



# **Voluntary and Community Sector Groups in the Spotlight: workforce development understanding, needs and support**

Survey Findings and Recommendations

March 2011

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## Introduction

### What is Workforce Development?

Workforce development is about improving the skills and knowledge of staff and volunteers to enable them to better deliver quality services for the users they serve. It is also about ensuring that the requirements and regulations of government are best met in response to the changes brought about by circumstances such as the death of Victoria Climbié and Baby Peter and recommendations from the [Social Work Taskforce](#), the [Social Work Reform Board](#), and other government agencies such as [Department for Education \(DfE\)](#), and executive non-departmental public bodies (NDPB).

Workforce development means:

- Developing the people in your organisation to improve the way you deliver your services and activities. This includes paid workers, volunteers and trustees.

Practically, workforce development often means training, but it can also include other ways of gaining knowledge, such as mentoring schemes and secondments. Workforce development may also include the work you do to increase the recruitment and retention of high quality people to your sector e.g. award schemes, regular supervision.

### Background

Children England and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services undertook a survey to gauge and further understand the workforce requirements of the following groups who work with children, young people and families in the voluntary and community sector across England:

- Faith groups;
- Small volunteer- led groups;
- Those working with disabled children and young people; and
- LGBT young people.

The design of the survey was to gauge their understanding, the support available to them, and their future needs concerning workforce development.

The survey was conducted on behalf of the Children's Workforce Development Council; a government funded body-providing support, programmes and funding to improve the skills and knowledge of those who work with children, young people and families. CWDC wanted to understand the needs of these groups to include their needs in their planning and activities for the following year.

## Method

We identified participants via Children England and NCVYS's existing networks and through other network such sports associations. We managed to identify 53 potential participants (only 30 participants were required).

Between November and December 2010, participants received a survey via survey monkey to complete. A reminder went out on 6 December 2011.

**We received 39 responses** providing a response rate of 75%.

71.8% of the organisations surveyed employed between 1-19 staff. 12.8% were volunteer- led. 5.2% employed 100 or more staff.

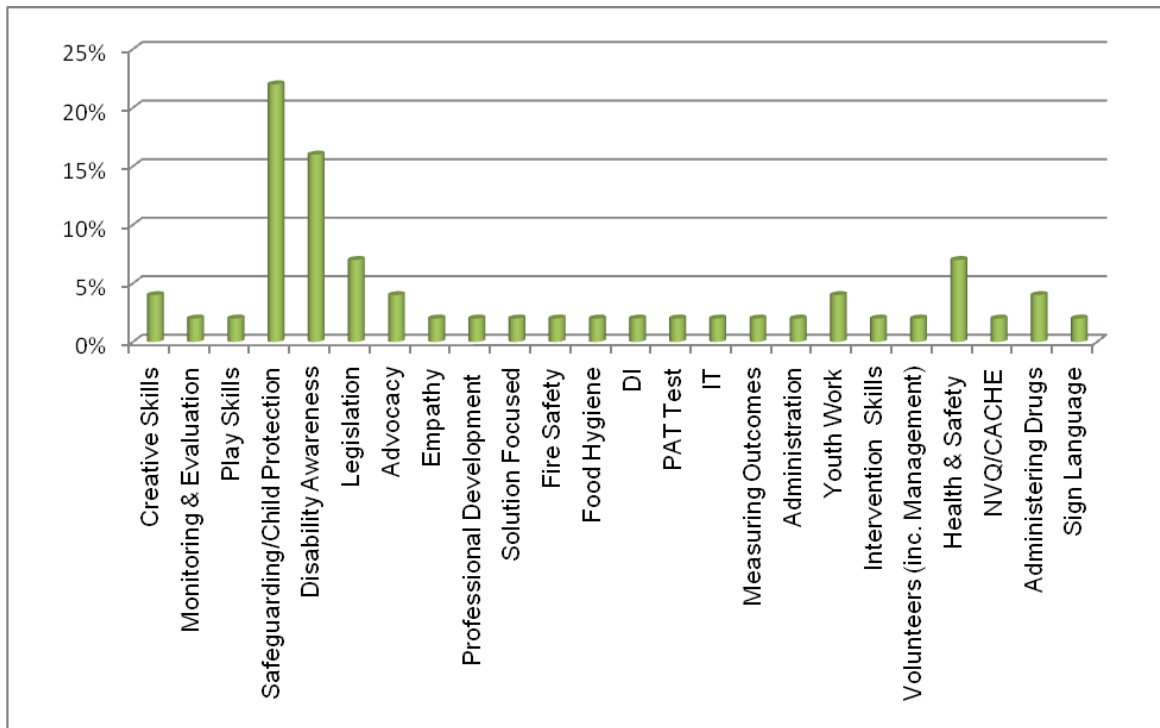
89.2% of the organisations surveyed had volunteers, with the majority (54.1%) having between 1-19. However, 27% hosted between 20 and 99 volunteers.

The survey work conducted was with specific groups and the most popular group were those organisations that worked in supporting children and young people with disabilities (36.8%), followed by faith-based organisations (18.4%), Volunteer led (13.2%) organisations, and finally those who worked with LGBT young people (5.3%). Maybe however, since some of the organisations that took part in the survey work with more than one group, this information ought to be viewed with caution.

The make-up of these organisations ranged from: a church running a children's club, a youth group and a mother and toddler group; a football club supporting disadvantaged young people; and a children's charity that works with disabled children and young people that has developed its own volunteer programme.

35.1% worked specifically with young people, with 24.3% working with families. 13% worked specifically with children. However, many of the organisations provide a range of services aimed at children, young people, and families.

## Understanding and meeting workforce development needs



**Fig. 1 Current skills and knowledge needs identified for staff and volunteers**

Figure 1 illustrates that Safeguarding/Child Protection (22%), Disability Awareness (16%), Health & Safety (including First Aid, Lifting & Handling) (7%), and Legislation (7%) are the top four priorities for organisations working in the voluntary sector working with faith groups; small volunteer led groups; those working with disabled children and young people; and LGBT young people.

Disability awareness features so highly in the current skills and knowledge needs of VCS organisations because of the high level of disability groups participating in the survey. This need of the VCS should perhaps be viewed with caution.

Looking at the skills and knowledge needs identified, it is clear that organisations that work within these areas require a very specialist skill and knowledge set e.g. Administering Drugs (2%), PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) Test (2%), DI (Minibus) (2%), and Advocacy (4%).

These needs have been identified by a variety of methods such as supervision, appraisals, training needs analysis, and feedback.

Fig.2 How organisations currently meet their workforce development needs

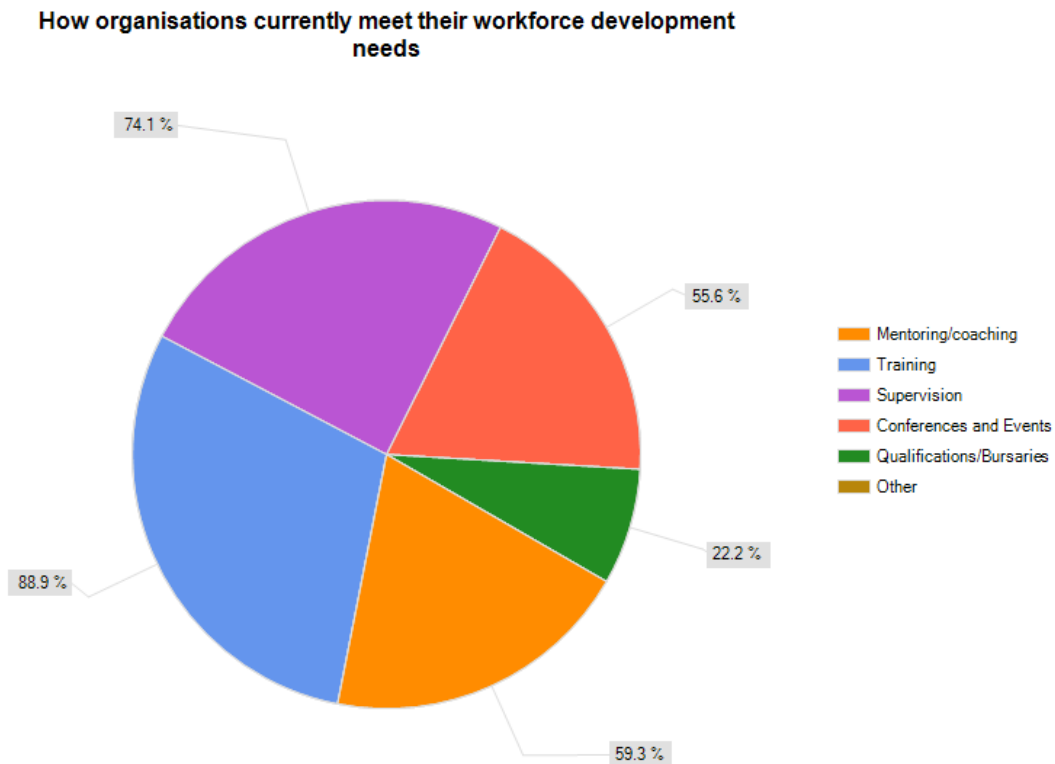


Figure 2 illustrates that Training (88.9%) and Supervision (74.1%) are widely offered to meet the training and development needs of the organisation. It is encouraging to see that mentoring/coaching (59.3%) was also a popular method to deliver skills and knowledge. Conferences and events (55.6%) were also a popular method.

### Support networks





85.2% of these organisations sourced support from a wide variety of networks to help them develop their staff and volunteers, such as Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS), Councils for Voluntary Youth Services (CVYS), NCVO, Primary Care Trust (PCT), Local Authorities, Volunteer Development Agencies, national voluntary organisations such as The Children's Society and local organisations such as Community First Portsmouth. It is not unusual then that 79.2% of participants sourced support from local networks.

Partner organisations/similar organisations were the second most popular support mechanism, with 25% of participants looking to these for peer support. Participants were least likely to source support from national bodies (12.5%). This is not unexpected, as national membership bodies such as NAVCA, NCVYS and Children England are a 'network of networks', with members primarily being those organisations to which these groups turn to for support e.g. CVS, CVYS and national voluntary youth organisations.

## Social media

81.5% of participants had access to the internet, but only 40.7% currently utilise this for workforce support or information. 71.4% were very keen to be able to access workforce support or information via the internet, but would have difficulties due to the lack of infrastructure in their organisations particularly if they took on volunteers. There were issues on internet access for volunteers. This is not just about accessing the internet, but also about rate of use, ease of use, and physical location.

Popular accessed websites included:

-  Volunteer England;
-  Government sites;
-  BBC Bite size; and
-  CVS websites.

Which web site accessed would depend on the information or support that was required by the participant and as one respondent said:

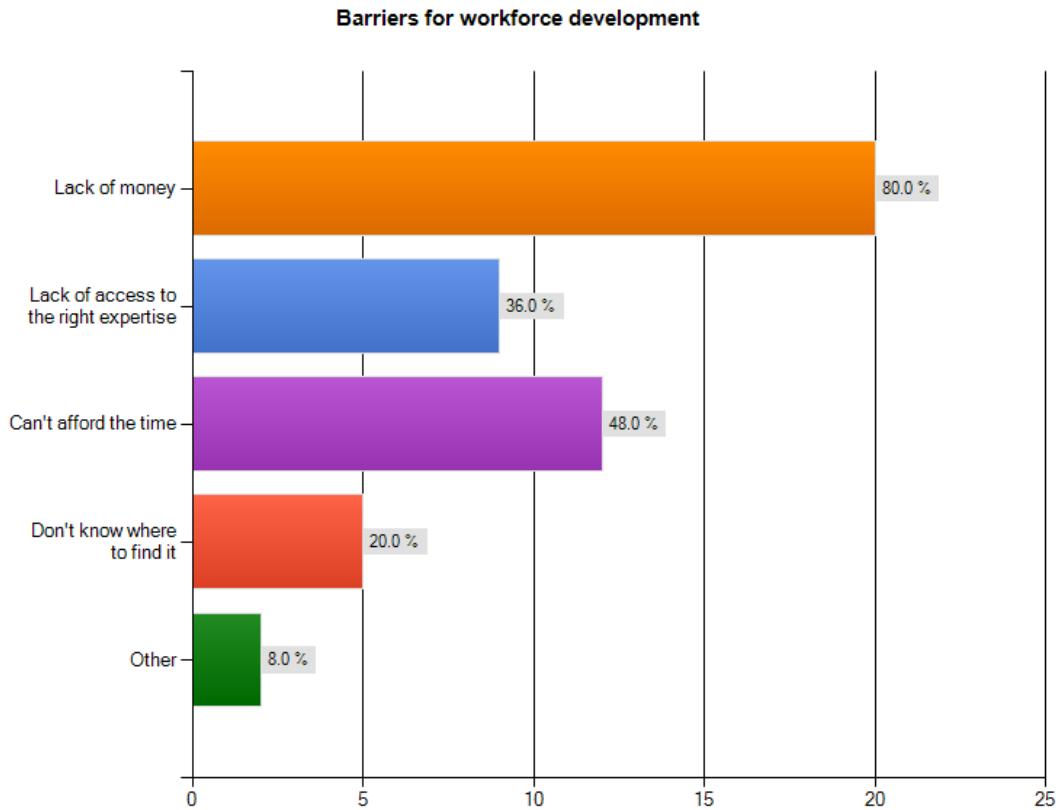
*“No one website could meet everyone’s information needs”.*

(Q10, Respondent 3)

## Future needs in workforce development

The figure below demonstrates that the main barrier for organisations is a lack of money.

**Fig. 3 Barriers for workforce development**



It is no surprise from the respondents feedback that funding/training budget was the most popular support that organisations wanted to put in place to meet staff/volunteer workforce development needs.

Respondents said:

*“Recruitment, training, induction, supervision, support/management are all necessary”* (Q15, Respondent 4).

*“Although more staff and volunteer training was deemed as a necessity, it was also important that funding is available to backfill posts”* (Q13, Respondent 20).

*“Leadership skills were also required in terms of providing peer supervision”* (Q13, Respondent 22)

*“mentoring young leaders”* (Q13, Respondent 13).

In response to the question on the survey about what you would like to offer/put in place to meet training and development needs? Robust line management is important for staff/volunteers as supervision (74.1%) accounts for one of the main pathways for organisations to understand individual and organisational development needs since further:

*“Needs are identified during this process and ongoing supervision session”.*  
(Q7, Respondent 7)

In such organisations, these leadership and management skills play an important role in the development of staff/volunteers and in producing future leaders in their organisation.

Due to the increase in problems faced by young people and changes in the funding climate, 65.4% envisaged changes and new training and development needs. 26.9% were not sure.

## **Summary and recommendations**

The results of the survey positively demonstrate that the voluntary and community sector organisations that participated in the survey are actively involved in workforce development activities, which enable them to better meet the needs of children, young people and families.

However, it is evident from the results that the majority of these organisations rely on volunteers and that the primary barrier that prevents organisations from being able to fully support the training and development needs of volunteers (and staff) is lack of money.

The current government’s vision of a Big Society sees volunteering as key to enable people to be more involved in their communities. It is clear that with a reduction in statutory services the voluntary sector will have a lot more to do.

Cuts in such services create a higher demand for the services that have survived and there is an apparent shift to use volunteers more predominately in the workforce. Therefore investment in workforce development of those who work or volunteer in the VCS, is crucial if they are to be fully equipped with the skills and knowledge to deliver effective services to children, young people and families.

There is no evidence that there has been an increase in the use of volunteers, as there is no previous benchmark, nor did we ask participants in the survey about whether the number of volunteers has increased in the last 12 months. However, it can be noted that these organisations have a particularly high number of volunteers.

*“More people are accessing volunteering – many of these people may not have been willing to do this – they are signing up for volunteering to stop their benefits being stopped/reduced”.*  
(Q15, Respondent 2)

It is evident from the findings that organisations that recruit volunteers need to have in place mechanisms that support them such as supervision, training and induction. However to echo one of the respondent's comments:

*"Volunteer programmes do not come free."*  
(Q15, Respondent 4)

*"Needs constantly change in workforce development and it is important that training and development programmes continue to adapt and change as appropriate and that when a member of staff or volunteer had been identified as needing a specific type of training it is provided"* (Q14, Respondent 3).

Training and development needs to be tailored to suit individual organisations needs:

*"Many of the courses are held during our session times and we do not have enough staff to cover many absences."*  
(Q14, Respondent 2)

However, whilst the survey findings indicate some specialist training needs, the results show that three out of four of the top priorities of training (safeguarding/child protection, health and safety and disability awareness) match the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge and are three of the CWDC funded and NCVYS led Progress project's training priority areas.

Two of the priority training areas: health and safety and child protection/safeguarding were identified as being fundamental for safe practice within the CWDC commissioned report produced by Leeds Metropolitan University *Investigating the Training Needs of Volunteers in the Children's Workforce (August 2010)*. Therefore, to equip volunteers and paid front-line workers with the 'basics' necessary for their role, is vital.

The consortium partners and CWDC (DfE) need to consider promotional activities to highlight the large volume of workforce information that is available electronically, but not accessed fully. This reflects anecdotal information NCVYS has recently picked up, in that some volunteer managers were not aware of the information and resources available to them. Also 20% of respondents said they do not know where to find the support that they need.

Perhaps promotion should be targeted initially at local infrastructure organisations as they have the existing structures to be able to disseminate and use their networks to link and join up existing workforce information in a central place i.e. their website. This is beneficial to those that have easy and regular access to the internet and only want to access web information. It is important that consortium partners in their policy and workforce activities continue to advocate for investment /awareness in this area.

It was pleasing to see that a large percentage of the organisations surveyed are already accessing support via infrastructure organisations (networks), particularly those locally based (79.2%) to help them develop their staff and volunteers.

This demonstrates the importance of these networks and reflects the investment CWDC has previously made to support local infrastructure organisations to provide workforce development support e.g. Workforce Strategy Partners Programme (WSPP).

Small VCS organisations will continue to require this support, particularly those delivering specialist services or to specific groups (such as those surveyed) and those with significant numbers of volunteers within their organisations.

CWDC is working in partnership with a Children & Young People's Voluntary Sector Workforce consortium led by Children England including the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS), the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), and the Race Equality Foundation (REF).

## Appendix

### Survey Monkey Questions

#### Voluntary and Community Sector Groups in the Spotlight: workforce development understanding, needs and support

**1. How many staff do you employ?**

- 0-19
- 20-50
- 51-99
- 100 – 205
- 206+

**2. How many volunteers do you employ?**

- 0-19
- 20-50
- 51-99
- 100 – 205
- 206+

**3. What best describes the work that your organisation does? (tick one)**

- Faith based
- Volunteer Led
- Supporting disabled children and young people
- Work with LGBT young people
- Other / comments (please describe in your own words)

**4. Does your organisation deliver services to?**

- Children
- Young People
- Families

**5. What are the current needs of staff and volunteers in terms of improving their knowledge and skills to be able to work with children, young people and their families?**

**6. How have you identified these needs? e.g. Training needs analysis, Supervision and Appraisal**

**7. What do you currently offer to meet your organisation's training and development needs?**

Mentoring/coaching  
Training  
Supervision  
Conferences and events  
Qualifications - bursaries  
Other / additional comments

**8. Do you have access to any support to help you develop your staff and volunteers? i.e. from a local network such as a CVS**

Yes

No

If yes, what is the name of the organisation?

**9. Are they:**

Local network

Regional organisation

National body

Partner organisation/similar organisation

**10. Do you access any training and development support/information from the internet?**

Yes

No

If yes, what websites do you use?

**11. If no, is accessing this information something that you would like to do?**

Yes

No

**12. Are there any barriers preventing you from accessing web information and resources?**

**13. What would you ideally like to offer/put in place to meet the staff /volunteer training and development needs? e.g. Training budget, supervision, induction programme**

**14. What are the barriers in preventing you from being able to fully support the training and development needs of your staff and volunteers (please tick as many boxes as is appropriate)?**

Lack of money

Lack of access to the right expertise

Can't afford the time

Don't know where to find it

Other (please give details)

**15. Do you envisage any changing or new training and development needs? E.g. which may be due to an increase in problems faced by young people, changes in the funding climate etc.**

Yes

No

Additional comments / details