery**

65.4% of organisations that responded had a training budget.

For over 60% of these organisations this budget had increased since 2003. For 35.5% it had stayed the same. One organisation had lost their budget by 2005 due to a funding crisis. Two organisations had gained a budget by 2005 and one of these was due to a grant accessed via the Skills Brokerage scheme.

	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Average</i>
<i>2003-2004</i>	£500	£4,000	£1,554.55
<i>2005-2006</i>	£175	£3,500	£1,514.58

Organisations offered training to all groups including staff, volunteers, trustees and service users. Where staff and volunteers were employed, training was offered by over 85% of organisations. Levels of trustee and service user training were not as high with the former being offered in 63% of organisations and the latter offered in 56% of organisations.

Training was delivered in a variety of ways with 89% of organisations using in house training and 79% using training delivered by other voluntary organisations. Only 3 organisations used either correspondence or e-learning. Other ways of delivering training included via statutory partners, by the national society, by universities and by providers of specific topics.

Where in house training was used, 40% were offering all or some of their courses as accredited. Training qualifications held by staff included City & Guilds 7303 and 7307 (6), OCN Training the Trainer (5), PGCE (post graduate certificate in education 3), ECDL (1), NVQs and NVCs level 3 and 4 (2) and qualifications indicating competency specific to area of work.

7% of organisations were not sure if they made use of training consultants and of the remainder there was an almost even split between using consultants and not using consultants.

89% of organisations felt there had not been an increase in e-learning since 2003 and few organisations identified any other changes in training delivery since 2003. Changes which were identified included an increase in accredited qualifications, an increase in in-house training for specific topics, and an increase in informal IT training provision for service users.

### **Learning Opportunities**

59% of organisations felt that learning opportunities had increased for staff and volunteers and only 3% identified that this had decreased. Reasons for this increase included more emphasis on training in funded projects (included in bids), an increase in projects, an increase in staff, more frequent training sessions for volunteers, changes in management, legislation, increased awareness of raising professional standards and a more professional approach to service delivery. Reasons for the decrease included lack of overall funding with pressure of work demands. Where it stayed the same, reasons included having a similar budget, lack of funds to increase training, use of a rolling programme and limited requirements.

63% of organisations felt that learning opportunities had increased for service users. For organisations that had specifically identified that they offered training to users this increased to 80%. Reasons for this included increased provision for basic skills training needs, an increase in numbers of workshops and projects, an increase in service users, a staff or volunteer coordinator in post to coordinate training, increased funding and publicity. In cases where it had decreased this was due to financial difficulties.

The perceptions of learning opportunities were cross tabulated to investigate whether there were differences between organisations which had and had not accessed the Skills Brokerage scheme, but no significant differences were found.

Many organisations seemed to struggle to complete the question concerning other learning and/or training needs identified. However, those that did suggested ongoing needs within the areas of trainer development and IT. There were also several

mentions of policy and procedure such as health and safety, child protection, and human resources. Another area which was suggested was working with clients with disability or mental health or learning difficulties and another covered personal development such as time and stress management. Other needs tended to be specific to the activities of the organisation for example fork lift driving, horticulture and carers issues.

Constraints to finding the right opportunities were listed as cost or lack of funding, lack of time, difficulties accessing the location and difficulties finding appropriate courses. One individual had a concern about paying for training and then finding it to be irrelevant and another mentioned a difficulty with volunteers not wanting to attend courses especially on their own.

### **Views of those using the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme**

Of the thirty organisations that completed the questionnaire, 20 stated that they were accessing Humberside Learning Consortium but only 10 stated that they accessed the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme. When compared to actual registrations records 19 of the organisations had made use of the scheme in the past. This indicates a potential issue re knowledge of the scheme. This was despite an accompanying leaflet which was sent out with the second batch of questionnaires.

However, of those who knew that they had used the scheme, 20% had used it more than once. Not surprisingly the majority had accessed the scheme in order to enhance training opportunities but other reasons included that there were free places available, that it met a current need, to update professional practices and as a compulsory element of another process.

The uptake of courses in the 5 priority areas is presented in the table overleaf together with identification of ongoing need.

<i>Training Area</i>	<i>Percentage of Organisations who made use of training in this area</i>	<i>Percentage of Organisations who identified a training need in this area</i>
Management & Leadership	40%	50%
Volunteer Management	Not yet available	30%
Trusteeship & Governance	30%	60%
Trainer Development	40%	40%
Community Development	30%	30%
Fundraising	10%	50%

Benefits of accessing the scheme were identified as being affordable (or free), achieving accredited training qualifications, accessible training for volunteers, improved service delivery, improved procedures and practices, clarifying ways of tackling shortcomings and realising that other organisations faced similar challenges. One organisation stated *“we are grateful for the £175 Humberside Learning Consortium grant that kicked us off towards training our community in neighbourhood management”*.

Some difficulties were experienced in accessing the scheme and these included money or funding for courses, time to release staff and insufficient notice of dates.

Levels of satisfaction were high with 88% stating that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the provision. One organisation was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the scheme.

### **Views of those not using the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme**

15 of the organisations which responded stated that they had not used the scheme. Another 2 were not sure if they had used it. 3 respondents did not complete this question. Of the 17, roughly half were not aware of the scheme prior to receiving the questionnaire. The other main reason for not utilising the scheme was that it was not based in their local area and that the distance to travel to Hull was not easily manageable. In addition, staff shortages placed restrictions on time for existing staff

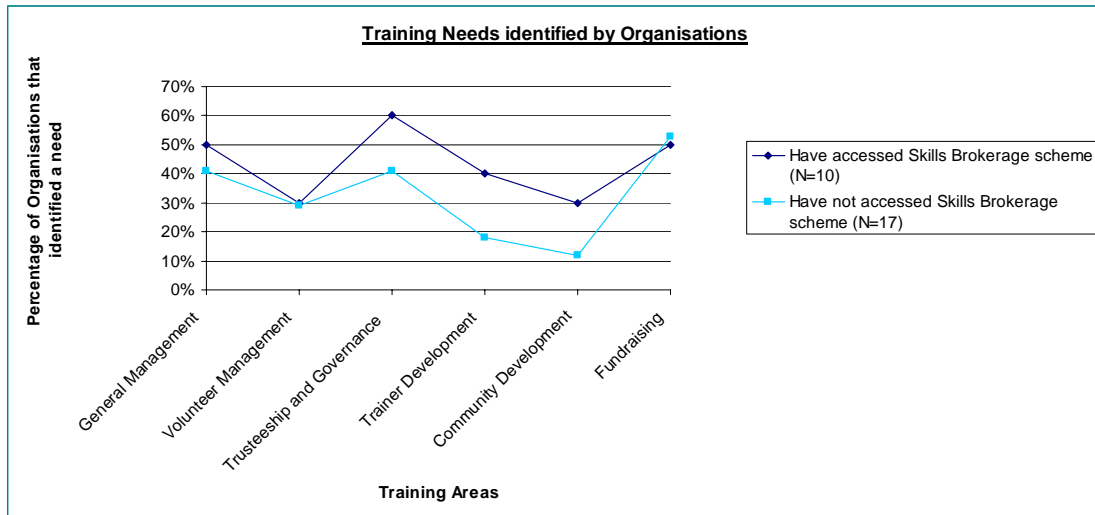
to attend training, and other commitments resulted in time and funding restrictions. One organisation stated that it had direct links with training providers.

Factors which would encourage organisations to make use of the scheme were identified as having more training delivered closer to the organisation or having the trainer come to them. Others requested more information about the scheme. Others felt that recent changes within their management would result in increased uptake in training. Although detail was not supplied as to reasons, the literature indicates that management commitment to learning is crucial in the development of a learning culture. Another respondent felt that there were not any current training needs but would take it up when a need was identified.

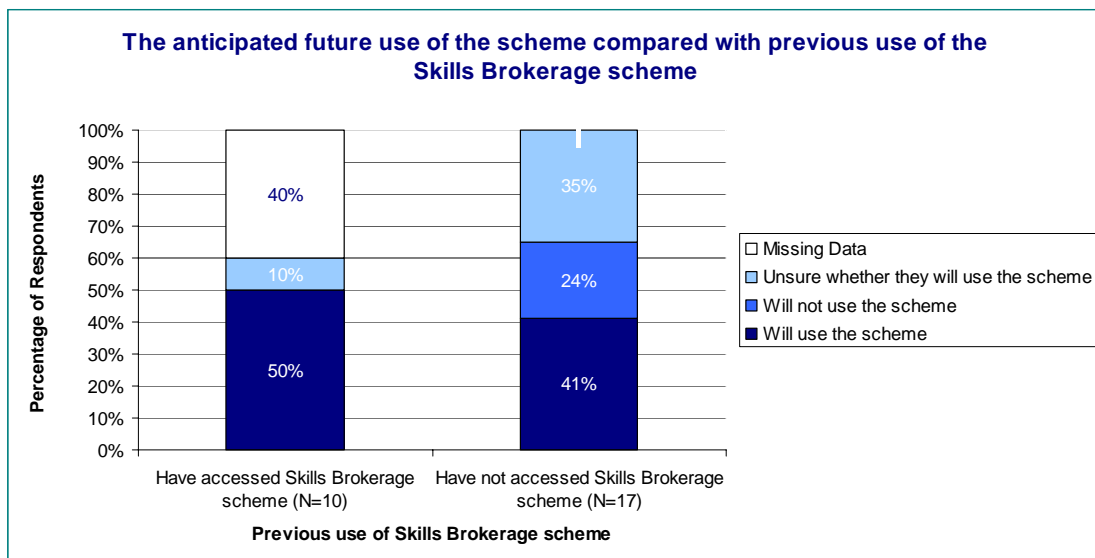
These organisations did identify some training needs and the results of this are shown below.

<i>Training Area</i>	<i>Percentage of Organisations who identified a training need in this area</i>
Management & Leadership	41%
Volunteer Management	29%
Trusteeship & Governance	41%
Trainer Development	18%
Community Development	12%
Fundraising	53%
Other	38%
No training Needs	6%

The following graph shows the training needs identified by both groups of organisations. As can be seen there is an overall higher level of identification of need in the organisations that have accessed the scheme in the past, but the areas of priority are the same in both groups.



43% of the organisations felt that they would use the scheme in the future as they needed training in certain areas. One organisation stated that a viable resource was now identified. Another 36% were not sure whether or not they would access it saying it would depend on what was on offer as well as their funding and staffing situation. 21% stated they would not use it and this was for reasons of limited time, lack of funding and specific needs not suitable to be met by the scheme. Another issue was that of volunteers and trustees not wanting to travel and particularly of trustees being elderly. Anticipation of future use of the scheme was cross tabulated with past use of the scheme and it was found that a greater percentage of those who had had previous experience of the scheme felt that they would use it again in the future.



## **9. PROFILE AND VIEWS OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE ACCESSED THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR SKILLS BROKERAGE SCHEME**

### **Profile**

Responses were received from people holding a wide range of positions. As such, identified roles were diverse spanning hands on service delivery right through to project management and strategic planning. The most commonly identified roles were in training & development, administration and project management. Job titles included those of Development worker, Project Worker, Training Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, Administrator, Manager, Chief Executive, Director, Chairperson and Honorary Secretary among others.

86% of people who responded were paid staff whereas only 13% were volunteers with 1% not providing this information.

### **Participation in training and learning opportunities**

It was evident from the responses that there is much activity occurring in this area with individuals taking a keen interest in growth and development.

Training areas were diverse and related to a person's role. They included those areas offered by the Skills Brokerage scheme of Management & Leadership, Trainer Development, Community Development and Fundraising as well as additional areas of Business Management & Administration IT, Quality Assurance, Policy and Procedure, subjects specific to organisational activity and other subjects. A list of the courses which individuals have participated in is presented in Appendix A. This list is not exhaustive as some respondents did not specify actual courses rather providing more vague responses such as *"too many to mention"*. It is interesting that the largest groups are those of Policy and Procedure (many of which tend to be mandatory), and specialist subjects.

The majority of respondents had participated in between 1 and 4 courses/workshops over the previous year including those accessed via the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme and those accessed elsewhere. 27% had attended only one course and 4% had accessed over 10 courses or workshops. Only 2% (one individual) had not participated in any courses at all. There was no

significant difference in the number of courses accessed between those who had used the skills brokerage scheme and those who had not.

It was expected that 100% of the responses would indicate that they had used the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme as emails were sent only to those who had provided contact details to Humberside Learning Consortium following a course. However, this was true for only 63% (N=35) of the responses. A further 25% stated that they had made use of the Humberside Learning Consortium but not the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme. 13 % stated that they had not used either the Humberside Learning Consortium or the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme. Reasons for this discrepancy could indicate a lack of awareness or knowledge of the scheme. It is also possible that in some cases an organisational email address was provided which may then have been picked up by another member of that organisation rather than the person who attended a course through the Skills Brokerage scheme.

Of those who stated that they had accessed a Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage course, the majority had accessed only one course, although 26% had accessed 2 or 3 courses. The maximum number of courses identified was 5 and these included separate short workshops.

The breakdown of attendance of courses, as reported by the portion of the sample that had used the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme, is shown below.

<b><i>Name of Course</i></b>	<b><i>Percentage of respondents who accessed each course (N=35)</i></b>
Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) Awards	11%
University Certificate in Voluntary Sector Management	6%
Access to Management Development Awards	0%
City and Guilds stage 1 & 2 Teaching Awards	17%
OCN accredited Training the Trainers (4 days)	11%
OCN accredited Community Development programme	9%
OCN accredited course in Fundraising (4-days)	9%

Non-accredited short workshops	20%
Other	31%

Other courses included a Business Planning course (4 day), OCN Level 3 Introduction to Marketing, CIB Giving Funding Advice (4 day), City & Guilds Stage 1 Certificate in Delivering Learning, OCN Tutor Assessor Award and Internal Moderators Award.

Short workshops included Organisational Development and Training Plans, PQASSO Mentor Training, Outcomes Focus, Taster Day for OCN Marketing, Trustees Workshop, Health and Safety Introduction Certificates, Minute Taking Skills, Interactive Whiteboard Training, Developing Ourselves, Hull Strategic Representation and Training the Trainer 1-day workshop.

### **Experiences of the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme**

#### Accessing the scheme

People had heard about the scheme from a variety of sources with the most common being the Humberside Learning Consortium newsletter and emails. Other ways of hearing about the scheme included through LAG group meetings, ERVAS, VANEL and Hull City Council Area Coordination Team.

Reasons for accessing the scheme were as expected and included to access and undergo training for personal and professional development. Additional comments were that the scheme offered appropriate courses at low cost and high quality. Others sought advice regarding development and mentioned specific areas of training in which the scheme offered courses. One comment was *“it offered a course that looked particularly relevant to my development. Nothing similar was available elsewhere locally. That it was a pilot scheme and without costs was a bonus.”*

Difficulties accessing the scheme included the following:

- Transport – this was problematic especially for those not working in Hull as courses were only available on the North Bank. It was also difficult for these individuals to access the resources of the Humberside Learning Consortium as they are far away

- Time and resources – people stated that time on a course was time spent away from the job. Others had to stay at work to deal with emergencies or missed part of courses due to illness
- Late notice of dates of courses was problematic for some
- Confusion of dates of courses, for example being double booked was also a problem
- One person felt that the delivery of the course was poor and that there had been a lack of support and guidance
- Course wanted was not available
- Lack of awareness of needs of a person with a hearing impairment and willingness to look at different ways to meet the needs. Mixed experiences with Humberside Learning Consortium staff

### Appropriateness of Courses

94% of students felt that the course attended was very relevant (78%) or relevant (16%) to their work with some comments being *“all about what I do everyday”* and *“highly relevant to all aspects of my working life (paid or unpaid)”*.

It was evident from the responses and examples given that people were finding that they were able to make use of the knowledge and skills gained in practical ways. Some of the most descriptive examples follow.

*“The PQASSO training was very useful and items covered in the course are now incorporated in our PQASSO team meetings”*

*“The work on HR has informed recent revisions of our organisation’s policies and procedures”*

*“The project management module has helped with a recent series of funding applications to continue one of our projects and also led to the development of a new project idea – which may or may not proceed depending upon the direction that our Trustees wish to take our organisation”*

*“It really helped towards understanding Management processes and contributed to the newly written 5year business plan that we produced as a staff team. I shared much of my new knowledge with other staff”*

*“By using session plans for each of my classes I’m able to offer more structured sessions. This is beneficial for the student but mostly for me, as I am more in control of the content of each lesson and can make sure I don’t have to carry any of the subjects over to the next class”*

*“Being able to liaise with people met on the courses, further understanding of sector and funding available, improving the promotion of our services and advice that I am able to pass onto others”*

*“The skills that I gained from this course have given me confidence to implement new marketing and publicity opportunities and develop organisational literature”*

*“I now feel competent in delivering short courses to adults. Additionally, I have made use of and referred trainers to the library of training materials”*

Those who found the courses irrelevant (equating to 2 individuals) referred to the courses in Voluntary Management and Fundraising. In the case of the former, it was felt that the level of the course was pitched at someone new to management rather than those already in senior management positions. This individual found that she did not learn anything new and found that the assignments were time consuming when trying to balance an already heavy workload. The other person did not provide a reason.

#### Services used in addition to accessing courses

The additional services offered by the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme had been used by just over half of those who had accessed the scheme. The most used service was the information and advice available on the website. However several individuals had also made use of the Trainers Conference, Quarterly Trainers Network Meetings, and the library of training materials and guides.

## Benefits of the scheme

Benefits of the scheme to the individual were identified as:

- Access to relevant local training of good quality
- Increased skills and knowledge
- An additional route to learning
- Networking opportunities
- Flexible learning
- Increased productivity (benefit to organisation)
- Increased professionalism
- Personal development
- Achievement of qualification
- Employment
- Learning about other organisations in the area

These are illustrated by the following quotes:

*"I believe that it has caused a course – that was very relevant to my work – to have taken place that would not otherwise have happened. More generally, the scheme seems to make a good job of identifying and delivering courses that are relevant to the VCS and keenly priced"*

*"Giving me a clear and concise way to approach a situation and thus improve my work"*

*"Meeting new people within the voluntary sector and widening the strings to my bow!"*

*"Humberside Learning Consortium has given me another route to learning that I was not aware of 18 months ago"*

## Satisfaction and Suggested Improvements

Overall 97% of students were either very satisfied (61%) or satisfied (36) with the scheme. One individual was dissatisfied (this was the same individual who had explained why the course undertaken was irrelevant to her) and the remaining respondents did not indicate their levels of satisfaction.

Suggestions for improvement of the scheme included:

- More courses; greater range and extended to other areas of interest
- More local training venues especially North Lincolnshire or the south bank
- All trainers should have diversity training in the fullest sense
- More monitoring and facilitation of hard to reach learners
- Keep costs low or none
- Increased marketing with more information available regarding the courses
- Increased information regarding course content and demands before the course especially for the longer ones. This may help to decrease drop out rate
- The word “brokerage” is not useful
- Increased networking opportunities for organisations to discuss the needs of the sector

### **Barriers faced when accessing training and learning opportunities**

Difficulties faced in accessing the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme were echoed in the identification of general barriers to training and were overwhelmingly those of time and money.

Issues around time were that time spent training was time away from the job that often pressures of work would not allow. People also found that fitting in training demands along with balancing work, family and other commitments was difficult. This is clearly demonstrated by the following quote: *“The main barrier for me personally is that of time. I manage a project single-handedly and devote much of my time to seeking out further funding in order that the project can continue. Training, therefore, often comes low on my list of priorities”*

Many individuals stated that they worked for a small charity and therefore they or the organisation could not afford to pay for training. There were also indications of funding complications with restrictions on funding streams to pay for training. This was overcome in some instances by using in-house training.

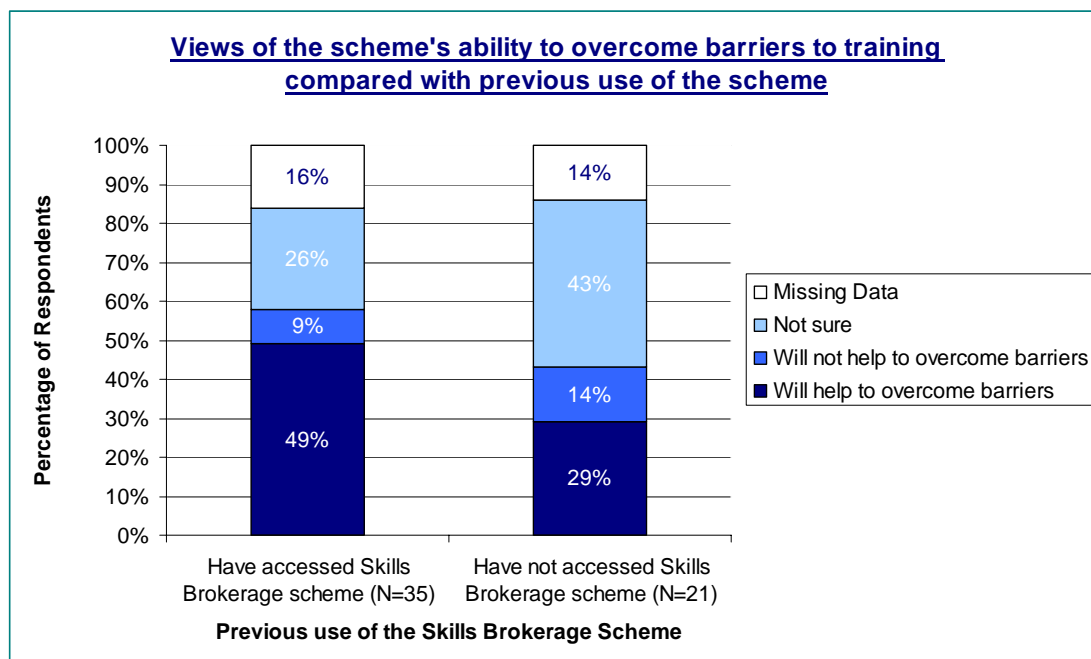
Other barriers which were mentioned included finding out about what is available, the suitability of courses, specific training needs, the location of courses and travel implications. As stated by one individual *“Travel to and from courses is a problem as it takes a good hour to get into Hull. If courses could be offered on occasion in this*

area it would greatly enhance my own and other staffs opportunity to develop further skills”.

Ill health and needs due to an impairment or disability (size of groups, awareness of tutors) was another barrier and one individual stated that “finding courses that are not too boring” was a challenge.

Some individuals felt there were no barriers and one stated that any barrier could be overcome as long as the individual’s commitment to personal development was strong.

Almost half of respondents who completed this question felt that the scheme would be able to assist them in overcoming these barriers. This was further broken down into those who had and had not accessed the scheme. A greater percentage of those who had accessed the scheme felt that it would be possible for it to overcome some of the barriers as opposed to those who had not accessed the scheme.



Common suggestions were around the two main barriers of time and money. It was felt that increased provision in other areas such as Grimsby or the South Bank, Goole and Withernsea would be helpful and one person mentioned web-based learning as a possible alternative. It was felt that the scheme could assist in overcoming the barrier of cost by providing opportunity and assistance to access funding grants or sponsorship, by offering subsidised courses or bursary places with

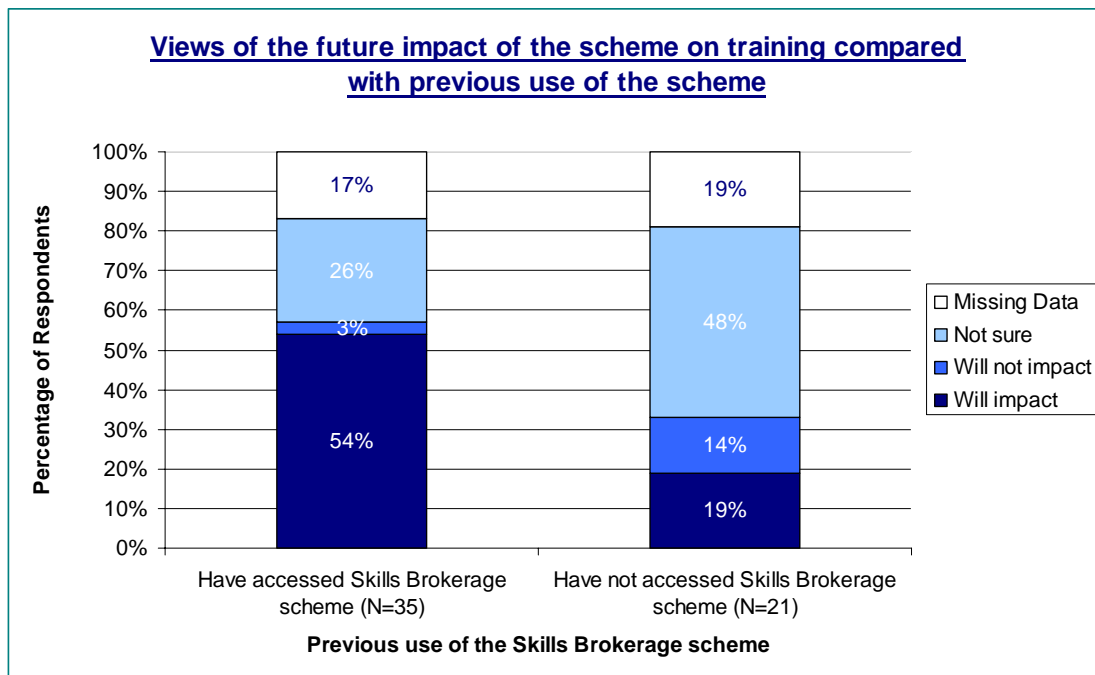
no costs, by providing assistance in finding funding and by reimbursing travel expenses. Some individuals commented that the scheme had already assisted by offering affordable and funded local opportunities.

The scheme had also been found to have helpful tutors who could enthuse and this was identified as an important feature. However, more creative and flexible ways of working in relation to delivery of training, understanding access needs and making contact with those experiencing them were advocated to help in meeting the needs. 39% expressed uncertainty of the scheme's capabilities to assist in overcoming barriers while only 13% felt that the scheme could not overcome barriers. Reasons for this were that not even the scheme could make more hours in a day and that it was each organisation's responsibility to secure contracts and projects to pay for training or to change funding policies.

### **Future Aspirations**

As expected by the above findings several respondents indicated that they were unable to detail specific learning plans due to uncertainties regarding funding. However, there were many comments from these individuals that they would like to develop more training for themselves and other staff and volunteers if they could overcome the limitation of finances. Only one person stated that *"I would very much like a break from training for a while"* indicating the additional pressures which participation in training exerts on daily life. Despite these barriers and difficulties plans for the future are evident with many individuals identifying learning goals and specific courses which they want to attend. A list of these courses can be found in Appendix A alongside the list of courses already participated in. The most popular areas are those of Policy and Procedure, specialist subjects, Management and Leadership (including Project Management) and Trainer Development.

Half of all respondents who completed this question felt that the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme would impact on their future training and development plans, but a further 41% were unsure. This was broken down into those who had and had not accessed the scheme. A greater percentage of those who had accessed the scheme felt that it would impact on their future than those who had not accessed the scheme.



Ways in which it was envisaged that the scheme could assist included:

- Keeping up to date with what is on offer
- Seeking support and assistance when training needs are identified
- Specific needs could be fulfilled
- Valuable asset for updates and development when no training budget
- Assist with career progression and personal development

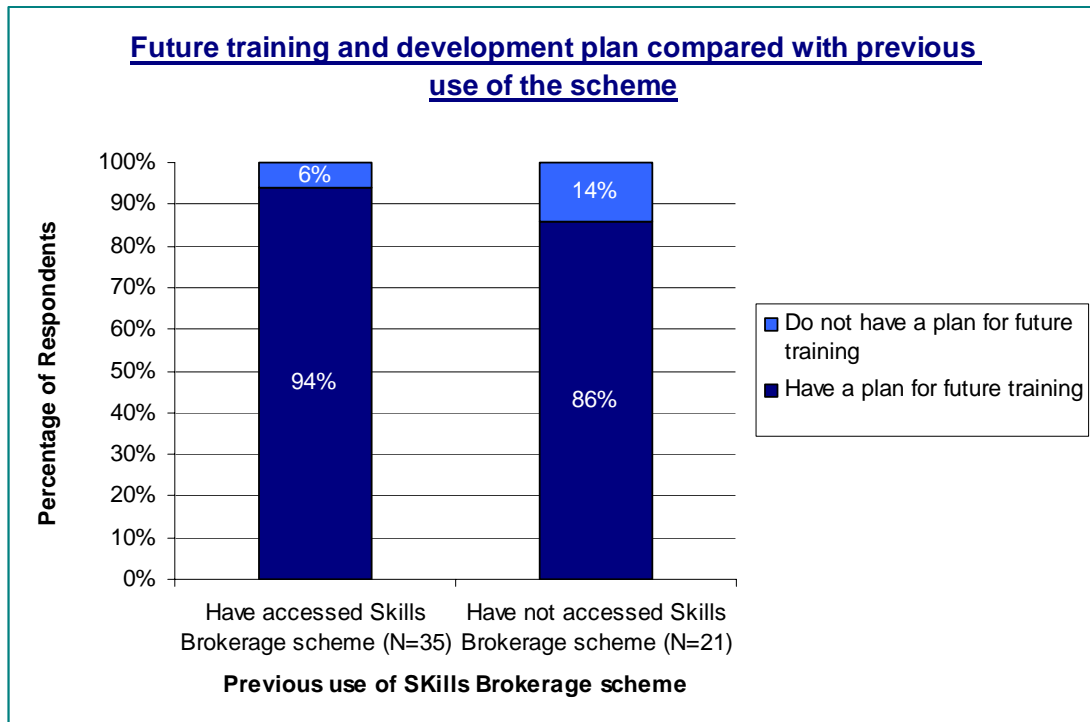
Some also saw a wider picture and felt that the scheme would impact on organisations by more volunteers and staff taking up training, complimenting existing courses, and becoming part of training provision when staff increased. One organisation planned to work with Humberside Learning Consortium re local delivery.

Reasons for stating that the scheme would not impact on future training included insufficient staff to undergo training, irrelevant courses as staff were more qualified than courses offered, and generally irrelevant courses.

Several others wanted more information before making comment on this topic or stated that the impact would depend on what was on offer.

Whether individuals had a plan for the future and their use of the Skills Brokerage scheme was cross tabulated. It was found that a slightly higher percentage of those

who had used Skills Brokerage had a plan for future training compared with those who had not used this scheme and this is shown on the graph below.



## **10. DISCUSSION**

### **Profile of Respondents**

As can be seen by the findings, the organisations that responded to the questionnaire represent the diverse nature of the sector with different types of organisations, different areas of work, types of activities, target groups and geographical locations within Humberside. In addition, numbers of staff, volunteers and service users varied greatly but the average numbers indicate that the organisations accessed are small to medium rather than large in size. No major difference was noted between those that accessed Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme and those that did not access the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme in terms of numbers of staff, numbers of volunteers, numbers of service users, levels of training budget or use of recognised quality assurance systems. It was anticipated that there would be a difference depending on the location of the organisations. The evaluators expected a greater percentage of organisations based in Hull to be accessing the scheme. However, the responses indicate that there were more organisations from the South Bank who had used Skills Brokerage than those from Hull itself. However, the generalisation of this finding is limited by the low response rate to the questionnaire.

### **Changes noted since 2003**

Organisations have faced significant changes in the past two years related to legislation and policy applicable to the voluntary sector. Part of this evaluation was to investigate the changes which organisations have experienced on a practical level. This has been done only on a superficial basis due to the number of topics involved. It is hoped that the findings may inspire further investigation into these areas.

Some of the changes noted by the majority of organisations include:

- Increased demands on service delivery. This is indicated by increased numbers of episodes of service offered per year experienced by 90% of the organisations
- Increased numbers of paid staff. It seems that there has been an increase in paid employment within the sector although 40% of organisations indicated that there had been no change mainly due to reasons of funding

- Increased numbers of volunteers: Figures were similar to above and although an increase in volunteers had been noted, there was also a high percentage of organisations who felt this had been static
- Increased use of a recognised quality assurance system: Over half of the organisations were using a recognised system or working towards one. It seems that there is an awareness of these systems and a realisation of the need for one to be in place and this was confirmed as only one of the remaining organisations did not want to implement a recognised system. The systems cited were those expected, with PQASSO being the most commonly used.
- Increase in training budget: Almost two thirds of respondents had a training budget and of these the majority stated it had increased. Only one organisation had experienced a decrease in budget. However the average amount for training remains relatively low at an average of just over £1,500 for organisations averaging 9 staff and 37 volunteers. Difficulties finding funds was one of the strongest barriers experienced to accessing training
- Increased learning opportunities for staff and volunteers: Reasons for the increase in opportunities included the above. More staff, more volunteers and more projects resulted in the need to create more learning opportunities. This was enabled by more emphasis on training in funding of projects with funding being included in bids, legislation and emphasis on professionalism in service delivery.
- Increased learning opportunities for service users: This mirrored the reasons for increase in staff and volunteer learning opportunities with organisations citing increased service users, increased projects and workshops, increased funding, increased publicity and having someone in post to coordinate training. In both cases decreases in opportunities were the result of lack of funds,
- Changes in delivery of training: In-house training remains the most popular way of delivering training with uptake of courses offered by other organisations following as a close second. There was a clear majority who thought that the use of e-learning had not changed since 2003 and this was further indicated by only one organisation identifying e-learning as a method of training delivery. Although the method of delivery has perhaps not changed there is an indication that there may be an increase in the availability of accredited courses as 40% of organisations who deliver in-house training are offering accredited courses. The staff that deliver these courses have a variety of qualifications and this would indicate that the number of trainers and consultants within the sector is increasing. There was

no clear majority regarding the use of training consultants with almost half of the organisations using them and a similar number not using them.

As indicated by the literature there is a growing emphasis on having an appropriately skilled workforce and it is suggested that Skills Brokerage schemes would have assisted organisations in coping with these changes indirectly by promoting workforce development.

### **Perceived strengths and limitations of the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme**

The organisations and individuals who had used the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme identified numerous strengths of the scheme. These included:

- **Affordability:** several respondents commented that costs were reasonable and assistance with funding had been obtained
- **Good quality:** it was felt that the scheme offered an avenue for accessing courses of good quality
- **Provision of accredited training** enabling individuals to achieve recognised qualifications
- **Accessibility to volunteers** (this could not be verified due to the low numbers of responses received from volunteers and it is not known how many of the original sample were volunteers)
- **Flexible approach to learning**

Although not identified by respondents, the scheme has some elements which were identified within the literature as important to successful delivery. These include autonomy from organisations accessing the scheme, experience of the sector which it is serving and a single sector focus.

The scheme does face some limitations and again these were identified from personal and organisational perspectives. These included:

- **Location of the training:** this was seen to be the key limitation as it is difficult for organisations which are not based in Hull to access the training

- Administrative issues such as late notice for dates and occasional double bookings. Several respondents felt it would be useful to have more information about the courses prior to the start date.
- Courses which are available: some respondents indicated that a greater range of courses would be useful
- Disability awareness or diversity training for tutors: one individual mentioned that tutors should have more training in this regard

Other challenges identified in the literature did not seem to be evident in the case of this scheme as there were no indications of issues with attitudes to learning or tensions with the role of the broker.

### **Outcomes of Skills Brokerage for Voluntary Sector Staff and Impact on Future Aspirations**

The benefits of the scheme were identified on personal and organisational levels as assisting in increasing skills and knowledge and as a result contributing to improved service delivery, increased productivity and greater professionalism of organisations and the sector. One individual indicated that they had gained employment as a result of the training participated in via the scheme and organisations benefit from a more skilled pool of potential employees. Another key benefit recognised from both the organisational and individual perspective was that it created networking opportunities and encouraged sharing of experiences between voluntary organisations. This was seen to facilitate a sense of cohesion within the sector.

Training and learning within the sector appears to be active with many individuals having a plan for their future development and able to identify specific courses in which to engage. However, it is noted that one of the busiest areas is that of Policy and Procedure. As many of these courses are mandatory, they usually take priority over other development. Time to engage in other training may therefore be further limited due to the number of “mandatory” topics which have to be covered. The other area which shows much activity is that of “Specialist subjects” related to organisational activity. As these tend to be individual to an organisation it would be difficult to provide for these needs in a skills brokerage scheme unless the scheme was able to work with the different organisations on a smaller scale. Ongoing needs are indicated in the areas of Trainer Development and Management & Leadership, with the addition of Project Management to the latter. Organisations also made

mention of other needs related to working with client groups with physical disability or mental health issues.

Individuals who had used the scheme recognised it as a valuable resource. They viewed it as complimentary to other training provision within the area rather than the only avenue for training (see Appendix B for a list of training providers which have been accessed). Over half had also benefited from additional services and resources offered by the scheme, such as the website. It has not been possible to establish whether the scheme itself has had an impact on future aspirations as changing requirements within the sector and nationally also contribute to an increased emphasis on competence, best practice and professionalism.

### **Why some organisations do not use Skills Brokerage**

Despite the promotional and publicity activities which take place there appears to be a general lack of awareness of the Humberside Learning Consortium Skills Brokerage scheme within the sector with some confusion by organisations and individuals as to whether they had made use of the scheme or not. It is suspected that some may have participated in the courses but not realised or remembered that the courses were accessed via this scheme. A comment made by one individual regarding the “unhelpfulness” of the word “brokerage” may give an indication of a possible reason for this.

Lack of awareness is also a major factor in why organisations had not accessed the scheme and several of these indicated that they would like some more information about it. However, there were a few organisations that had been aware of the scheme and yet still felt that it would not be useful for them. In these cases reasons were given as:

- Location: training based in Hull and the cost, time and organisation of travel was not easily manageable
- Staff shortages resulting in insufficient time for existing staff to attend courses
- Other time and money restrictions
- Having direct links with training providers themselves
- Courses offered not applicable for staff and volunteers of certain organisations

## Limitations of the Study

The main limitation for this study has been the relatively low response rate from organisations and individuals to the questionnaires despite a follow up phone call to organisations and repeated email reminders to individuals. The following factors have been identified as impacting on the response rate.

For postal questionnaires:

- Several organisations reported that they had recently moved premises leading to issues around change of address and busyness with moving
- Some organisations reported a change in staff resulting in questionnaires not reaching the intended recipients
- In addition some of the staff to whom the questionnaires had been sent were on annual or maternity leave and therefore had not completed the questionnaire
- Recent changes within the management or structure of organisations also seemed to be a reason why some organisations had not completed the questionnaire
- Organisations also reported a lack of time (often due to a lack of staff) to complete the questionnaire often due to pressures with completing funding bids
- Several organisations reported not receiving the questionnaire. In addition some organisations reported that they had returned it yet Consortium Solutions had not received it. This indicates possible limitations with the postal system.
- Confusion between the paper and email questionnaire

For email questionnaires:

- There was no way of knowing whether email addresses were still active or relevant considering above reported staff changes
- Some addresses appeared to be organisational addresses rather than an individual's address within an organisation. The email may not therefore have reached the person who attended the course
- The nature of email inbox may have resulted in low responses. Some individuals may not have received the email due to full inboxes. Also, people tend to respond to emails immediately or not at all but there is a limit to how many times a reminder can be sent
- Possible problems with the email systems may have resulted from emails in both directions not getting through
- Confusion between paper and email questionnaires

The latter limitation occurred with both paper and email questionnaires. As the evaluators were gathering the data it became evident that the same person within an organisation was in receipt of both questionnaires. The evaluators had expected that these would be different individuals and the questionnaires were designed in that light. This was not perceived earlier by the evaluators due to limited access to contact details. As a result recipients became confused not realising that the two questionnaires were different and usually only returning one of them. It also meant that organisations or individuals who had returned one did not understand why they were receiving a further reminder. If the two questionnaires could have been combined in some way a better response rate may have been achieved.

A final limitation relates to the sampling. As the evaluators relied on Humberside Learning Consortium to provide email addresses and organisations, it is not known how Humberside Learning Consortium collects data for its register or how robust its database is. There is the potential that some organisations that are registered were left out. The email address list also included some Humberside Learning Consortium staff which may have introduced an element of bias to the results.

## **11. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study has set out to explore the experiences of the voluntary sector relating to training and learning opportunities and particularly the impact which the Skills Brokerage scheme has made on the sector. It has provided some indication of the changes experienced by the sector over the past 2 years, for example the increased demand on service delivery and changes in the delivery of training. If a similar future study was to take place, it would be recommended that contact be made in person (particularly with organisations) rather than via a postal questionnaire. Although this would be time consuming it would allow for greater representation as well as deeper and more meaningful exploration of the issues and experiences of voluntary organisations.

The findings suggest that organisations and individuals working within the organisations hold similar views regarding training and learning opportunities. Overall there is an awareness of the importance of training to contribute to personal and professional development and there is a substantial amount of training activity taking place over a diverse number of areas.

However, the sector still identifies major challenges in accessing training and learning opportunities and these are not surprisingly demands on time, funding requirements and issues around sustainability. These three factors appear repeatedly and impact on all areas of work, including aspects of staffing, implementation of quality standards and uptake of training opportunities. There also seems to be evidence of a vicious cycle in that each factor impacts on the other – lack of funding may result in reduced staff which in turn results in lack of time for existing staff to attend courses. Uncertainties regarding future funding and sustainability may result in prioritisation of activities by organisations and the development of staff, who may not be employed in the long term may become a low priority. It would be unrealistic to expect a pilot scheme which offers training opportunities to be able to overcome these barriers which are a recurring theme in the sector, or not to be subject to the far reaching effects of these concerns.

However, there is an encouraging note in that the majority of organisations have actually identified an increase in staffing, volunteers, attendances and projects/workshops on offer. This would indicate that despite the ongoing struggle

against the above mentioned barriers, there are positive changes occurring within the sector.

Other trends have been noted within this study such as an increase in training budgets and the use of quality assurance. At this point no clear differences between those accessing the Skills Brokerage scheme and those which are not accessing the scheme could be found in terms of the above trends, the organisational profiles or the uptake of training. However, there are some interesting observations which may be worthwhile revisiting in the future. One of these observations is of a greater percentage of organisations using the scheme from the South Bank than from Hull. Another observation is a higher percentage of those who had accessed the scheme having a plan for their future training. This may indicate greater motivation and ownership for their professional development. There were many positive comments from those who had accessed the scheme with over half identifying a future positive impact of the scheme on their learning. This scheme is viewed as complimentary to other existing training provision and as such it is a helpful and viable resource for the sector.

There are some recommendations which could be made to assist the scheme in addressing the needs and challenges experienced by the sector and in reaching those who are not already accessing the scheme. However, it is recognised that the scheme will have its own restrictions in terms of budget, time and resources and that not all of these recommendations may be possible. However, the scheme would be encouraged to consider innovative and flexible ways of working within these restrictions in order to assist the sector in meeting ongoing needs.

- Training delivered in different localities within the sub-region to overcome barriers of travel and additional time and cost implications. This may also assist in overcoming the reported reluctance of volunteers to travel out of their area. Working with individual organisations re best options for provision may be very helpful for them
- Ongoing assistance with funding (with greater emphasis on this if at all possible) would assist organisations and individuals in overcoming the financial barrier
- Provision of a greater range of courses
- Tightening of administrative procedures in order to provide sufficient notice of dates and avoid confusions with bookings
- More information about courses and their demands available to the sector

- Increased training for tutors especially regarding disability awareness

In addition, there are some recommendations related to the apparent lack of awareness or understanding of the scheme by the sector. These include:

- Ongoing publicity perhaps with a drive to target organisations not yet in contact with Humberside Learning Consortium or the Skills Brokerage scheme
- Dissemination of very clear and simple information about the scheme and how it could be of assistance
- The comment by one individual regarding the term “brokerage” could be given consideration and a more obvious name chosen if this is possible within funding constraints. A catchy slogan may be an option if a name change is not possible
- It may also be helpful for the scheme to give some further thought to its role as broker as opposed to training provider as it is possible that this has also generated some confusion

Due to the diverse nature of the sector and the wide variety of training needs, the Skills Brokerage scheme is unlikely to be suitable for all organisations. However, it is felt that the scheme is a valuable resource for the sector and it is hoped that it can continue to support the needs of organisations and individuals working within the sector with regards to facilitation of workforce development. Finally, as indicated by the high levels of satisfaction from both organisations and individuals and the number of examples given indicating application of training in daily work activities, the scheme should also be commended on its flexibility and affordability to date, as well as the quality of courses on offer.

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **A List of Courses which respondents to the email questionnaire have participated in and plan to undertake in the future**

<i>Completed Courses in 2004-2005</i>	<i>Planned Courses for 2005-2006</i>
<b>Management and Leadership</b>	
Certificate in Management Level 3	Management Qualification (not specified) x4
NVQ Level 3 Management	NVQ Level 4 Management
Project management	ILM Management if based on South Bank University Certificate in Voluntary Sector Management
	Supervision x2
	Evaluation and Monitoring
	Project Management – not specified
	Prince 2 Project Management
<b>Business and Administration</b>	
OCN Introduction to Business Management	Further Business related courses – not specified
Degree in Business Management	Finance related accounts training
NVQ 2 Business Administration	Financial management training (Yorkshire First)
Business Planning by Crosby Community Action	
Business Planning – not specified	
Minute taking for voluntary sector via Sure Start	
<b>Marketing</b>	
NCVO Public Relations Master class	
Forging links with NE Lincolnshire Regional Media	
OCN Marketing	
<b>Trainer Development</b>	
City & Guilds 7303 Part 1	7307 Part 2 x4
Training the trainer	7407
OCN Internal Moderators Award x2	OCN Internal Moderators Award
OCN Tutors Assessors Award	Certificate of Education x2
PGCE	Completion of PGCE Training for teaching in FE colleges
IGEN Information, Advice and Guidance	BA in Education and Training
Observation of teaching and learning	Training qualification – not specified
Assessor Training – not specified	Assessor Training – not specified
Staff Coaching – not specified	

<i>Completed Courses in 2004-2005</i>	<i>Planned Courses for 2005-2006</i>
<b>Community Development Work</b>	
OCN Community Development Workers Skills	Masters degree in Regeneration/Community development and empowerment (help with finding a course would be appreciated)
Diploma in Social and Community studies	Degree in Social and Community Studies
Regen School	Regen School (Sheffield)
Volunteers Conference Investing in the Future	
<b>Fundraising</b>	
OCN Advising Voluntary groups on funding	Fundraising – not specified
OCN Funding advice workers course	Courses addressing the financial side of ERDF funding – help on match funding, apportioning costs, finance programs
OCN accredited grant makers course	
Fundraising course by Hull Doc	
Fundraising for the Voluntary Sector by VANEL	
Fundraising awareness – not specified	
<b>IT</b>	
ECDL	Degree in Computer Science
PowerPoint	Adobe PageMaker
Sage Passport	
Image Manipulation	
Video Editing	
SPSS computer based	
<b>Quality Assurance</b>	
Matrix Accreditation for the Organisation	
ALI Inspection Processes	
<b>Policy and Practice</b>	
CIEH Foundation Certificate in Health and Safety in the Workplace	Health and Safety x3
NEBOSH Certificate in Health and Safety	Child Protection x2
Health and Safety – not specified	Disability
Appraisal Training	Diversity Training
Assertiveness	Equal Opportunities
Data Protection	First Aid Refresher
Diversity x2	Manual Handling
Equal Opportunities	Mental Health
Fire awareness	Risk Assessment

<i>Completed Courses in 2004-2005</i>	<i>Planned Courses for 2005-2006</i>
Fire Extinguisher Training	
First Aid	
Food Hygiene	
Freedom of Information	
Lone worker training	
Recruitment and Selection	
Visual Impairment Awareness	
<b>Specialist</b>	
APIR Training	Areas of Law
Conflict Management	Benefits x2
Counselling/Therapeutic skills	Certificate in Mental Health Level 3
Credit Union courses - various	Drugs Training
Criminal Justice	Drivers Training
Drug Awareness and Training x2	MSc in Presentation Skills
Employment Law	Spiral Dynamics
Family links Nurturing Training	Supporting People Training
Football Coaching courses	Understanding Connexions
Introducing Connexions	Welfare Rights System
Minibus and the Law	
PDR Training	
Restorative Conferencing Practitioner	
Reiki 1 and 2	
SCIP	
Sex Offender Training	
Sheltered Housing Courses	
Specialist Conferences and Forums	
Welfare Rights courses	
<b>Other</b>	
Active Partners Benchmarking	Outcomes Training
Active Partners Regional Forum Conference – What's in it for Everyone	Completing the 9295
OCN Social Auditing course	
Open University Degree related to child and adolescent mental health	
Initial assessment workshop	
Various short courses/workshops	

## **APPENDIX B**

### **A list of training providers which have been accessed by respondents to the email questionnaire**

#### *Training Providers*

Community Transport Association

Crosby Community Action

Doncaster and South Humber NHS Healthcare Trust

Dublin University

Football Association

Grimsby College

Grimsby Mediation

HIT at Manchester

Hull City Council – not specified

Hull City Council Education Centre

Hull College

Hull CVS

Hull Doc

Hull University

Humberside Fire Service

HWRCC

Internal Providers

JCWI, ILPA, CLT offer mandatory continuing professional development courses

Leeds Addiction Unit

Official Sage Centre, Leeds

Open University

Private individual

Regen School

St Johns Ambulance

Sure Start

The Courtyard, Goole  
VANEL

Yorkshire First