

Workforce Development Needs of the
VCS in Yorkshire and the Humber

FINAL REPORT

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APPENDIX: PROFILE OF RESEARCH STUDIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **mtl** have been commissioned by Yorkshire Futures to undertake a study of the workforce development needs of the voluntary and community sector in Yorkshire and the Humber. This report presents findings from the first stage of the research which has sought to:
 - Identify and review relevant research
 - Consult extensively regarding key issues, knowledge gaps and priorities
 - Consider the best way forward for stage 2 of the research
2. A significant proportion of research into the workforce development needs of the VCS has been undertaken at the national level by VCS representative bodies such as the NCVO and VSNTO. Within Yorkshire and the Humber a number of sub-regional reports and action plans to address workforce development needs have also been published.
3. Overall, there appears to be a high degree of consistency in the key findings of existing research suggesting there is a consensus about the primary needs of the VCS and even how these might be addressed.
4. Key skills gaps include: obtaining and managing funding, organisational development, inter-personal skills, regulatory issues, ICT, entrepreneurship, management development skills and a range of service specific delivery skills.
5. There is a clear policy framework for activities to address the training needs of the sector at a national, regional and sub-regional level. These include the National Workforce Development Strategy, the National Skills Strategy, the Regional Economic Strategy, FRESA and other sub-regional/local level action plans which have been developed alongside the LLSCs.
6. Findings from consultations with key stakeholders across the region indicate there are a number of shortfalls or deficits in appropriate provision to meet the diverse needs of the sector. There are concerns that provision is funding rather than needs driven and too much emphasis is being given to NVQ provision. It is also felt that training provision does not offer progression routes and higher level training suitable for more experienced workers and volunteers.
7. There are often very practical barriers to the VCOs accessing training provision which need to be overcome. These practical barriers are often more acute in rural areas and for particular disadvantaged groups e.g. disabled, BME
8. The customization of provision and assessment of demand seems to be much more appropriate at the local level where operational issues relating to affordability, accessibility and quality can be dealt with more effectively. It is also important to acknowledge that much is already happening or is planned (by way of sub-regional activity) within some parts of the region, notably South and West Yorkshire.
9. The opportunity this study has afforded to map and distil key issues was broadly welcomed, but there were differing views about the need for further work, and the direction this might take. In this regard, we conclude that:
 - There is very little (if any) support for any widespread quantitative survey-based research across the region or sub-regions.
 - There is a degree of support for a more detailed examination of some key issues highlighted by consultees and the existing body of research at local levels, but with the clear intention of working with and supporting local networks and initiatives.

- There is a stronger preference for a more active research made and approach, strongly attuned to pump-priming innovative and new approaches, coupled with disseminating and embedding good practice and “locked into” the existing policy frameworks. This is precisely the approach being advocated by NCVO.
10. At this stage we believe the most fundamental issue for the Steering Group to collectively decide is:
 - Whether further research is actually required at this stage and if so.
 - How further work would add value to the existing body of knowledge and know-how identified in Stage 1.
 - What the precise lines of enquiry further research should follow.
 - Who would benefit from further work and how?
 11. Assuming that further research work is deemed necessary and beneficial, we suggest that careful consideration is given to some of all of the following options by the Steering Group:
 - Undertaking selective qualitative research to address key issues in sub-regions and/or localities where there appears to be a) identifiable knowledge gaps b) a willingness for VCS organisations and other stakeholders (e.g. Learning Partnerships) to facilitate and co-ordinate such work.
 - Embarking on a programme of action-based research targeting key issues already identified (e.g. shortfalls, quality standards, linkages with SSCs) through innovative projects led by VCS organisations and other intermediary organisations such as Learning Partnerships/Consortia/Social Enterprise Networks.
 - Embarking on a qualitative research exercise to identify and account for best practice across the region and ensure this is disseminated and embedded amongst VCS groups, intermediaries, and providers of workforce development services, against the backcloth of the existing policy and strategic framework.
 12. Before proceeding further, we recommend that the Steering Group revisit the original aims and objectives of the study in order to satisfy themselves that the direction any further work may take will add value to the existing body of knowledge and existing policy context that we have reviewed in this report.
 13. Revising and clarifying the terms of reference could, in our view, help ensure that people 'on the ground' in the VCS and amongst LSCs and Learning Partnerships [amongst others] feel they have a real stake in it and how it may be of benefit to them in more effectively meeting the workforce development needs of this important and vibrant sector.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 **mtl** were commissioned by Yorkshire Futures to undertake a study of the workforce development needs of the paid staff and volunteers working in the voluntary and community sector [including social enterprises] in Yorkshire and the Humber. The objectives are:
- To establish a regional picture of the learning and skills provision in relation to sector organisations, paid staff, trustees and volunteers;
 - To clarify the skills needs and gaps in relation to the identified groups;
 - To identify the additional needs in relation to groups facing particular disadvantage e.g. women, BME groups and people with disabilities;
 - To determine the barriers to employers and individuals accessing and delivering the required learning and skills needs and to make recommendations to overcome these;
 - To develop a model for the infrastructure which will support the VCS in its work to ensure a fair and inclusive region for all. Such a model or models can be used to form the basis of discussions with key regional and sub-regional agencies as to a shared approach to planning and funding;
 - For the outputs of this work to be directly usable and useful by providers, funders and learners.
- 1.2 A Steering Group comprising the following people is managing the study:
- Mike Bridge ~ Yorkshire Futures
 - John Harris ~ Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Forum
 - Henry Rigg ~ Yorkshire Forward
 - Janette Cawcutt ~ Regional Forum
 - Val Booker ~ Yorkshire Futures
 - Verni Tannam ~ GOYH
 - Tricia Walker ~ NYLSC
- 1.3 The research study has been divided into two overall stages, with the latter dependent on the outcomes of the former. The first stage of work has comprised the following:
- The collection and review of relevant research studies [profiled in the Appendix to this report].
 - A review of the policy context pertaining to the study.
 - Extensive key consultations with stakeholders across the region and in some instances beyond.
 - Attendance at the Yorkshire Futures LMI Working Group and a meeting with John Harris of the Regional Forum.
 - The preparation of this final Stage 1 report for consideration by the Steering Group.
- 1.4 This report sets out our findings in relation to the above, draws some conclusions, and considers options for Phase 2 of the work.

2. REVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH

Introduction

- 2.1 In this section, we report on our review of existing research work of relevance to this study in terms of both key findings to emerge and general observations about the body of work as a whole.
- 2.2 We have sought to identify, collect and review relevant research studies pertaining to the workforce development needs of the voluntary and community sector [VCS]. 26 reports have been identified through desk-based research and interviews with key consultees.
- 2.3 The reports are profiled in the Appendix to this report and make interesting reading. There is certainly an extensive body of research work to draw on and learn from, with still more underway or planned. This of itself is a significant finding.

Existing Research Review - Key Findings and Issues

- 2.4 A significant proportion of the research into the workforce development needs of the VCS has been undertaken at the national level by VCS representative bodies such as the NCVO and VSNTO. However, within Yorkshire and the Humber a number of sub-regional reports and action plans to address workforce development issues have also been published.
- 2.5 At the national level, the publication of the VSNTO's Workforce Development Plan in 2001 set out the priorities and issues for key organisations such as LSCs and RDAs working with the VCS. The plan also contributed to wider Government activity to raise the profile of workforce development issues across all sectors following the development of the national strategy for workforce development. More recently, the Futureskills research undertaken in 2003 has informed the preparation of a National Skills Strategy for the VCS in England. This strategy is part of the Active Community Unit's work to raise capacity within the VCS to contribute to public service delivery. The strategy will eventually form part of the ACU's capacity building and infrastructure framework and investment plan, due to be published in April 2004.
- 2.6 At the regional and sub-regional level, research has been undertaken to inform the development of the sector, facilitate the allocation of funding and prioritise activities. For instance, West and South Yorkshire have undertaken analysis of VCS training needs to inform the activities of sub-regional consortia and the LSCs. Frameworks for the development of social enterprise have also been developed to co-ordinate activity across Yorkshire and the Humber and support the allocation of funding through European Structural Funds and organisations such as Business Link.
- 2.7 In addition, a number of mapping and general research reports have been undertaken to outline the key workforce development issues and particularly to map social enterprise activity to fill existing data and knowledge gaps. The research therefore tends to fall into two categories: research based reports to map and outline key features of the VCS and its workforce development needs, and action plans and strategies to co-ordinate and prioritise activity and inform the allocation of funding.
- 2.8 The reports have been developed in a number of different ways depending upon their purpose and aims. Many of the national strategies and action plans have been developed using existing national data about the sector, and published draft reports for wider consultation.

- 2.9 Where primary research has been undertaken, data has been collated through:
- Telephone surveys
 - Postal surveys
 - Focus groups
 - Consultations with key representative organisations
- 2.10 Where postal surveys have been undertaken, these typically achieved low response rates [i.e. 5-10%] and most have relied heavily on a number of intermediary organisations such as LDAs distributing questionnaires to their members.
- 2.11 Overall, there appears to be a fairly high degree of consistency with regard to overall key findings regarding workforce development issues, suggesting there is a consensus about the primary VCS needs, and even how these might best be addressed. The following sections summarise key issues and findings to emerge from the studies.

Demand Issues

- Recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers is an issue, particularly given low levels of unemployment.
- Diversity and the need to be responsive to new policies and initiatives results in constantly changing and complex training needs.
- Time to undertake training is difficult with many organisations being short staffed. Cover for staff to undertake training is difficult, particularly as many workers juggle a number of roles.
- Cost can be a barrier to training particularly if travel costs and staff cover are considered alongside direct training costs.
- In rural areas, training can be difficult to access and expensive as locally based training is often not cost effective to provide and centrally based provision is difficult to travel to. It is also felt that there is some resistance to “outside” help and low levels of networking within rural areas.
- The main future skills needs in rural areas were similar to those in urban areas and included finance, marketing, management.
- There are a number of basic generic training needs for paid workers and volunteers within the sector. These include health and safety, basic food hygiene, first aid etc.
- Strategic level staff mainly require management training, including financial planning, project management, strategic planning, leadership, people management etc.
- The sector faces a wide range of specialist skills needs relating to different areas of activity e.g. working with mental health patients, coping with stress etc
- Whilst demand for volunteers is increasing, this tends to be in harder to fill/specialist areas, which require skilled volunteers.
- There may be low levels of recognised training needs within the sector and in some cases a reluctance to accept training e.g. no desire for career progression. Many organisations do not have formal training assessment procedures.
- Training for management committees is important and often overlooked. Finding suitably qualified trustees can be difficult, particularly those with a knowledge of finance.

- Social enterprises have similar workforce development needs to other VCO's and enterprises] e.g. marketing, management, recruitment support, finance, strategic planning, regulation, but there may be value in examining differences in these needs given the diversity of this sector.
- There are many similarities in training needs identified at sub-regional/regional and national level.

Supply Issues

- Training providers are also restricted by cost and value for money in terms of the development and delivery of many training courses.
- The VCS requires training specifically designed for the sector, which is affordable, practical and flexible.
- There is a need to invest and develop existing learning networks and infrastructure. However the existing infrastructure is patchy, complex and of variable quality.
- There should be greater awareness of the differing barriers to take-up of training faced by different groups e.g. does training provision exclude participation of different groups or areas?
- There may be scope for greater inclusion of capacity building activities in existing community strategies and LSC activities.
- In rural areas, organisations may need to work together to co-ordinate and access training.
- The sector should better promote volunteering opportunities.
- There are mixed views of the appropriateness of different provision e.g. some research reports preference for shorter courses, some want more accredited courses, some support distance learning, whilst some do not. Preferences may be influenced by the type of training being undertaken and needs/location of the VCO.
- The perceptions of funders may be that the sector provides a cheap option to deliver training. The role and quality of the sector as a training provider needs to be promoted.
- Quality standards are an important way for the sector to raise quality, as are better links and communication with training providers.
- Access to information and the promotion of learning are key issues for the VCS.
- Mentoring and support activities rather than direct training may have an important role in increasing workforce development activity.
- Some perceive training to be supply driven rather than demand led.
- Whilst it is generally felt that there is enough training, provision is generally felt to be of variable quality.
- Within Yorkshire and the Humber fundraising, finance, personnel, and management were amongst the most frequently accessed training courses.
- Pitching training at the right level is important. Training should take into account different levels of experience amongst participants.
- Some research suggests a shortage of advanced level courses.

Issues for Further Research

2.12 Studies undertaken to date have highlighted a number of issues which may merit further research, mostly requiring qualitative research methods; these include:

- Qualitative research into perceptions of the sector as a place to work amongst school leavers and experienced workers who may consider a career change.
- Qualitative research to unpick the frequently cited skills shortage of planning and organising, including what this means for organisations and possible solutions.
- Qualitative research into the implications of skills gaps for organisations.
- Clarity about the relationship and added value between infrastructure organisations working at different levels would help service users and assist funders in planning strategic investment where it can make the most difference.
- Careful consideration should be given to services which are needed and can be afforded in different areas. Economies of scale should be considered and where some infrastructure services may best be provided across more than one Local Authority district.
- Local/Regional Government need to consider how best to underpin the provision of infrastructure support
- Are some support functions better delivered independently for BMS/disabled organisations? How should these functions be organised geographically?
- How can social enterprises make better use of support offered by Business Links and SBS? How can VCS infrastructure add value to SBS support provision? How should social enterprise support relate to wider support infrastructure? Are there particular aspects of social enterprise support better delivered independently of other provision?
- The concentration of BME communities in rural areas – statistics available currently suggest numbers are low.
- What are appropriate delivery mechanisms?
- How will infrastructure development and capacity building sit with other initiatives? e.g. futurebuilders.
- ACU's infrastructure strategy should be rural proofed to represent needs of rural communities in metropolitan areas.
- More in-depth research may be required into the particular needs of youth work, community development work, childcare and care work.

2.13 These lists do however only provide an overview of key issues which ideally should be considered in context.

3. POLICY CONTEXT REVIEW

Introduction

- 3.1 Workforce development has received considerable attention over recent years at national, regional, Sub-regional and local levels.
- 3.2 In this section, we review the policy context relating to workforce development within the VCS, including social enterprises. It primarily explores:
- National skills and workforce development strategies
 - The national social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal agenda and developing role of the VCS
 - The regional context for workforce development and skills including RES, FRESA
 - The sub-regional context for workforce development including European Structural Fund Programmes

The National Skills and Workforce Development Agenda

- 3.3 The National Skills Strategy “21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential” published in July 2003 aims to provide a framework to support skills development so that people can work more productively in all sectors, including the voluntary sector, and make a greater contribution to their communities.
- 3.4 Whilst the strategy sets out general recommendations for workforce and skills development across all sectors, it recognises the need for skills development within specific areas of employment such as the voluntary and community sector.
- 3.5 The strategy therefore sets out plans for a specific VCS skills strategy. The Active Communities Unit [ACU] within the Home Office, have commissioned the VSNTO to prepare a skills strategy for the VCS. This is currently at draft stage and a consultation exercise is underway. The report is due for completion by April 2004, and will form part of the ACU’s Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework and Investment Plan.
- 3.6 The draft skills strategy for the VCS identifies four clear priorities for action; these are:
- Recruitment and retention
 - Leadership and management skills
 - Networks, collaboration and information provision
 - Access and investment in skills
- 3.7 The strategy makes a number of recommendations as to the role of different agencies in the delivery of workforce development activities across the country. It has been suggested that the RDA’s role should be in supporting regional WFD co-ordinators [with Yorkshire and the Humber being cited as a good example of this]. The co-ordinators should aim to identify and articulate regional skills needs, support networking and co-ordination/liaison across the VCS and support access to funding.
- 3.8 In 2001, “In Demand: Adult Skills in the 21st Century” was published by the Strategy Unit. This set out the important role of workforce development in raising productivity and supporting social inclusion. In 2002 the Strategy Unit published a second report which provided an action plan for taking workforce development activity forward up to 2010.

- 3.9 The action plan focuses on the need to create a demand-led system by raising informed demand for workforce development, improving the responsiveness of the supply side and developing the right Government framework.
- 3.10 In order to raise the demand for workforce development the action plan recognises the importance of promoting the benefits of workforce development, access to IAG and removing barriers to participation [time and money]. Improving supply will require; flexible funding, improved quality and capacity building amongst providers.
- 3.11 Delivery of the strategy recognises that workforce development needs vary widely at the local level and that there should be as much local autonomy as possible requiring constant interaction at all levels. The strategy also requires genuine sharing of information and experience amongst partners.
- 3.12 The national LSC's Workforce Development Strategy has been developed in line with the National Workforce Development Strategy, and local LSCs have been required to integrate workforce development issues into their Local Strategic Plans.
- 3.13 However, alongside the National Workforce Development Strategy, the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation [VSNTO] has developed a Workforce Development Plan for the Voluntary Sector which was published in 2001. This plan recognised the greater responsibility given to LSC's and RDA's in supporting workforce development within the VCS and prepared the plan to facilitate this work.
- 3.14 The VCS Workforce Development Plan outlines a number of key skills gaps and issues for the sector and a detailed list of "priorities for action" for key partners.
- 3.15 A network of Sector Skills Councils [SSCs] have been established by the Government with the aim of "ensuring that the sector dimension is brought to bear on the whole UK learning system" [National Skills Strategy]. Improving workforce development, recruitment and retention has been identified as a key priority for SSCs by their lead body the Sector Skills Development Agency and features highly in all their Action Plans.
- 3.16 There therefore exists a framework for general workforce development activity across all sectors through the National Skills and Workforce Development Strategies, whilst the national VCS skills and workforce development strategies provide a framework for activity aimed specifically at the VCS. At the sub-regional level, the LSCs have addressed workforce development issues in line with the national agenda, and have incorporated consideration of VCS issues.

Social Inclusion, Neighbourhood Renewal and the Changing Role of the VCS

- 3.17 Alongside general efforts to increase workforce development, changes in other areas of Government policy have increased the potential role of the VCS, and therefore had an impact on the skills needs of its workforce.
- 3.18 The emergence of the social inclusion agenda has been one of the key developments allowing an enhanced role for the VCS. The VCS is clearly seen to be one of the key stakeholders in this agenda due to its ability to engage with some of the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged people including those within BME communities, disabled people and women.

- 3.19 There has also been progression of the Social Exclusion Unit's [SEU] National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal with the allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding to Local Authorities throughout the UK. The NSNR has set out a role for the VCS in local economic development through community finance initiatives and social businesses.
- 3.20 As part of efforts to revitalise local economies, the VCS has also become more involved in enterprise and entrepreneurship. The DTI's social enterprise strategy has aimed to encourage VCS involvement in neighbourhood renewal by supporting the development of social enterprise. The sector has also been given a greater role in public service delivery. The Treasury's cross cutting review of the role of the VCS in public service delivery suggests that the sector is "uniquely placed to reach marginalised groups and enable individuals to participate actively in their local communities". The DTI have recently announced their intention to place its Social Enterprise Unit under the remit of the Small Business Service. Some within the social enterprise sector have expressed concern that the move will inhibit implementation of the Government's 'Social Enterprise Strategy for Success', in particular for the expansion of public service delivery by social enterprise.
- 3.21 As Government policy has changed and evolved, the VCS have had to do the same. This has led to the need for increased skills development in new areas of activity and greater demand for workforce development.
- 3.22 To support this a range of different funding streams have been made available to enhance the capacity of the VCS to become more involved in a wider range of activities. The Community Empowerment Fund for instance is part of the NSNR and is aimed at increasing and enhancing community and voluntary sector involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships, in particular through the establishment of effective and inclusive community networks.
- 3.23 The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has also published a strategy to support neighbourhood renewal skills and knowledge, "The Learning Curve". The strategy recognises that specific skills are required for neighbourhood renewal and therefore seeks to:
- Build the knowledge base and apply knowledge
 - Develop organisational and interpersonal skills
 - Change behaviours to develop entrepreneurial and reflective behaviour
- 3.24 The immediate challenge for the strategy is to increase the opportunities for learning by stimulating the demand for, and supply of, learning opportunities and to develop ways of sharing best practice.
- 3.25 A key feature of Government activity to support the VCS has been to promote citizenship and volunteering opportunities and get more people involved in their local communities. This creates a demand for the training of volunteers, but also raises questions as to how the sector can best engage with individual volunteers or organisations which are run solely by volunteers to address workforce development needs.

The Regional Context

- 3.26 The Regional Economic Strategy [RES] and the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action [FRESA] provide the main frameworks for regional level activity.

- 3.27 One of the three strategic aims of the RES is to release and enhance the potential of all people to achieve a healthy learning region and social inclusion. Social inclusion and diversity, and employment and skills are also cross-cutting themes to the strategy.
- 3.28 The main objective within RES relating to skills development is to “achieve a radical improvement in the development and application of education, learning and skills, particularly high-quality vocational skills”.
- 3.29 In order to achieve this objective, partners will work to:
- Increase the quality, flexibility and responsiveness of education, learning and skills provision
 - Raise the skills and flexibility of the region’s workforce, so it can more effectively adapt to change and respond to economic opportunities
 - Improve educational attainment and vocational skills amongst labour market entrants
 - Create a culture in which education, learning and skills are highly valued by individuals and businesses
- 3.30 Although not directly related to the VCS, the RES includes a clear commitment at regional level to workforce and skills development.
- 3.31 The FRESA objectives form a key part of the RES and in addition to the four objectives outlined above, includes:
- Increase productivity through workforce development activity
 - Capitalise on public investment in the NHS, education, housing and transport
 - Increase the quality, flexibility and responsiveness of education, learning and skills provision
 - Connect those at most disadvantage to labour market opportunity, through learning and skills acquisition
 - Tackle barriers to labour market mobility
- 3.32 RES and FRESA both outline a role for the VCS in achieving regional objectives as well as activities of other key partners such as the local LSCs and Learning Partnerships who are required to produce sub-regional workforce development plans, which reflect local supply and demand issues.
- 3.33 Whilst both the RES and FRESA include measures to develop entrepreneurial and business skills as well as support general business development, Yorkshire and the Humber has also produced a social economy framework which is focused on supporting social enterprises.
- 3.34 The issues to be prioritised in 2003/04 include:
- Addressing inequalities in sub regional support for social enterprise
 - Assistance for the sector in accessing finance
 - Exploration of cluster development, especially in food and environmental business
 - Improving market opportunities for social enterprise, especially in the public sector
 - Addressing the skills needs of the sector
- 3.35 This research will therefore form a key component of activities to progress this work.

The Sub-Regional Context

3.36 Looking at sub-regional level, there are a number of different programmes and initiatives, which will have an influence on local level activity. The four sub-regions each have their own LSC which are having an increasingly important influence on local workforce development activity. Different areas of the region are also affected by Objective, 1, 2 and 3 funding, and there are numerous area based initiatives such as SRB and NRF which will again create different conditions for workforce development activity.

South Yorkshire

3.37 South Yorkshire LSC and the South Yorkshire Open Forum together with other key partners have established a training sub-group, which examines workforce development issues. Independent consultants have undertaken research into the workforce development needs of the VCS in South Yorkshire and this has informed the development of a sub-regional action plan for workforce development.

3.38 The action plan includes the following objectives;

- To continue to develop a strong and collaborative working relationship (LSC/VCS)
- To identify current and future workforce development needs in South Yorkshire
- Employer engagement – to work with partners to develop strategies for engaging employers and their workforce
- Plan and deliver training provision to meet identified needs and contribute to LSCSY corporate targets and link to the local compact agreement
- Creation of a sustainable organisational development culture, identifying/supporting the business skills needs of the sector
- To expand/build capacity to meet identified training and development needs
- To position the sector in regional discussions and plans as a growth sector that underpins and enables economic activity and growth
- To work with partners to explore demographic impacts on the sector and develop positive action strategies as appropriate to widen participation
- To work with partners to produce and disseminate examples of good and best practice across the sector and the network

3.39 Activity is also going on at Local Authority level. For instance, Doncaster Learning Partnership is in the process of undertaking research into the skills needs of frontline delivery staff; the Barnsley Learning Partnership is establishing a workforce development working group to develop a Barnsley-wide action plan, as will Sheffield Learning Partnership once restructuring has been completed.

3.40 In addition to funding from the LSC, workforce development activities in South Yorkshire are also supported by the availability of Objective 1 funding.

3.41 The Objective 1 programme includes a range of measures to support economic and social development in the South Yorkshire sub-region. This includes measures to develop an adaptable and entrepreneurial workforce and help communities access jobs and training. Funding can therefore be accessed for community based training provision, social economy entrepreneurship training and employee development schemes for instance.

North Yorkshire

- 3.42 Within North Yorkshire the LSC and with the North Yorkshire Forum have been engaged in a range of activities to support workforce development, although in some cases, these activities are still in their early stages of development.
- 3.43 One of the main initiatives has been the recruitment of a VCS skills broker. The skills broker is responsible for assessing workforce development needs in VCO's and possibly helping organisations to access training and plan for their training needs. This initiative is building up a body of knowledge and research around workforce development in the VCS and is facilitating the establishment of appropriate training provision.
- 3.44 The initiative is also trying to access organisations in the more remote areas of North Yorkshire and engage them with other organisations and training providers. Whilst a formal workforce development strategy for the VCS is not yet in place in North Yorkshire, the sub-region is starting to investigate and address some of these issues.
- 3.45 North Yorkshire, along with West Yorkshire and the Humber, is eligible for both Objective 2 and Objective 3 funding.
- 3.46 Objective 2 does not have the same levels of funding available for workforce development related activities as Objective 1, but does include revenue funding to support entrepreneurship and to give people the skills to contribute to greater business competitiveness.
- 3.47 Objective 3 is also available within parts of North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and the Humber. Objective 3 funding can be used to promote lifelong learning and access to training and education, supporting entrepreneurship and adaptability in the workplace.
- 3.48 ESF funding is now primarily administered through co-financing organisations e.g. LSC and Jobcentre Plus, therefore funding for workforce development related activities will also need to tie in with co-financing organisations' objectives.

West Yorkshire

- 3.49 West Yorkshire Learning Consortium is a co-operative of voluntary and community sector organisations who have an interest in learning and skills. It seeks to play a pivotal role in influencing workforce development policy and practice with a variety of policy makers and funding organisations, including LSC West Yorkshire and Yorkshire Futures. One of the consortium's key objectives is to provide information to the CVS on issues of learning and skills development.
- 3.50 The Consortium have just completed a study of workforce development needs within the VCS, based on 55 responses from 270 VCS groups mailed. Further work is planned in relation to ESOL. Voluntary Action Kirklees are also in the process of undertaking a face-to-face survey of their 75 members, which will investigate workforce development needs and engagement. Voluntary Action Wakefield were involved in a survey ['Establishing the Baselines'] co-ordinated by the Charities Information Bureau which assessed workforce development needs.

- 3.51 One of the key strategic objectives of the LSC West Yorkshire is to increase the engagement of employers in workforce development. Key priorities in this regard include the following:
- The promotion of the Investors in People quality standard.
 - Support for in-company Learning Centres.
 - Partnership activities with Business Link West Yorkshire.
 - Efforts to engage effectively those in the workforce with basic skills needs.
- 3.52 Of particular interest to this study is the LSC's Development Challenge pilot programme for the voluntary and community sectors which has generally proved very successful, although participants have required much more support than expected, making the programme more expensive than was originally anticipated.
- 3.53 More generally, the LSC is increasingly focusing much of its work and priorities [including workforce development] on six key sectors reflecting the make-up of the sub-regional economy; these are: construction, health and social care, manufacturing, transport and distribution, travel and tourism, and the voluntary and community sector [including social enterprises].

Humberside

- 3.54 Following a tendering exercise in early 2003, Workforce Development and Sector Brokers have been appointed for Chemicals, Agriculture and Food, and Ports and Logistics. Alongside these are Brokers appointed for Construction, Early Years, Health and Social Care. This complements existing Broker representation from the voluntary and community sectors.
- 3.55 This is part of the LSC Humberside's Workforce Development Strategy, which aims to increase economic prosperity in the sub-region. The sectors identified require an active approach to address workforce development needs within the sub-region.
- 3.56 Humberside Learning Consortium [HLC] exists to encourage and support learning within the CVS in Humberside, by making it easier for individuals to access learning opportunities and voluntary sector organisations to provide suitable learning opportunities. The Yorkshire Forward Skills Development Fund was used to fund a piece of research in 2001 ['What's Going on?'] which explored the training that takes place in VCS organisations and so provide baseline information about the 'third sector' in the Humber sub-region. A follow-up survey was completed in 2002.
- 3.57 The Consortium recently organised a 'Celebration of Learning' event in Hull with much of the focus on the future of workforce development in the CVS. HLC has also been instrumental in providing courses to the workforce of the VCS, including both paid staff and unpaid volunteers. They are also in the process of developing a Community Development Qualification for the sector's workforce and have been instrumental in the development of two co-financing bids from the Single Pot, which have focused on volunteer training and quality standards, both with qualitative research components.
- 3.58 More recently, People Projects have undertaken a postal survey [sample 87] to gather information about social enterprises and VCS organisations who aspire to be social enterprises, in order to inform the development of strategy and infrastructure development.

- 3.59 Boothferry CVS have also undertaken a recent survey in 2003, but the response rate was very poor [less than 10%] from over 300 VCS groups, which has limited the value and reliability of the results somewhat.

Concluding Remarks

- 3.60 There is a clear policy framework setting out workforce development priorities at the national, regional and sub-regional level. Within the four sub-regions, activity to support workforce development is already underway, although at varying stages of development. In most cases, activity has been underpinned by quantitative research. However, the availability of funding at the sub-regional, and local level, obviously has a significant influence on activity.

4. KEY CONSULTATIONS

Introduction

4.1 **mtl** have undertaken interviews 57 representing national, regional, sub-regional and local organisations with knowledge of the workforce development needs of the VCS. These people are as follows:

- West Yorkshire LSC ~ Lynne Wharton; Fiona McManaman; Margaret Cobb; Lucille Ingham; Mike Jackson; Steve Crowther; Barbara Bailey
- Humberside LSC ~ Sue Hall; Julie Hojda; Keith Woodcock; David Windles
- Humberside Learning Consortium ~ Jenny Mills; Andy Crossland
- Business Link Humberside ~ John Franklin
- Boothferry CVS ~ Lynne Bamford
- North Bank Forum ~ Katy Malinsom
- Voluntary Action North Lincolnshire ~ Barbara Diggle
- East Riding Central CVS ~ Ian Curtis
- West Yorkshire Learning Consortium ~ Quinn; Tony Herman; Chris Hollins
- Bradford CVS ~ Alice Wallace
- Voluntary Action Wakefield ~ Becky Wakefield
- Voluntary Action Kirklees ~ Elaine Peaker
- Voluntary Action Calderdale ~ Chris Keene
- Federation of Community Development Learning ~ Susi Miller
- Community Development Exchange ~ Denise Tone
- Community Work Training Company ~ Tony Herrmann
- Charities Information Bureau ~ Chris Hollins
- Lifetime Careers [Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham] ~ Chris Hiley
- Calderdale & Kirklees Guidance, Advice & Information Network [GAIN] ~ Alison Kinder; John Haslam
- South Yorkshire Social Enterprise Network [SYSEN] ~ Drew Bentley
- Sheffield Community Enterprise Support Centre [SCEDU] ~ Dave Thornett
- West Yorkshire Social Enterprise Support Centre [SESC] ~ Chris Hill; Amanda Vickers
- Humberside Co-operative Development Agency ~ Jonathan Clarke
- Community Economic Regeneration Team [CERT/ Barnsley] ~ Andy Arnold
- The Development Trust Association ~ Hugh Rolo
- South Yorkshire and Humberside Open College Network ~ John Sanders
- West and North Yorkshire Open College Network ~ Guy Farrar
- Assessment Centre for Voluntary Organisations ~ Terri Wolf
- GOYH ~ John Millar; Janet Munn
- CERT [Humber] ~ Neil King
- LSCSY ~ Steve Pierpoint; Mandy Crawford - Lee
- LSCNY ~ Tricia Walker

- VC Train ~ David Holdsworth
- NE Lincolnshire Learning Partnership ~ David Kent
- Voluntary Action Barnsley ~ Linda Smith
- Voluntary Action Rotherham ~ Lynn Richardson
- NYFVO ~ Jane Mander
- Easingwold Community Care Association ~ Robert Ebb
- Ripon Council for Voluntary Service ~ Lynette Barnes
- Ripon Council for Voluntary Service ~ Jill Lawson
- Craven Voluntary Action ~ Paul English
- Stokesley and District Community Care Community ~ Sue Allan
- Selby District Association for Voluntary Service ~ Gill Cashmore
- SYLSC ~ Joanne Pepper, Ian Swain
- York Council for Voluntary Service ~ Roger Newton
- South Craven Community Action ~ Milton Pearson
- Barnsley Learning Partnership ~ Tim Lees
- Calderdale Learning Partnership ~ Tina Butrick
- Northallerton and District Voluntary Service Association ~ Hazel Kirkby
- Resourcing the Community ~ Cath Mahony
- Voluntary Action Sheffield ~ Sue James
- Wakefield Learning Partnership ~ Catherine Lunn
- Sheffield Learning Partnership ~ Dee Defgranges
- North Yorkshire Learning Partnership ~ Jane Inman
- Doncaster Learning Partnership ~ Rachael Pullen
- South Yorkshire Open Forum ~ Clare Burnell
- Yorkshire Futures LMI Working Group ~ Various Representatives
- Practitioners Working Group ~ Various Representatives
- Leeds Learning Partnership ~ Clive Robinson
- SCEDU ~ Alan Dukes
- Northern Clusters ~ Ian Drayton
- STEP ~ Gavin Boyce

4.2 Our key lines of enquiry during this consultation process have been to:

- Establish what relevant research has been undertaken, is underway or is planned
- Identify areas of existing workforce development learning provision for the VCS and explore key issues in relation to the demand for such provision and where there may be shortfalls
- Establish whether organisations possess databases of VCS groups/ organisations in their areas and whether they might be willing or able to share these should the need arise
- Identify other useful contacts/ organisations with whom it might be useful for us to consult
- Discuss the possible future direction of research [Stage 2 of the study] and the factors which need to be taken into account before proceeding

- 4.3 We now turn to the key matters arising from these consultations with a bearing on the issues addressed during this first stage of the research, and consultees' views about how the study might progress in Stage 2.

A. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: NEEDS, PROVISION AND GAPS/ KEY ISSUES

Researching Needs and Provision

- 4.4 As the Appendix [and Section 2] illustrates, some substantial research projects have been undertaken at a national level on workforce development needs within the VCS sector [e.g. NCVO, Paulo], most of which are of direct relevance to the Yorkshire and Humber region and parts thereof. Then of course, there are a series of sub-regional and local assessments of demand and/ or available provision. In addition, some sub-regional learning partnerships [perhaps with the partial exception of North Yorkshire] are in the process of undertaking or planning further work in this field.
- 4.5 Existing work is underway in various localities across the region, including Leeds, Calderdale, Sheffield and Humberside, either in support of the development or updating of local learning plans or with reference to specific capacity-building projects.
- 4.6 A number of organisations offering training and developmental courses to the VCS have done so on the basis of 'market research' which they usually conducted themselves, ranging from semi-formal [but usually] small postal surveys to focus groups and informal discussions through local learning forums and community empowerment networks.
- 4.7 Whilst mainstream provision is available across the region, the VCS itself may be in a good position to provide the flexible, appropriate provision required by the sector. This does however require quality standards to be adopted by the sector.

Workforce Development Needs

- 4.8 Several consultees pointed to the difficulties faced by VCS groups in accurately assessing their own workforce development needs, and monitoring them on an on-going basis. More help in developing capacities to do this [e.g. training needs analysis skills, preparing training plans etc] was mentioned. It was suggested that some VCS organisations may in fact under-estimate their own skills base and capacities.
- 4.9 Social enterprise networks suggested that more needs to be done specifically to investigate the workforce development needs of the social enterprise sector although some work was underway; there were also some reservations and concerns about how this might best be achieved. They also believe a number of these network organisations already have a 'good handle' on needs within the sector i.e. we need to build on what we know already.
- 4.10 In many respects the training and development needs of social enterprises mirror those in private enterprises which operate within similar markets. Management structures in social enterprises however, tend to be flatter and a lot of skills are often invested in one or two key people. This makes managing growth and succession planning problematic for many social enterprises.

- 4.11 Another key message from our consultations was that there are some gaps in provision to meet the workforce development needs of the VCS and social enterprises, but that these needs are varied, not always easily identifiable and are often quite localised. They are also changing in accordance with the quite profound changes which have been affecting the VCS over recent years as it has become [according to one VCS consultee] "more mainstreamed". There was certainly a broad consensus that although there is a significant amount of training provided across the region, there is a shortfall of appropriate, reasonably priced, flexible and accessible provision, with some areas [e.g. North Yorkshire and parts of the Humber] more acutely affected than others.
- 4.12 An important finding, however, is that most consultees regard these issues as most acute at the local level and that there is a fair degree of consensus as to what the needs are; the main issues of concern appear to be about how effectively [or otherwise] these needs are being addressed.
- 4.13 A distinction needs to be drawn between skill shortages and skills gaps. Low pay within the sector, and the temporary nature of many jobs were identified as key underlying causes of skill shortages; the fairly buoyant state of the economy and labour market in many areas [though there are exceptions] also accentuated problems. Aside from [or rather in addition to] skill/ people shortages, there were a number of areas which might be regarded as skills gaps or shortfalls within and affecting the VCS, and it is to these that we now turn.
- 4.14 Key areas of skills deficit within the sector are as follows:
- Obtaining and managing funding - lot of demand over previous years, but some evidence that this may be on the wane. The need is shifting away from awareness raising and training in making bids, towards issues relating to various aspects of project and programme management, especially - financial profiling/ management; monitoring and evaluation and reporting.
 - Organisational development - an extension of the latter in many respects, but more inward-facing e.g. business and financial planning, recruitment/ selection, marketing. There is a perception that perhaps one area of under-provision is in regard to trusteeship, and in some areas management committee skills. Some consultees felt that more needs to be done to make VCO's aware of the role of workforce development in wider organisational development.
 - Inter-personal ['life'] skills - assertiveness, communication, chairing/ running effective meetings, committee skills, public speaking, confidence building, 'jargon-busting'. Capacity building and community/ volunteer enablement.
 - Regulatory issues emerged as an important issue, notably in regard to equality, health and safety, taxation, legal status and environmental issues. Child protection is also becoming a big issue for some in the sector, with related training needs emerging.
 - ICT - predictable perhaps. The key points emphasised here were:
 - ➔ The need for basic - intermediate - advanced levels
 - ➔ The need for some non-accredited, 'short-sharp' [top-up] courses
 - ➔ More emphasis on creative and applied aspects to IT e.g. media, publications, web site design
 - ➔ Development of research skills, especially using the internet e.g. web site search techniques, down-loading data etc

- The issue of entrepreneurship within a social enterprise [VCS] setting was alluded to. While this remains something of an unresolved issue, it was regarded as an increasingly important issue and one which needed to be better responded to
- Management development skills - especially managing people, finances and stakeholders. Higher level skills and development needs are important, with a perceived shortfall in 'refresher' and short course provision in particular - law, equality, personnel etc
- There was also reference to specific service delivery skills [including customer care, counselling, managing information, skilled trades etc]. Increasingly staff and some volunteers have to engage in multi-tasking as service delivery grows and clients needs become more complex. This is putting considerable stress on some people, suggesting that stress and time management may be valuable for some workers

4.15 The most significant barriers to accessing suitable training were deemed to be: time and staff/ volunteer cover; cost [especially higher level and extended training; and convenience [especially the location at which courses are run]. The short-term nature of much funding on which VCS groups rely was felt to compound the problem, partly due to limited funds for training, but also because of the concern that the returns on that investment for the group [rather than the individual] may be lost if/ when the project comes to an end, or the individual moves on anyway.

Addressing the Needs

- 4.16 Providers of training and development services within the VCS acknowledged the fact that they faced skills gaps themselves, and consequently saw the need for more and better 'training for trainers' courses - training to enhance tutor skills and also to attract new entrants. There is a need to distinguish [though not too starkly] between the needs of those delivering management training and those addressing the skill/ development needs of community development workers [where a lot of investment is happening in some areas e.g. Humberside].
- 4.17 Similarly, there was felt to be the need for more learning mentors to aid and assist progression, especially amongst volunteers and management group/ committee members. Thirdly, there are capacity issues amongst paid VCS staff, especially with regard to skills in undertaking training needs assessments and in developing individual training plans. A few consultees suggested that the workforce development needs of those delivering non-accredited learning was something of a 'grey area', meriting further investigation - is there enough of the right kinds of 'flexible' provision, and for whom? Others suggested this was something of a distraction to the key policy agenda.
- 4.18 More generally, there were criticisms that much training provision is funding-led and insufficiently attuned to the needs and circumstances of the VCS, although there was a sense in which the situation was improving rather than deteriorating. There does appear to be some duplication of funding with regard to between different organisations with the need for better co-ordination between the various pots of money available and the organisations responsible for them [especially Yorkshire Forward, LSCs and national/ Government agencies]. Whilst some consultees saw merit in a voucher scheme to facilitate access to training provision and relieve the administration pressures of securing funding for training, others felt that it was a lack of funding for training which was a key issue rather than VCO's ability to access existing funding streams.

- 4.19 Several consultees [especially those within the VCS] felt that too much emphasis was being given to NVQ-related provision. The time/ resource-consuming nature of collecting evidence and the difficulty facing volunteers in doing this [less so, paid staff] was felt to be either misunderstood or set aside due to Government targets and ethos. The actual modes of provision funded [i.e. delivery mechanisms] was also mentioned, with some consultees suggesting there was scope for more shorter courses delivered within VCS settings and for mentoring-type activities. Some consultees felt the VCS needs to try to sensitise mainstream funding to better meet their needs which may require better communication between funders and the wider VCS.
- 4.20 Another concern amongst consultees is the level at which courses are set, with many feeling that these are too basic and lag-behind wider developments in much of the voluntary sector, less so amongst community groups.
- 4.21 With regard to social enterprises, some consultees felt that LSC and Business Link workforce development strategies perhaps under play the needs of social enterprises. Increased liaison with Yorkshire Forward and DTI was argued by some to be a useful exercise.

B. DATABASE AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS

- 4.22 The majority of local development agencies/ CVSs have databases of members which can be used for mail-outs, but cannot be passed onto another organisations for reasons of client confidentiality, lack of prior agreements or assurances that this would not be done. In some cases, address labels can be purchased, but this will not provide telephone contact details for follow-up of non-responses or significant sorting of the sample.
- 4.23 Sub-regional learning consortia [e.g. VCTrain] also usually have a 'database' of organisations but this often only includes those with whom they contact regularly. Therefore, this largely includes organisations already engaged in training activities.
- 4.24 A small number of organisations [e.g. Unltd, VAWD] are in the process of pulling databases together, although most of these are really client databases, rather than comprehensive datasets of VCS groups/ organisations. As such, access to those databases [and use of the contact details] may be problematic in some instances.
- 4.25 The general picture was therefore of a highly fragmented and uneven pattern of database provision across the region with few consistencies in how the data is collected, organised, stored or accessed. There are patchy areas where no reliable VCS contact details appear to be available at the present time [e.g. Boothferry, North Lincolnshire and much of North Yorkshire].
- 4.26 Social enterprise networks in South and West Yorkshire in particular [e.g. SCEDU, SSYSEN, SESC] seem to be undertaking mapping exercises at the moment, although these were acknowledged to be far from comprehensive and quickly out of date. There seems to be less data on the social enterprise sector/ employer base available in North Yorkshire and the Humber.
- 4.27 Some CVSs, voluntary sector forums and local learning partnerships report that they have reasonably robust local databases of voluntary and community groups and might be willing to share them [at cost] to assist with any relevant research.

C. VIEWS ABOUT STAGE 2 OF THIS RESEARCH

- 4.28 The majority of the people we spoke welcomed this research and were happy to engage with us [and those who have commissioned us] in this initial stage of research. They felt that an effort to identify and review existing work in this field was a useful endeavour, and *they would like to receive some feedback* on the work undertaken to date, particularly that relating to existing research studies. Several also felt there was scope to improve the dissemination of best practice across the region amongst VCS groups and those responsible for policy and funding.
- 4.29 There is a widespread feeling that many of the key issues regarding workforce development within the VCS [perhaps less so social enterprises] are now known about and there is a keen desire for more action [and funding] to address these needs and develop appropriate provision. Research to inform sub-regional activities has already been undertaken [or is underway] in most areas, although North Yorkshire is a partial exception.
- 4.30 Another view expressed by several consultees was that much of the recent research within this field had really produced results which were much to be expected i.e. they had offered little in the way of new insights or evidence. It was also noted that several studies had drawn conclusions based on fairly limited sample surveys [usually due to poor survey response rates].
- 4.31 Turning to views about further possible research as part of a Stage 2 to this study.
- 4.32 The majority of consultees are very reticent about the need for further primary-based research, whether based on postal, telephone or widespread face-to-face interviews with VCS groups across the region or sub-regions. Response rates from recent CVS user satisfaction surveys have been low, in some instances less than 10% [e.g. Boothferry CVS]. Some baseline survey work has also proven to be of limited value, described by one consultee as "too broad, too vague and quickly out of date". There is now a clear feeling of 'survey fatigue' across much of the VCS which would result in very low response rates to any future survey work at this time, whether initiated by Yorkshire Futures, LSCs or even bodies representing the interests of the VCS.
- 4.33 There is however a degree of support for a more detailed examination of some key issues. The local context emerges as an important factor in the minds of many consultees - the differences between needs and provision tend to be most acute at a very local level, therefore research would need to be very specific if it were to add real value.
- 4.34 There may also be some potential for carefully targeted research focusing on the needs of different types of social enterprises, although the main gap seems to be more in terms of whether these are being properly addressed at a local and sub-regional level. We hope to investigate the possible scope of any further in consultation with South Yorkshire networks at a forthcoming meeting organised by Dave Thornett of SCEDU.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Introduction

- 5.1 The conclusions of this initial stage of work reflect our interpretation of the findings which have emerged from our extensive consultations and our reviews of the existing research and policy context in this field.

Conclusions and Key Messages

- 5.2 The main conclusions drawn from this stage of work are as follows:

- There is already a significant body of research which has investigated the workforce development needs of the VCS, more is underway and planned. In addition to this body of research, there is a clear policy framework and guidance, and relevant strategies and action plans designed to co-ordinate and prioritise activity in this and related areas and allocate funding accordingly.
- There is a high degree of consistency as to key overall findings emerging from existing work, especially with regard to workforce development needs, at local as well as 'higher' levels. Previous studies have highlighted a number of specific issues, which may merit further investigation using qualitative approaches such as focus groups, selective interviews or workshops.
- There exists a substantial national and regional policy framework relating to workforce development activities across all sectors, much of which alludes to the importance of addressing these needs effectively within the VCS - these include the National Workforce Development Strategy, the National Skills Strategy, the Regional Economic Strategy and the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action [FRESA]. Other policy initiatives in relation to neighbourhood renewal, lifelong learning and social inclusion also underline the importance of developing the capacity of the 'third sector' as a whole, and social enterprises in particular.
- Our consultations indicate that there appear to be a variety of shortfalls or deficits [less outright 'gaps'] in appropriate provision to meet the needs of the dynamic but also fragmented and localised VCS across the region. There appears to be a fair degree of consensus as to what the workforce development needs are within the VCS, with more interest in developing and enabling learning provision to address these needs, particularly within sub-regions. In this regard, concerns relate to the extent to which provision is funding [rather than needs] driven, whether too much emphasis is being given to NVQ-related provision and whether there is a sufficient 'staircase' of provision to higher levels suitable for paid workers and volunteers within the VCS. There are also often very practical barriers to VCO's accessing training provision which need to be overcome. These practical barriers are often more acute in rural areas and for particular disadvantaged groups e.g. disabled, BME.
- The big [and consistent] messages to emerge from the consultation exercise are really about developing a suitable infrastructure and ensuring appropriate funding mechanisms are in place at a regional and sub-regional level. The customisation of provision and [where appropriate] assessment of demand seems to be much more appropriate at the local level where operational issues relating to affordability, accessibility and quality can be dealt with more efficiently. It is also important to acknowledge that much is already happening or is planned [by way of sub-regional activity] within some parts of the region, notably South and West Yorkshire.

- There is a highly uneven and fragmented picture with regard to the availability and accessibility of VCS databases across the region. Bringing together a comprehensive and reliable database of VCS organisations and groups across the region, even sub-regions [let alone maintaining it] would be nothing short of a Herculean task, well beyond the scope of this study.
- With regard to any further work as part of this study, our consultations point to two major areas of concern:
 - ▶ Not 'reinventing the wheel' - building on, rather than duplicating existing research and common knowledge, with a particular focus on localised provision and good practice.
 - ▶ Acknowledging widespread survey fatigue within and across much of the VCS. The unequivocal message to strategic partners and funders we heard from the consultees we spoke with was.."stop surveying us, and get on with addressing the needs as we know them".
- The opportunity this study has afforded to map existing research and distil key issues was broadly welcomed, but there were differing views about the need for further work, and the direction this might take. In this regard, we conclude that:
 - ▶ There is very little [if any] support for any widespread quantitative [survey-based] research across the region or sub-regions. Any approach should not be a "one size fits all" approach, as this would fail to take into consideration local activity and nuances.
 - ▶ There is a degree of support for a more detailed examination of some key issues highlighted by consultees and the existing body of research at local levels, but with the clear intention of working with and supporting local networks and initiatives.
 - ▶ There is a stronger preference for a more active research mode and approach, strongly attuned to pump-priming innovative and new approaches, coupled with disseminating and embedding good practice and 'locking into' the existing policy frameworks. This is precisely the approach being advocated by NCVO.

The Way Forward ~ Options for Consideration

- 5.3 The first and most fundamental issue before the Steering Group for this project is to decide collectively:
1. Whether further research is actually required at this stage; and if so:
 2. How further work would add value to the existing body of knowledge and know-how identified in Stage 1 [aims].
 3. What the precise lines of enquiry further research should follow [objectives].
 4. Who would benefit from further work, and how? [dissemination/added value]
- 5.4 Assuming that some further work is deemed necessary and beneficial, we now draw on the key findings and conclusions of this study to set out possible options for the continuation of the project in Stage 2.
- 5.5 It is clear from the consultations that there is no desire for more large scale primary research as there is already a good understanding of the key issues and some degree of survey fatigue within the sector. There may be a number of ways forward, but we suggest that the following 3 options are given close consideration by the Project Steering Group:

- a. Undertaking selective qualitative research to address key issues in sub-regions and/ or localities where there appears to be a] identifiable knowledge gaps and b] a willingness for VCS organisations and other stakeholders (e.g. Learning Partnerships) to facilitate and co-ordinate such work.
- b. Embarking on a programme of action-based research targeting key issues already identified [e.g. shortfalls, quality standards, linkages with SSCs,] through innovative projects led by VCS organisations and other intermediary organisations such as Learning Partnerships/Consortia/Social Enterprise Networks.
- c. Embarking on a qualitative research exercise to identify and account for best practice across the region and ensure this is disseminated and embedded amongst VCS groups, intermediaries, and providers of workforce development services, against the backcloth of the existing policy and strategic framework.

5.6 Before proceeding with a further Stage of research [of any kind], we recommend that the Steering Group revisit the original aims and objectives in order to satisfy themselves that the direction any further work may take will add value to the existing body of knowledge and policy context as set out in this report. Revising and clarifying the purpose of further research could help ensure that people 'on the ground' in the VCS and amongst LSCs and Learning Partnerships [amongst others] feel they have a real stake in it and how it may be of benefit to them in more effectively meeting the workforce development needs of this important and vibrant sector.

APPENDIX I
PROFILE OF RESEARCH STUDIES