

Third Sector Skills Strategy Consultation

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Introduction

This response is from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS). It builds on our continued engagement with our members (170 national, regional and local youth organisations and networks) on workforce development issues. We focus in our response on some key questions rather responding to all.

Question: We listed seven sector specific skills areas, have we have missed any that we should ensure that we include in subsequent versions of the strategy?

A focus on sustainable practice within the sector is considered of particular importance, especially within the emerging economic climate. Business planning, diversification of markets and the need to perhaps look at social enterprise models in order to explore alternative funding streams are areas for further development within the sector. There is also a need for the sector to have individuals that have a 'business mindset' in order to survive this current storm and provide business capacity within an increasingly competitive marketplace.

The areas of commissioning, evaluation and monitoring are important to the sector, particularly due to the increasing possibilities of gaining contracts from local authority Children's Services Departments. As funding becomes more limited and streamlined through efficiency drives, it is important that NCVYS members remain competitive and therefore even more critical that they are very thorough in their evaluation and monitoring processes in order to demonstrate impact and outcomes. This could fit into fundraising or business planning. It would also be important to look at what existing support is available to support those skill areas e.g. around commissioning there is support and training from NAVCA and VCS Engage (NCB).

Key findings from the report on skills demand

Question: This report is based on a number of pieces of research carried out by the Hub, do the findings represent how you see the sector, and if not what are the principle differences?

Not entirely. One of the key differences is the steps the sector has taken to address skills gaps. For example, NCVYS members have been creating 'grow your own workforce initiatives' turning former service users into workers.

Throughout the report there needs to be more data and emphasis about volunteers, the role that they play and their workforce development needs. In the youth sector and other parts of the third sector, volunteers are the largest workforce and yet the report focuses mainly on paid staff. NCVYS has been working with CWDC and is hoping that it will introduce a volunteer strategy for the children, young people and families workforce.

It is important that research takes place to map what strategies, products and services already exist to support workforce development within the different occupational areas that make up the third sector. This will ensure that there is no duplication and facilitate good practice within the third sector.

Due to the recession and the economic climate, research needs to take place to clearly highlight the impact that this will have on skills gaps and needs and on workforce development across the third sector as a whole. NCVYS is currently collecting information from its members as to the impact of the recession and a report will follow. NCVYS will highlight to Skills- Third Sector any information concerning workforce development. For example, the British Red Cross's youth work department had its £100k budget to fund professional youth work qualifications for its staff withdrawn (NCVYS has asked the Red Cross to send a case study to the Workforce Hub).

Increasingly NCVYS is receiving more enquiries from individuals who have been made redundant and want to become paid youth workers or volunteer. The recession has led to an increase in the number of volunteers. This will lead to demands on managers of volunteers. At a time when the sector is struggling financially, having the capacity to manage volunteers effectively can be difficult.

On page 12 there is a table which outlines the top ten voluntary sector industries. NCVYS has data which clearly shows the large size of the workforce of the children, young people and families sector and therefore demonstrates the value of the sector in delivering services. This contribution to public service needs to be acknowledged as a key resource in the same way that other key workers are acknowledged in this section, such as social workers. NCVYS has previously provided the Workforce Hub with references to the research report conducted on behalf of NCVYS and Children England (formerly NCVCCO) by the University of Hull.

Question: **Soft skills** are seen as a particular area in which the sector needs to build additional competency, do you agree with this and if so what do you think are the best ways to develop these skills?

NCVYS agrees that the sector needs to build competencies with regards to soft skills. Some NCVYS workforce development task group members commented that the importance of soft skills has “come off the radar”. Individuals commented that if you are classed as a professional in your field, you should naturally have the necessary soft skills too – but this is not always the case and the value of soft skills needs to be given increased recognition.

One of the most important soft skills for the voluntary and community youth sector is communication. Also good supervision, line management and mentoring programmes might help individuals to develop and enhance soft skills.

Having specific exercises and training built into all learning programmes, and even incorporated early on into the school education system, may help to improve soft skills.

Question: **Leadership and management** is also an important area. What training do you do in this area and are there specific things we need to do to ensure that those in the sector can build skills in this area?

There aren't many third sector specific opportunities to train in management and leadership. Managers in our sector can access wider programmes. For example, as part of its youth workforce reform programme, the Government has introduced a Youth Workforce Reform Leadership and Management Development Programme¹ which will be implemented from March 2009. However, this focuses on Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) delivery and does not include specific or sufficient focus on the challenges that third sector managers face. There are huge numbers of services delivered outside of IYSS which still require skilled leaders and managers.

It is with great regret that we learn about the demise of the Third Sector Leadership Centre . We believe that there is a continuing need for opportunities for leaders and managers to network and learn from each other. For example, NCVYS facilitates chief officer groups where national chief executives working in the sector can join up practice and share learning on key issues on a regular basis.

Anecdotal evidence from our links with individuals working in the sector indicates that learning clusters are an informal but productive approach taken by managers within the sector to share learning and resolve issues of shared concern.

¹ <http://fpmonline.rve.mmtdigital.co.uk/Markets/Childrens-Workforce-Development.aspx>

Technological developments such as Skype have made this joining up more practical in addition to meetings between individuals.

It would be beneficial to produce an information sheet giving the different types of leadership and development opportunities that are available. Greater awareness should lead to greater take-up of available opportunities.

Key findings from report on skills supply

Question: Do you agree with general comments made in the document regarding the barriers to offering skills training? What other barriers would you identify from your knowledge and experience?

NCVYS broadly agrees with the general comments listed in the document and reinforces the point that time and money are the main barriers to offering training. This can be further exasperated by capacity issues whereby organisations may not have a dedicated person responsible for training within an organisation or have access to this resource or specialist knowledge locally.

NCVYS members have regularly cited insufficient training opportunities as an area for further development and investment. For volunteers a big barrier is having programmes of training which meet volunteers' needs, in terms of times, location and programme. In addition, the youth sector does not have consistent access to professional courses in all areas of the country.

NCVYS members from rural areas have indicated that the key barriers to training for them are poor transport links and lack of IT/broadband capability. Individuals may have to travel miles in order to attend training courses in the larger towns/cities. We have learnt of an example in Cumbria, where a young boy of 18 did not have a car and was therefore unable to attend a youth work training course. He would also struggle to do an Open Learning course as he does not have access to the Internet in his local area.

With regards to funding, a significant area for development is building the provision of training for voluntary and community organisations into local commissioning contracts. NCVYS has asked CWDC to take this issue forward, acknowledging that full cost recovery is of vital importance to third sector organisations.

It would be good if more grant making trusts would consider funding workforce development as part of project funding. NCVYS has identified some trusts that support workforce development within the *Funding Guide to Workforce Development* found at www.ncvys.org.uk >> workforce >> funding) but there could be more.

Question: How do you think we can work with employers and employees to raise the demand for training?

The demand for training is there but the difficulty is having the right provision. It is also about having the staff capacity to take forward a training strategy within the organisation and being aware of funding streams (which is why the *Funding Guide to Workforce Development* is important to the sector).

If employers worked more collaboratively then resources will be maximised. For example employers could offer spare training places to other organisations or share the services of Training Managers. NCVYS encourages collaborative working, devoting a section to it within the *Funding Guide to Workforce Development*. We have also encouraged our members to contribute to a central training directory that we host on our website in an effort to facilitate an exchange of training opportunities.

Local infrastructure organisations have a key role to play in offering this type of service but this requires funding to do so. Increasingly Workforce Development Co-ordinators are being employed to act as a broker not only between promoting training and collaboration opportunities within the sector but that from the local authorities too. This role has been made possible as a result of the Workforce Strategy Partners Programme from CWDC. NCVYS can provide names of our members who have been involved in this type of work for additional insight into this area.

Stakeholder analysis

Question: Are there any other key **national** stakeholders that we should add to the matrix. What would their starting positions be and where would their ideal final positions be?

The stakeholders listed on page 26 do not list membership bodies such as NCVYS, NAVCA, Children England or regional learning networks.

Government departments responsible for workforce development of the sector's occupational groups should be included, e.g. Department for Children, Schools and Families is responsible for establishing the policy areas concerning workforce development for the voluntary and community youth sector. In addition, there are other Government departments which cover workforce development policy, e.g. the Department of Health issued a workforce development strategy for the mental health sector.

Drivers

Question: What drivers have we missed (see annex 2 or www.3s4.org.uk for a comprehensive list, or add your own)?

The drivers were discussed at length at the regional West Midlands consultation event that Nichola Brown, NCVYS's Workforce Development Officer, attended on 12 March 2009. A sub group at this meeting concluded that the impact of the recession was a key driver. It also thought that many of the drivers could be linked together with others (therefore effectively reducing the list). (Notes to that effect are on a flip chart paper ready to be submitted to the Workforce Hub).

Two important drivers for NCVYS at present stem from Government policy. One such driver is around regulation and registration. Within the *2020 Children and Young People's Strategy* (DCSF), paragraph 3.67² states that Government seeks to use regulation and registration to influence the quality parts of the workforce. NCVYS has already made the Workforce Hub aware of its concern regarding regulation and registration and is thankful of its continued support. NCVYS also hopes to gain the support of Skills-Third Sector in this area.

The other driver is the Government's increasing focus on qualifications which leads to higher training costs for the sector and workers expecting more pay. It would be difficult for the voluntary and community youth sector to address this, due to its limited financial resources. This issue is discussed in more detail below.

Priorities for change

Question: Do you agree with the three priorities? If not why not?

Priority 1: There is a need for appropriate qualifications and training

NCVYS suggests that this is reworded as set out below:

“There is a need for appropriate skills and knowledge to deliver services”.

Qualifications and training are two of the routes to achieve this which need to be part of a wider organisational skills or development strategy. NCVYS suggests leaving in action 4.

NCVYS is of the firm opinion that a wide range of methods to develop the sector's workforce needs to be in place in order to meet individual organisational and individual needs and to help individuals gain skills and knowledge. It would be beneficial for the sector to be informed about all of the different methods covering

² <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/delivering-services/children-and-young-peoples-workforce/>

both non-accredited and accredited learning e.g. action learning sets, supervision, reflective diaries.

Qualifications can easily be a measurable way of improving skills levels and logging numbers of individuals who have attained such a standard. We explore below alternative ways that the sector can provide evidence to Government that it is delivering a skilled, professional and knowledgeable workforce.

It appears that the Workforce Hub is placing high importance on qualifications. Whilst there is some support for this, in our experience this does not resonate with the whole of the voluntary and community youth sector. The increased focus on qualifications is seen by some within the sector as an area which will need additional funding towards training cost and perhaps contribute to the development of a two tier workforce. There needs to be an increased emphasis on personal attributes and skills, and a higher value placed on experiential learning.

We should also learn from international practice. For example, on a recent study visit to Japan, NCVYS's Workforce Development Officer learnt about international approaches to workforce development in the third sector. When discussing the approaches for developing volunteers, qualifications were not mentioned. The delegates were keen to share approaches which could be implemented quickly and easily, especially as many volunteers hold down full time jobs.

For some employers qualifications are a lengthy way for their staff to gain skills. They struggle with providing not only the funding (particularly for higher education qualifications) but also the time, particularly when contracts for post are time-limited due to the nature of funding. Discussions with members involved in the workforce development task group and anecdotal evidence indicate that employers want immediate solutions to skills gaps and will try and put in place steps such as organising peer mentoring or sending a member of staff on a short training course.

Furthermore, within the voluntary and community youth sector, the notion of formal academic learning (gaining qualifications) is not for everyone. Some individuals have had bad experiences of learning at school and some volunteers have literacy and numeracy problems. Therefore, the requirement to have a formal qualification may not appeal to or be appropriate for everyone.

Priority 2: There is a need to increase employer and employee engagement

NCVYS believes this already exists. Many of our members show real commitment to workforce development but barriers such as time, capacity and funding (discussed above) limit their capacity to address these. Also it should not just be about employee engagement, but the engagement of volunteers too. Therefore we would re-word this priority to:

“There is a need to remove the barriers that prevent employers, volunteers and paid staff to engage in workforce development”.

Actions to support this priority could include ways of brokering collaboration within the third sector (as mentioned earlier in this paper), e.g. sharing of training places, the establishment of learning clusters, sharing of practice. In addition, Skills – Third Sector could create a funding strategy which would help the sector to address the barrier that lack of funding creates (which is detailed under action 5 within priority 3). Examples of actions within the funding strategy could include the development of partnerships with children’s trusts to support workforce development. We hope that this would lead to workforce development costs being acknowledged as legitimate overheads by commissioners to support full cost recovery (as referred to earlier in the paper).

Priority 3: There is a need to raise the profile of the sector and the way it works

NCVYS agrees with this priority. The new body Skills-Third Sector needs to promote the importance of a variety of approaches to workforce development and gain Government recognition for these. An increased understanding of how the sector works amongst the Government, and Sector Skills Councils may lead to better coordinated cross-sector workforce strategies

Government needs evidence from the sector that it is developing staff and volunteers who work professionally. The exact nature of such evidence needs to be explored, but is likely to include evidence of quality systems (e.g. IIP award) or the use of skills passports to record an individual’s learning journey. A skills passport could detail both experience and a variety of workforce development methods used and CPD. Action 5 within priority 1 could be moved across to this priority to emphasise this point. The skills passport in place from Skills Active would be a good model to look at.

NCVYS understands that priority 3 will be the actions the new body Skills-Third Sector will take forward. To maximise impact and make the most of limited resources it is important that the new body sets achievable actions to ensure success in a few targeted areas, rather than setting actions in a number of areas which together may become unmanageable.

For NCVYS the priority is working with the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Government departments to represent the voice of the third sector with regards to workforce development. SSCs and Government need to develop approaches which engage the third sector to ensure that strategies do not overly focus on statutory services but include tailored support for third sector organisations delivering services to children, young people and their families.

Skills-Third Sector therefore needs to establish robust communication channels with organisations such as NCVYS, so that we can continually feed in the needs and issues of the sector and broker a sound relationship between the sector and central government agencies.

NCVYS values the role of Skills-Third Sector and hopes to continue to build upon the relationship it has established with the UK Workforce Hub. In particular we need support with our continued lobbying around areas such as regulation and registration of the workforce.

Given the arguments above, action 1 (developing a recruitment programme that targets school leavers) is a lower priority.

NCVYS would be keen to see a reduced list of realistic and achievable actions across all the three priority areas and focus to be on those issues highlighted in this paper.

Other comments

There needs to be clear communications about the roles of the Third Sector National Learning Alliance and Third-Sector Skills. In order to avoid duplication and confusion within the sector about the respective roles of these agencies it is important that there is clarity about the purpose of each organisation in order to ensure maximum engagement of the sector.

In addition to this response form, NCVYS has provided three papers which elaborate further on the skill gaps and needs of the sector and general workforce development issues and needs:

- 1) *Training Needs in the Voluntary Youth Sector* Fairbridge/NCVYS March 2006
- 2) *Third Sector Capacity Building Focus Group* CWDC/NCVYS July 2008
- 3) *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Development Strategy* NCVYS response to the DCSF, March 2009
- 4) *Training Providers Event Report* NCVYS, June 2008