

# **LSC CAPACITY BUILDING FUND**

**Final Report  
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## **Executive Summary**

### ***Introduction***

This is a report of the evaluation of an LSC-funded project aimed at building capacity in the Voluntary and Community (Volcom) sector. The Capacity Building Fund involved the distribution of £200,000 to each of the 9 LSC regions, with another £200,000 invested in 2 pilot projects, one aimed at further developing consortia to enable delivery of the Prince's Trust Team Programme and one led by Federation of Community Development and Learning (FCDL), aimed at building capacity in the voluntary and community sector.

### ***Strategic Context***

The Fund sought most directly to support the implementation of the *Working Together* strategy, which recognises that many Volcom organisations – especially those representing black and minority ethnic groups - need investment to build their capacity to work with LSC systems and standards.

The Fund also links with other government strategies and agendas, including: “*21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: Realising Our Potential*”, *ChangeUp*, *E2E* and *Skills for Life*.

### ***Operation of the Fund in the Regions***

The £1.8 million available from National Office was divided equally amongst the 9 LSC regions, which in turn adopted a variety of approaches to apportioning resources. Most commonly, LLSCs decided on an equal split but in some cases modified to some extent according to concentrations of BME communities. Other approaches to allocating resources involved a partnership approach between LLSCs to provide a funding across a region rather than divide it into relatively small sums for each LLSC, and invitations to LLSCs to bid to the regional pot.

The emphasis was very much on getting money spent and monitoring for potential underspend, in order to be able to reallocate any spare resources in time for them to be utilised although, in the event, there were few underspends reported.

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Some LLSCs appeared to be bemused by the focus on BME groups, especially given low concentrations of BME communities in some areas, said to have more pressing equality and diversity priorities locally include gender and learning disabilities. The counter argument to this was that BME groups were often under-developed and in need of additional support, especially in relation to their ability to engage with their LLSC.

In addition, it should be noted that the Fund has offered some individual LLSCs relatively modest resources and with higher priorities, officers have not been able to commit much time to engaging with a sector that demands a lot of time if it is to be engaged successfully. Nevertheless, in the context of the Capacity Building Fund, most LLSCs responded admirably to the challenge of getting meaningful activity underway within such a short timescale.

In most cases LLSCs commissioned organisations known to them to undertake capacity building activities on their behalf. Most popular were mapping exercises, in order to better understand the nature and scale of activity amongst BME voluntary and community groups. However, there are concerns that they will identify needs for additional capacity building activities and may well raise expectations that such support will be made available from the LSC, which will not be able to respond positively.

The Capacity Building Fund has also offered new opportunities for training and development, and promoted/supported enhanced partnership working, as well as a host of other activities.

Some concern was expressed about the sustainability of activities, with LLSCs slimming down in terms of staffing, work with the Volcom sector reportedly being relegated below other priorities within many LLSCs, according to many of those interviewed, and limited capacity in the CVS network.

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### ***Prince's Trust Team Programme***

This built on existing work already undertaken with a range of sector organisations working in partnership with The Prince's Trust to widen participation in learning.

Prince's Trust provides the 'brand' for the provision, which is either offered through a consortium, co-ordinated by Regional Colleges who access funding for programmes to be delivered by delivery partners or by a college direct. The target audience for the provision is disaffected 16-25 year olds

With reference to its original objectives, the project has made progress but has some distance still to travel. Perhaps most importantly, whilst it has helped to build capacity within some LSC regions to enable the Pilot model to be delivered, the development of consortia needs to be underpinned by a robust funding plan that can secure resources from appropriate sources over a reasonable period of time

### ***Federation for Community Development and Learning***

Federation for Community Development and Learning (FCDL) promotes and supports community development learning, creates training opportunities and develops relevant qualifications. FCDL's membership is described as mainly small, locally-based, voluntary and community sector groups who want to either access or deliver Community Development training in order to satisfy local needs. Much of this training is said to be informal/non-accredited.

Funding was awarded to a variety of groups and ranged from £400-£4,000, with most in the £2,000-£4,000 range. This resourced a variety of activities, including the delivery of accredited and non-accredited training.

The consensus amongst delivery partners was that whilst those participating in activities resourced by the funding had provided very positive feedback, they felt frustrated at not having more time to plan, prepare for and implement the activities. There was also a feeling that whilst any financial support was appreciated, that which was available through the Fund was insufficient to cover all of the costs of some proposed activities, which meant them being scaled down or additional funding having to be secured from elsewhere.

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FCDL expects to over-deliver on its contract with the LSC, which it believes is testimony to both the level of demand for such activities and its ability to facilitate such activities through its membership and other networks. FCDL also believes it highlights demand for unaccredited as well as accredited community development learning.

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations***

The Capacity Building Fund would appear to have made an important contribution to the 'Working Together' strategy, albeit that some LLSCs feel that the Fund was somewhat tokenistic and possibly little more than something with which to sweeten the strategy. There is also some concern regarding its relationship to 'Change Up' funding and the potential for duplication.

Nevertheless, many of the activities supported by the Fund have already proved to be valuable, be it through delivering training, better understanding the needs of the sector, engaging more effectively with the sector etc.

Over the coming year (and beyond) it will be important for the regional Volcom leads, with the support of other colleagues, to build upon the activities resourced by the Capacity Building Fund. To fail to do so will result in the LSC potentially losing credibility with the Volcom sector. On the other hand, to succeed in doing so has the potential to invigorate the sector, promote learning to under-represented groups and realise the ambitions of the 'Working Together' strategy.

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2005 ERS was commissioned by LSC National Office to undertake an evaluation of an LSC-funded project aimed at building capacity in the Voluntary and Community (Volcom) sector.
- 1.2 The Capacity Building Fund involved the distribution of £200,000 to each of the 9 LSC regions, with another £200,000 invested in 2 pilot projects, one aimed at further developing consortia to enable delivery of the Prince's Trust Team Programme (£150,000) and one led by Federation of Community Development and Learning (FCDL), aimed at building capacity in the voluntary and community sector (£50,000). A separate report has been provided to LSC National Office on the delivery of the Prince's Trust Team Programme, although the operation of the Prince's Trust Team Programme in the East region is included in this report.
- 1.3 The report is based on the following:
- Review of relevant documents including:
    - 'Working Together' strategy;
    - LSC bidding guidance;
    - bid documents; and
    - promotional literature.
  - Face-to-face discussions with LSC national office staff;
  - Face-to-face discussions with staff in local LSC offices (LLSCs) in the following regions:
    - East
    - London
    - North East
    - North West
    - South East
    - South West
    - Yorkshire & Humber
  - Face-to-face discussions with Federation of Community Development and Learning (FCDL); and
  - Telephone discussions with a sample of delivery partners.

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- 1.4 It did not prove possible to make arrangements to see LLSCs in the West Midlands. Those in the East Midlands deferred any activity until after the period to which this evaluation relates.
- 1.5 This evaluation seeks to establish:
- How decisions were taken as to how the money should be spent;
  - What the money has been spent on in each instance;
  - Contribution of activity to 'Working Together' (e.g. consortia approaches, capacity building and sector engagement)<sup>1</sup> and other relevant Government agendas; and
  - Evidence of good practice.
- 1.6 This evaluation has required participants to contribute significant amounts of their time, for which we are very grateful.

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<sup>1</sup> Building on the achievements of previous national sector pilots  
*Capacity Building Fund Evaluation*



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## 2.0 Strategic Context

### ***Working Together Strategy***

- 2.1 The *Working Together* strategy outlines recognition of the value of the Volcom sector in four main strands.
- Provider of Learning Opportunities
  - Employer
  - Source of Expertise and Channel for Communication
  - Communication and Working Relationships
- 2.2 The Strategy recognises that many Volcom organisations need (varying degrees of) investment to build their capacity to work with LSC systems and standards. In due course the inclusion of core costs in funding agreements and greater access to mainstream funding should assist with long-term sustainability of Volcom learning activities. The Strategy notes that capacity among black and minority ethnic Volcom organisations and infrastructure is particularly under-resourced, hence the focus of the Capacity Building Fund on BME groups.
- 2.3 The Working Together Strategy was viewed positively by LLSCs interviewed for this evaluation, but it appears to have raised expectations without bringing with it resources that might meet those expectations. In many respects LLSCs are unsure as to how they can help deliver the strategy.

### ***Public and Voluntary Services***

- 2.4 In *“21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: Realising Our Potential”*, the Government sets out the priority attached to improving the skill levels of the public services workforce. More specifically, this relates to: Armed Forces, Children’s Services, Court Services, Education, Fire Service, Health, National and Local Government, Police, Prison Service, Probation and Social Care. The added relevance here is that the Fire Service has been one of the main participants in the Prince’s Trust programme.

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- 2.5 For its part, the LSC also committed to continuing to improve the skills of workers who are delivering public services and to seek to do so in a more co-ordinated fashion. This was articulated in a Public Sector Strategy, endorsed by the Adult Learning Committee.
- 2.6 A measure of the scale of the issue is that more than a million public service workers are eligible for LSC support towards a first Level 2 qualification<sup>2</sup>. A recent NIACE Skills for Life survey indicates that 72% of healthcare staff have numeracy skills below Level 2 and 56% have literacy skills below Level 2.
- 2.7 Amongst the difficulties in addressing the issue, it is acknowledged that some existing models of provision have not engaged employers or learners in the sector as effectively as they might. This is because in some regions some existing providers have been unable to meet employer requirements in respect of location, timing, content and delivery of learning and how providers engage and manage the relationship with employers, and because employers need to be more flexible in terms of issues such as time off and encourage greater levels of 'buy in' from certain staff. Hence, amongst the LSC's objectives is to create a straightforward and affordable structure and pathway for employers and employees to access the learning they need.
- 2.8 Priorities within the LSC's strategy can be summarised as developing the following:
- a shared stakeholder and supply chain action plan, aligning relevant strategies and resources, and involving key sponsor Government departments and the Sector Skills Development Agency;
  - an effective brokerage and advice network to enable the sector to simply access provision, partly through widening the access of current LSC programme/initiatives consistently to public services;
  - a comprehensive provision strategy that meets the needs of employers and learners, drawing on the full range of LSC provision; and
  - a coherent funding strategy with the sector, exploring joint funding opportunities between agencies and facilitating better access to funding support for employers.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on 2003/04 Labour Force Survey data.

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### **Active Communities Unit**

- 2.9 In 2002 HM Treasury produced *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review* which recommended measures to strengthen the support and assistance available to voluntary and community organisations. Subsequently, research by the Voluntary Sector NTO identified significant skills gaps in the voluntary and community sector, including fundraising, volunteer management and trusteeship.
- 2.10 The Government's response was 'Capacity Building and Framework Infrastructure for the Voluntary and Community Sector', also known as 'ChangeUp'. ChangeUp aims to ensure that voluntary and community organisations have the skills, knowledge, structures and resources to achieve their full potential as service deliverers. As such, it supports the Home Office's Active Community Unit Public Service Agreement number 8, which aims to 'increase voluntary and community sector activity, including increasing community participation by 5% by 2006'.
- 2.11 ChangeUp is a capacity building framework for the voluntary and community sector, launched in June 2004 and involving an initial £80m investment, two thirds of it earmarked for delivery at a regional or local level. ChangeUp focuses upon four strands: infrastructure, skills, governance and performance, and sets out a 10 year strategic framework for achieving the following aim:

*...that by 2014 the needs of frontline voluntary and community organisations will be met by support which is available nationwide, structured for maximum efficiency, offering excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded.*

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- 2.12 The key principles underpinning the ChangeUp framework are that:
- the voluntary and community sector should lead on bringing about change;
  - one size solutions won't work: local flexibility is needed in determining priorities for change;
  - actions need to be focused on the difference made to voluntary and community organisations on the ground, with delivery taking place as close to the point of need as is economically viable;
  - initiatives should reflect and promote diversity including in recognition of the fact that community, BME, faith and rural organisations do not currently have equal access to support or representation; and
  - sustainability is paramount: ensuring funding secures long term impact, and paves the way to more stable and secure support services.
- 2.13 'Developing Capacity', published by the Home Office Active Communities Unit in March 2005, heralded another £70 million for capacity building work over the next two years through 'Capacity Builders', a new sector-led agency to manage the ChangeUp fund. Discussions between the LSC and ACU are ongoing, aimed at ensuring their respective activities dovetail and, where possible, add value to each other.

### ***Other Programmes***

- 2.14 LSC-funded activity such as that supported by the Capacity Building Fund should also support other government programmes, such as E2E and Skills for Life.
- 2.15 E2E is a learning programme which began in England in August 2003, and is primarily aimed at young people aged 16-18 who are not participating in any form of post-16 learning. It is designed to help them to develop their motivation and confidence, personal effectiveness and basic and key skills, and to give them a range of opportunities to gain vocational knowledge, skills and understanding. The aim is that they will progress into a Modern Apprenticeship, further learning and/or a job. Young people undertake learning in three core areas: basic and key skills, vocational development and personal and social development.

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- 2.16 A range of qualifications is available, but the programme is not qualification-driven. E2E is based on a partnership between providers (usually those who in the past offered Life Skills, Preparatory Training and NVQ Learning at Level 1), Connexions and the voluntary and community sector.
- 2.17 'Skills for Life' is the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. The priority is to improve the skills of those groups where literacy and numeracy needs are greatest and where we can make most impact, particularly:
- Unemployed people and benefit claimants;
  - prisoners and those supervised in the community;
  - public sector employees;
  - low-skilled people in employment; and
  - other groups at risk of exclusion.

### **Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)**

- 2.18 The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) funds, supports and champions the new UK-wide network of influential employer-led Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are organisations developed by groups of employers in industry or business sectors. SSCs are employer-led and actively involve trade unions, professional bodies and other stakeholders in the sector to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK.
- 2.19 Each SSC agrees sector priorities and targets with its employers and partners to address four key goals:
- Reducing skills gaps and shortages
  - Improving productivity, business and public service performance
  - Increasing opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce, including action on equal opportunities
  - Improving learning supply, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards

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- 2.20 In addition, Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs) being developed to deliver action to meet priority skill needs that will drive improved business performance. Operationally, an Agreement will put in place a framework which allows employers to sign up to a key set of sector skill priorities with the main funding and delivery agencies. This framework will allow all parties to agree what actions collectively will be taken to meet the identified priorities by:
- Providing strategic employer leadership;
  - Putting in place a mechanism for identifying shared objectives and contributions between employers and agencies;
  - Establishing a clear set of accountable actions.
- 2.21 The Volcom sector does not have an SSC, but it does have the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation (VSNTO), established as a partnership between four voluntary sector councils: the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action. This supports workforce learning and development for paid staff, volunteers, management committee members and trustees within the voluntary and community sectors.
- 2.22 In this respect, LSC will work with VSNTO in order to meet the needs of the Volcom sector. In particular, the VSNTO has established a Workforce Development Hub to ensure that voluntary and community organisations have easy access to information and resources to support a culture of learning and development and are able to recruit and retain a skilled workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities they work in.

### 3.0 Operation of the Fund in the Regions

#### *Allocating Resources*

- 3.1 The £1.8 million available from National Office was divided equally amongst the 9 LSC regions. Although not sparking much controversy, this was a bone of contention for one of the larger regions that felt it should have had a share based on its share of population/BME population.
- 3.2 The regions in turn adopted a variety of approaches to apportioning resources, following an amicable discussion of the options available. Although differing views were put forward in a number of instances, these seemed to have been by way of suggestion rather than LLSCs demanding they receive a certain allocation. Indeed, even those that might have argued for a larger share based on their larger population – and, specifically, the concentration of BME communities within their local areas – did not always do so. This seems to partly reflect an appreciation of the need for all LLSCs to have a minimum level of resource and of the practicalities of being able to spend a larger amount of money within a short period of time.
- 3.3 Most commonly, LLSCs decided on an equal split but in some cases modified to some extent according to concentrations of BME communities. For example, in order to inform the allocation of funding between each of the LLSCs in the North West, an analysis was conducted of BME populations in each area (shown below).

LLSC	Population	White (%)	BME (%)	% NW BME pop.
Cheshire & Warrington	864,868	98	2	4.44
Cumbria	487,607	99	1	1.25
Lancashire	1,414,727	93	7	25.45
Greater Manchester	2,482,328	91	9	57.42
Greater Merseyside	1,480,234	97	3	11.41

- 3.4 Apportioning funding entirely on the basis of the distribution of BME populations would have resulted in a concentration of funding in Greater Manchester, with very little going to Cumbria. It was therefore decided to split half of the money equally and allocate the other half according to the distribution of BME populations, as illustrated in the table overleaf.

<b>LLSC</b>	<b>50% Equal split (£)</b>	<b>50% based on BME pop. (£)</b>	<b>Total (rounded) (£)</b>
Cheshire & Warrington	20,000	4,440	25,000
Cumbria	20,000	1,250	22,000
Lancashire	20,000	25,450	45,000
Greater Manchester	20,000	57,420	31,000
Greater Merseyside	20,000	11,410	77,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>200,000</b>

- 3.5 It should be noted however that this was not a drawn out process. On the contrary there was swift and amicable agreement on the distribution of funds, with LLSCs keen to get on with committing resources rather than debate the bases on which they might apportion funding amongst themselves. It was agreed that any underspend be allocated to Greater Manchester and/or Greater Merseyside, given the concentrations of BME communities in those areas.
- 3.6 Other approaches to allocating resources involved a partnership approach between LLSCs to provide a funding across a region rather than divide it into relatively small sums for each LLSC, and invitations to LLSCs to bid to the regional pot.
- 3.7 Generally speaking, and given the very short timescale within which the project had to be delivered, the emphasis was very much on getting money spent and monitoring for potential underspend, in order to be able to reallocate any spare resources in time for them to be utilised. In the event, there were few underspends and those there were appear to have been recycled within regions, typically involving LLSCs with higher concentrations of BME populations receiving allocations from those with smaller BME populations, reflecting their relative ability to commit resources and achieve results.



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### ***Utilising Resources***

- 3.8 In considering how the Capacity Building Fund could be used to best effect, some LLSCs appeared to be bemused by the focus on BME groups, especially given low concentrations of BME communities in some areas, said to have more pressing equality and diversity priorities locally include gender and learning disabilities.
- 3.9 Furthermore, there was a suggestion that lessons learnt in building capacity amongst BME groups might not necessarily be applicable to the Volcom sector as a whole and might therefore be of limited value.
- 3.10 The counter argument to this was that BME groups were often under-developed and in need of additional support, especially in relation to their ability to engage with their LLSC. There were though reports from LLSCs of conflicting guidance from National Office as to how the Fund ought to have been used and indeed whether or not it should have been targeted on BME groups.
- 3.11 In addition, it should be noted that the Fund has offered some individual LLSCs relatively modest resources and with higher priorities, officers have not been able to commit much time to engaging with a sector that demands a lot of time if it is to be engaged successfully. In response to this, LLSCs in the Eastern region formed clusters in order to ensure that resources were not spread too thinly. Generally, work with the Volcom sector at the LLSC level is thought to be disproportionate to the funding attached to the sector.
- 3.12 Nevertheless, in the context of the Capacity Building Fund, most LLSCs responded admirably to the challenge of getting meaningful activity underway within such a short timescale.
- 3.13 In some cases this was achieved by LLSCs using the money to deliver activities directly, but in most cases it involved LLSCs commissioning third parties. In almost all cases, and given time constraints, LLSCs have commissioned organisations known to them to undertake activities rather than seeking to engage new organisations or embark on a tendering process.

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3.14 Inevitably, the commissioning approach has been selective and as such there is no guarantee that the most appropriate organisations were used. Particular issues seem to have arisen with regard to the degree to which umbrella organisations actually represent what can be a varied and diverse sector. Difficulties in this regard can lead to political sensitivities within the Volcom sector being aroused. However, LLSCs cannot have been expected to be anything other than pragmatic about what they might do and how they might do it.

### ***Capacity Building Activities***

3.15 It is apparent that there are different levels of capacity building. Depending on the stage to which a group has developed, it will have different needs in terms of the support that will help it to reach the next level in its development. The main capacity issues were believed to relate to the inability of Volcom groups to access LSC funding.

3.16 Mapping exercises, in order to better understand the nature and scale of activity amongst BME voluntary and community groups, have proven especially popular. However, there are concerns that they will identify needs for additional capacity building activities and may well raise expectations that such support will be made available. The worry is that LLSCs will be expected to provide this support, but will not have the resources (in terms of personnel or finance) to deliver.

3.17 Nevertheless, the information gathered in mapping should help in making a case to other potential funders, whilst other capacity building work should better equip Volcom groups to articulate that case in a more appropriate and effective manner than they may have been able hitherto.

3.18 More generally, the Capacity Building Fund has offered new opportunities for training and development, and promoted/supported enhanced partnership working, which should further strengthen the Volcom sector.

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3.19 Other activities included:

- reviewing LLSCs' information on BME communities and identify/fill data gaps;
- profiling the characteristics of BME communities;
- compilation of a (more) comprehensive database of Volcom groups, especially those representing BME communities;
- development of BME Volcom groups/umbrella organisations;
- developing a communications strategy for engaging BME communities;
- publications and events designed to engage with BME groups;
- development of websites to provide easier access to information and facilitate pooling of information;
- investing in leadership capacity and general business skills, including financial management and governance;
- investing in other capacity building training, including IT training;
- developing the membership of BME Volcom groups;
- establishment of consortia of learning providers;
- training needs/workforce development analyses;
- assessor/trainer training;
- promoting learning champions within the Volcom sector;
- investigating the key barriers faced by BME groups in accessing LSC funding;
- provision of advice to groups who might seek LSC funding, including some who had tried but failed;
- considering how the LLSC can work more effectively with the Volcom sector.

3.20 Some concern was expressed about the sustainability of activities, with LLSCs slimming down in terms of staffing, work with the Volcom sector reportedly being relegated below other priorities within many LLSCs, according to many of those interviewed, and limited capacity in the CVS network. In this regard, there is a danger that some activities resourced by the Fund will have provided a short term boost rather than built longer term capacity or, at least, that the potential of some activities supported by the Fund will not be realised.

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#### 4.0 Prince's Trust Team Programme

- 4.1 This built on existing work already undertaken with a range of sector organisations working in partnership with The Prince's Trust, not least in seeking to widen participation in learning.
- 4.2 The Prince's Trust Team Programme comprises two main elements:
- Providing the opportunity for employed and unemployed 16-25 year olds to participate in a 12 week personal development programme.
  - Offering employees or secondees the opportunity to develop Team leader and coaching skills.
- 4.3 Prince's Trust provides the 'brand' for the provision, which is either offered through a consortium, co-ordinated by Regional Colleges who access funding for programmes to be delivered by delivery partners or by a college direct. An example of operation is that a Regional College provides dedicated staff to work alongside staff from the Volcom, private and public sectors to support them deliver the programme and by working together ensure that provision by all members of the consortium is consistent. Indeed, some aspects of delivery of the Programme were shared (e.g. basic skills, internal verification, quality assurance etc.).
- 4.4 So far as the Prince's Trust is concerned, it is apparent that the Capacity Building Fund has been focused largely on supporting activity which builds upon the National Pilot.
- 4.5 With reference to its original objectives, the project:
- Continues to work towards embedding the achievements of the National Pilot, and has some distance still to travel;
  - Has developed partnerships in most regions between the Prince's Trust, delivery partners and funding colleges though this is yet to come to fruition in other regions;
  - Has helped to build capacity within some LSC regions to enable the Pilot model to be delivered, but the development of consortia needs to be underpinned by a robust funding plan that can secure resources from appropriate sources over a reasonable period of time;

- Has developed the basis for a sustainable model for this particular target group of learners, although ultimately sustainability will be determined by regional LSCs according to their own priorities;
- Has contributed to informing the debate regarding future funding of programmes within the voluntary and community sector by developing learning consortia to deliver fit for purpose provision;
- Has made a contribution to further developing the partnership approach for the sector, but much more work remains to be done in some LSC regions; and
- Has contributed to the development of a framework of credible qualifications fit for purpose for the voluntary and community sector.

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## 5.0 Federation for Community Development and Learning

- 5.1 Federation for Community Development and Learning (FCDL) promotes and supports community development learning, creates training opportunities and develops relevant qualifications. It is based in Sheffield, where it employs 3 full time professional staff and a handful of part-time support staff. Its operation is overseen by a management committee, half of which comprises individuals from BME communities.
- 5.2 FCDL relies heavily on strategic funding received from the Home Office's Active Communities Unit, but also receives subscriptions from its members (of which there are around 300) and generates income from sales of learning materials. It operates across the UK, often in partnership with other networked organisations. FCDL's membership is described as mainly small, locally-based, voluntary and community sector groups who want to either access or deliver Community Development training in order to satisfy local needs. Much of this training is said to be informal/non-accredited.
- 5.3 Within FCDL (but with potential for becoming freestanding) is Ubuntu, a network of individual BME activists and groups who share an interest in promoting and delivering CD learning from black perspectives. The third party to the proposal was the England Standards Board for Community Development Work Training and Qualifications (ESB), which promotes/endorsees good practice in CD learning programmes.
- 5.4 FCDL was only awarded around 30% of the sum it originally applied for, which severely compromised its ability to deliver the type of community development learning project it had envisaged. For example, the original bid included more networking activities and opportunities to exchange experience, but this has not been possible under this project.
- 5.5 The proposal outlined four outcomes that the project sought to deliver:
- Establish a relationship between the partners and LSC national office, which recognised the potential of the partners to contribute to the 'Learning Together' strategy;

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- Build capacity amongst BME and other voluntary and community groups to engage successfully with LLSCs;
  - Build capacity amongst BME and other volcom groups to provide good quality CD learning opportunities to marginalised communities and individuals; and
  - Pilot 20 non-accredited taster sessions by BME groups in 4 regions, and 3 new National Open College Network (NOCN) units in different regions.

5.6 In promoting the project it contacted a random selection of organisations on its database, both members and non-members. However, conscious that it only had £50,000 to distribute, FCDL did not want to encourage too high a level of demand. In addition, had time allowed, FCDL would have preferred to have adopted a more structured and strategic approach, both to the invitations to bid for money and in the selection of proposals. Of necessity, each proposal was considered on its merits as it was submitted rather than being able to support a variety of bids from a balanced selection of organisations. It did though attempt to involve smaller, marginalized groups. Nevertheless, FCDL believes it has been able to support some innovative (and therefore risky) approaches. At the same time, it did decide to turn down proposals that it considered unfeasible. In addition, whilst it sought to encourage proposals of a good standard, it did not want to support the more professional organisations, such as CVSs and local authorities.

5.7 Preparing proposals for submission to FCDL was said to have been quite challenging for some groups. Although FCDL had endeavoured to minimize the bureaucracy involved, they recognised the need to ensure that transparent and robust systems were in place for awarding and monitoring funding.

5.8 Funding awarded ranged from £400-£4,000, with most in the £2,000-£4,000 range. One of the difficulties in administering funding relates to the requirement on organisations to demonstrate that expenditure has been incurred before submitting a claim. However, organizations with very little cash were unable to fund expenditure up front, as a result of which FCDL found itself providing forward funding.

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5.9 Activities funded have included:

- 'Black perspectives in CDL' - a course developed by FCDL/Ubuntu (delivered twice) that was intended to relate specifically to working with BME groups.
- 'Training the trainers – aimed at developing skills amongst inexperienced workers and enhancing the skills of more experienced individuals in delivering OCN accredited courses.
- Edge International - paying for tutor fees, venues and transportation for the delivery of non-accredited training to 12 learners.
- Rochdale Intercultural Development Group - received £4,000 towards costs of delivering 7 courses, helping to fund tutors, crèche facilities, food and venues. There were 52 learners and the 2<sup>nd</sup> module of training was accredited (all achieved the accreditation).
- Kitemark - obtained £650 for its 'Involving People' project, aimed at volunteers and workers within the organisation to assist them in strategies to involve people more in the organisation. The course ran over a 6 week period and Fund money was spent on the tutor, registration, resources and materials. There were 10 learners and the course was accredited by the Open College Network.
- Black Development Agency - received money to build a Community Development Team for ongoing capacity building.
- South West Foundation – was awarded £2,000 to deliver training on community development through FCDL's two training packs: 'what is community development'; and 'the problems with organisations'. The second pack was used with a smaller group of people with disabilities. There were 72 individual learners in total but 92 learner places, all non accredited, bite size taster courses.

5.10 FCDL had requested that it be allowed to carry forward £6,000 into the 2005/06 financial year, but was encouraged by the LSC to use all of its allocation before the end of March 2005. Given the demand for training it had no difficulty in doing so, funding additional sessions in the South West and North West and covering the cost of accrediting a 'training the trainers' course in the South East.



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- 5.11 In view of the limited amount of funding available and FCDL's desire to see all of this spent on capacity building activities, it did not resource itself to provide the degree of management of the project that it would have liked to have undertaken. It would have preferred to have followed the model developed in 'Celebrating Achievement', deploying a dedicated outreach worker in order to identify and access the most isolated groups.
- 5.12 Indeed, the consensus amongst delivery partners interviewed was that whilst those participating in activities resourced by the funding had benefited, they felt frustrated at not having more time to plan, prepare for and implement the activities. There was also a feeling that whilst any financial support was appreciated, that which was available through the Fund was insufficient to cover all of the costs of some proposed activities, which meant them being scaled down or additional funding having to be secured from elsewhere. In one case, the offer of financial support was declined as the organisation was not able to complete the training before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005.
- 5.13 On a more positive note, feedback from learners appears to have been very positive, especially amongst learners for whom this represented the first opportunity to participate in training, who had reportedly enjoyed it and want to do more.
- 5.14 FCDL expects to over-deliver on its contract with the LSC, which it believes is testimony to both the level of demand for such activities and its ability to facilitate such activities through its membership and other networks. FCDL also believes it highlights demand for unaccredited as well as accredited community development learning. Its members report that support from local LSC offices is patchy, even for OCN accredited courses. FCDL therefore believes that the level of interest in participating in the capacity building activities that this project has supported demonstrates the need to carry out additional work and for the LSC to resource this appropriately.

- 5.15 More specifically, FCDL would like the opportunity to structure an approach that can best meet the individual needs of the voluntary and community sectors (which it regards – as do many others – as quite separate). Indeed, whilst many voluntary organisations have become established, credible and come to be perceived as part of the mainstream, FCDL sees community bodies becoming increasingly marginalised.
- 5.16 In addition, FCDL hopes that the LSC will recognise that the approach this project has piloted has been effective, albeit that the resources invested will have generated relatively modest results. This may in turn facilitate easier and more consistent access to funding through LLSCs.

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## 6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 There is a firm belief amongst those interviewed that the Capacity Building Fund represents genuine added value and has enabled LLSCs and others to do something to meet the high level of demand in the Volcom sector for such support. As such, the Fund is thought to have made an important contribution to the 'Working Together' strategy, albeit that there is some concern regarding its relationship to 'Change Up' funding and the potential for duplication.
- 6.2 However, some LLSCs feel that the Capacity Building Fund was somewhat tokenistic and possibly little more than something with which to sweeten the 'Working Together' strategy. In addition, the short term nature of the funding does not relate to the principles established in the 'Working Together' strategy.
- 6.3 Nevertheless, many of the activities supported by the Fund have already proved to be valuable, be it through delivering training, better understanding the needs of the sector, engaging more effectively with the sector etc. As such, the appendix includes a number of examples of good practice that might be shared amongst all LLSCs in order that they might consider the appropriateness of adopting similar approaches/practices in their local areas.
- 6.4 It is interesting to note that none of the activities that have been supported by LLSCs appear to have collided with other capacity building work funded by the LSC under this initiative (FCDL/PT). This seems likely to reflect the vastness of the sector, but might also hint at an absence of linkages between LLSCs and members/associates of FCDL/PT, or even a possibility that LLSCs tend to fund the 'usual suspects'.
- 6.5 Whilst the appointment of regional Volcom leads has not yet had the desired impact in all regions in terms of sector engagement, it certainly has the potential to offer a key interface between the LSC, Volcom groups and organisations such as Prince's Trust and FCDL.

6.6 Over the coming year (and beyond) it will be important for the regional Volcom leads, with the support of other colleagues, to build upon the activities resourced by the Capacity Building Fund. To fail to do so will result in the LSC potentially losing credibility with the Volcom sector. On the other hand, to succeed in doing so has the potential to invigorate the sector, promote learning to under-represented groups and realise the ambitions of the 'Working Together' strategy.

**APPENDIX: SUMMARIES OF REGIONAL LSC ACTIVITIES**

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## East

Funding was coordinated through LSC Norfolk given that regional co-ordinator for both the VCS and the Working Together Strategy was based there. Given the short timescales involved, the allocation of resources was decided at a meeting between partners with monies allocated according to priorities within the sector locally.

The BME focus was challenged by Hertfordshire and Norfolk LSCs, both of whose BME populations are small and dispersed. More pressing equality and diversity priorities locally include gender and learning disabilities.

A longer lead in time would have allowed more region-wide activity to be planned in line with the desire for a region-wide impact in terms of VCS work, with local actions feeding into a regional Action Plans. However, these are difficult to produce given the different progress made in each area and varying local priorities.

This funding has offered new opportunities for training and development, whilst the benefits of enhanced partnership working should further strengthen the VCS.

It was decided to adopt a cluster approach between neighbouring LLSCs according to geography, the type and scales of VCS activity and existing projects currently operating within one or more local areas. Three clusters were devised (below) in order to provide a critical mass of funding.

- Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Luton;
- Suffolk and Essex; and
- Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

*LSC Norfolk/LSC Cambridgeshire* have developed a project with the regional Citizen Advice Bureaux (CAB). The project will provide training needs analysis for front line staff within CAB in line with Skills for Life. Discussions had been taking place with CAB locally prior to the announcement of the capacity building funding with regard to promoting apprenticeships. Therefore the funding arrived at an opportune moment to drive this initiative forward.

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One difficulty has been overcome in terms of protracted 'new provider' contracting arrangements with the LSC. These have subsequently been abandoned given the complexity and timescales involved with payment now arranged via a purchase order. Relationships between the LLSC and CAB and local training providers have been enhanced as a result of the funding.

*LSC Essex/LSC Suffolk* have adopted a BME focus to planned activity in identifying requirements through a programme of research. Proposed work covers four projects with an allocated budget of £60,000 enhanced through Link Up and LID monies.

*LSC Hertfordshire/LSC Bedfordshire/LSC Luton* proposed strengthening local BME VCS groups, communities and networks through greater interaction between the LSC, regeneration bodies and the VCS. Hertfordshire received £10,000 of the £50,000 set aside for this cluster with Luton and Bedfordshire receiving the remainder due to the greater numbers of BME communities in these areas. It is hoped that the funding will allow expanded working links with smaller groups in particular, with a view to investing in leadership capacity and general business skills, including financial management.

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## London

The LSC London Group of Performance and Funding Directors agreed that LSC London South would co-ordinate this project, partly because it houses the VCS lead.

Activity has been based on the template for the Working Together Strategy, aiming to fill gaps in provision and building capacity through learning. The different skills of staff in each of the five LLSC offices have been utilised to share best practice.

Previous engagement has mainly emanated from ESF-funded activity although the range, composition and relative strength of groups accessing this money has been unclear in the past. This exercise has enabled a more comprehensive database of groups to be compiled in line with research into the needs and scope of the sector.

Funding was divided equally between the five LLSCs, despite London East being the biggest in terms of area and its VCS sector. The logic was that this would both produce projects of benefit to local areas and permit a co-ordinated approach to addressing the needs of the VCS across London in line with the Working Together Strategy and other LSC equality/diversity and workforce development strategies. Developing five different projects across London was expected test different forms of activity and highlight best practice in engaging with the BME VCS.

*LSC London East*, which suffers from the highest levels of deprivation in London, aims to identify and attempt to fill management skills gaps within VCS organizations, through management and governance training.

*LSC London North* has provided further funding to an existing ESF-funded project to build capacity in the VCS but with a new emphasis on BME organisations.

*LSC London Central* has targeted funding to develop VCS organisations as employers by building capacity generally, developing a brokerage system specifically to assist BME groups and to strengthen a project that aims to increase the take-up of apprenticeships amongst BME groups/individuals.



*LSC London West* has used the funding to boost capacity by encouraging learning advocates or champions within the VCS in connection with an existing project which has proved to be successful in the Greenwich area.

*LSC London South* has sought to improve the quality of support to the VCS sector by recognising and recording achievement of individuals in non-accredited learning. Activity was informed by one-to-one sessions with six VCS organisations and CVS in the six local boroughs.

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## North East

Four sub-regional consortia have been established in the North East, which are co-ordinated by a 'North East LSC VSC Capacity Building Coordinator', funded via DISK, SRB & LIDF with experience of the VCS. This is thought to have been of benefit in engaging with the sector in terms of both knowledge and credibility.

Activity began in mid January with an extension granted to the end of July to cover the time used to fill posts. £50,000 will be drawn down by the end of March with a further £50,000 carried forward to April-July.

Activity is based upon a framework of:

- VCS coordination (£20,000)
- Management development and training (£4 x £30,000)
- Consortium development and training (£4 x £10,000)
- Links to BEACON (BME representative group) (£15,000)
- Marketing (£5,000)

Training provided through a variety of providers including those from the voluntary sector to provide taught assessors and other accredited training. Funding has also contributed to research into the VCS at a sub regional level in terms of the scope of the sector and workforce development needs.

The funding was announced shortly after a separate event was held in October 2004 based on 'Working Together' so the capacity building monies came along at an opportune moment to sustain the momentum developed.

Each area already had a degree of activity, i.e. VCS representation on LSPs but without the consortia approach to co-ordinate. Each area has developed and costed its own Development Plan although sub regions are working to different timescales.

Through the consortia approach the North East has concentrated on building a broad VCS network, raising a profile and enabling people to buy into a process of diverse training for a diverse sector. The co-ordinator attends regional groups in a bid to provide a dedicated resource within the VCS support infrastructure.

Whilst the methodology employed in the North East has been labelled as a consortium approach, there have been no strict definitions as to how individual groups are set up in terms of constitutions etc.

There are concerns of a lack of continuation or sustainability when funding ceases, although three of the four groups are bidding for ESF co-financing monies.

No underspend is anticipated.

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## North West

Meeting called by regional co-ordinator and analysis conducted which showed apportioning funding entirely on the basis of distribution of BME populations would have resulted in concentration of funding in Greater Manchester, with very little going to Cumbria. Therefore decided to split half of the money equally and allocate the other half according to the distribution of BME populations. Agreement was swift and amicable, with LLSCs keen to get on with committing resources rather than debate apportionment of funding. Agreed that any underspend be allocated to Greater Manchester/Greater Merseyside, given the concentrations of BME communities in those areas

Although all of the resources were devolved to LLSCs, there was regional co-ordination, e.g. by placing a large order collectively for a toolkit for BME groups, a discount was obtained. In addition, a common basis for data collection was established.

Difficulties were caused by guidance from national office going to voluntary organisations before it went to LLSCs, raising unrealistic expectations, with some LLSCs being inundated with enquiries from voluntary groups, most of whom had to be disappointed, which caused some disquiet.

*LSC Cheshire & Warrington* commissioned its local Voluntary Sector Learning Forum to deliver a project through BME organizations, including a Race Equality Council.

*LSC Greater Manchester* awarded £70,000 of its £77,000 to the Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Organisations, which funded a number of activities:

- Establishment of a consortium of providers
- Provision of specific advice to groups unsuccessful in seeking LSC funding
- Drafting a report on how the LLSC can work with the sector more effectively
- A series of 10 workshops, covering 'understanding funding', 'bid writing' etc.
- Exploring how a consortium approach might work.

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The other £7,000 resourced a specialist BME consultant to:

- Look at the LLSC's information on BME communities and identify/fill data gaps
- Profile the characteristics of BME communities
- Investigate the key barriers faced by BME groups in accessing funding
- Develop a communications strategy for engaging BME communities.

*LSC Greater Merseyside* had already drafted its Working Together Strategy Implementation Plan and was therefore able to fund activities identified in the Plan, in conjunction with the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Women's Technology Centre, an existing contractor.

A proposed mapping exercise was conducted in another context, so the LLSC focused resources on (3) 1 day workshops (an introductory guide to becoming an LSC contractor), a 2 day workshop (a more detailed session on becoming an LSC contractor) and a 1 day conference (providing networking opportunities).

*LSC Lancashire* aimed to take forward the BME Pact's business plan and project a more positive image of BME groups and to celebrate their diversity. The LLSC funded a series of ½ day events, the production of promotional materials, enhancement of the Community Website and purchasing of a capacity building toolkit for BME groups.

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## South East

There was existing regional work with RAISE (VCS infrastructure group) to develop a Compact Framework for the South East, establishing how the six LLSCs wanted to work with the VCS. RAISE in particular brought a need from the sector for coherence in approach from all LLSCs. An action list was produced and published in April 2004. The Capacity Building Funding has been used to build on this work. Regionally, spend has been focused on mapping exercises, engagement models, partnership and consortia and workforce development. In this respect, these fit most strongly within the Intelligence /Communication elements of Working Together. There is a region-wide project being delivered in partnership with the Dyslexia Institute on trainer training for Skills for Life Professional Development Centres, which currently lack specific expertise in dyslexia.

*LSC Hampshire and Isle of Wight* has funded 2 projects. The *Evolve* project is enabling Southampton CVS to participate in a mapping exercise led by Hampshire County Council. Funding is being used for a process of updating their database of information on BME organisations. The second project is support for *Empathy*, a non-constituted group of black managers and community leaders. The money is enabling them to take their activities forward and develop their membership.

*LSC Kent and Medway* provided funding to a recently developed BME Support Network to carry out mapping activity of existing organisations (with associated identification of gaps). It was expected that the research would help to identify groups and encourage them to join the Network, as well as to feed back on their learning and skills needs. This feedback will inform other work to be undertaken locally.

*LSC Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire* has employed the funding for three elements. Firstly, to fund researchers to make contact with BME groups to feed information back to CVS in Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire. In Buckinghamshire it has been used to encourage greater coherence between organisations so that stronger CVS can be developed, through the appointment of a facilitator who is organising networking meetings and events. An appointment has also been made to encourage formation of a group of Asian leaders/elders in North Oxfordshire.

*LSC Surrey* did not submit a bid for the Fund. There were no existing projects that could have easily been expanded and the timeframe was not conducive to starting a new project.

*LSC Sussex* developed three strands of work through the Voluntary Sector Learning Consortium. Firstly, development of a website into which individual organisations can feed. Secondly, workforce development and capacity building in terms of quality of delivery, preparing for inspection under the Common Inspection Framework, and training provision. Thirdly, to support collaboration work between FE Sussex (consortium of FE colleges in Sussex) and the VCS.

*LSC Berkshire* used funding to engage with BME organisations beginning with a mapping exercise, then to encourage them to get a presence on a developing pan-Berkshire website for the VCS infrastructure. Secondly, money has been used to identify and support 30 learning representatives.

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## South West

The £200,000 allocated to the region was divided equally amongst the 6 LLSCs, even though LSC West of England (which includes Bristol) has the highest concentration of BME communities in the region. This LLSC was though perfectly content with an equal division of the monies, not least because of the difficulties in spending it within such a short timescale. There was a delay of 3-4 weeks in getting funding to LLSCs as money from national office was paid to the regional budget holder and did not feed through to other LLSCs until December.

For some LLSCs this was the first time they had undertaken this type of work. Approaches taken by each of them developed wholly independently, with no discussions between them in advance of committing spending. Indeed, there has only been one meeting since the project commenced. It is acknowledged that an initial meeting may have been helpful in discussing common issues and learning from one another.

Each of the LLSCs has been keen to fund activity that complements/can feed into WAPAF (a volcom capacity building and infrastructure development project). Most activities are likely to continue into April.

*Bournemouth, Poole & Dorset* undertook an audit of volcom groups. All of the £33,000 was passed on to Dorset Racial Equality Council to undertake a baseline survey to establish the number of groups, their size, capacity etc.. They then looked at the training needs of key individuals within these groups as well as officers within statutory bodies with responsibility for diversity issues.

*Gloucestershire* identified 11 BME groups offering learning opportunities and invited funding bids. Having received only four applications, bidding for a total of just under £30,000, they were all funded. The overall aim is to develop groups to enable them to participate as members of the regional WAPAF consortium and to run IAG contracts.



*Somerset* is working with an organisation called Vista, which has a remit to engage BME groups. It identified 19 groups with varying levels of capacity. The LLSC is also funding a development worker in Somerset Racial Equality Council to work with these groups, leading to the development of an umbrella organization. A key issue identified was the low level of IT literacy amongst these groups, so the project is paying for 19 broadband licences, 9 laptops with printers and 5 sessions of website training. The LLSC was unaware that this project was not supposed to fund capital expenditure.

*West of England* commissioned the Black Development Agency to undertake:

- Mapping of BME groups involved in the delivery of learning or engaging with disadvantaged people, whom they might refer to learning providers
- Workshops in each of the 4 local authority areas within the LLSC area, to raise awareness of LLSC targets/priorities, and how to deliver LSC-funded learning
- Develop a consortium of BME volcom learning providers.

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## Yorkshire & Humber

Decisions were taken as to the spending profile between LLSC areas according to the LSC Operational Guidance document and basic decision making around the table according to the specific needs of each local area. Funding has been split between local projects and two regional projects. The regional group meets monthly to discuss progress.

There is a feeling that the short-termism of the arrangements is inappropriate for the VCS as this only raises expectations that may not be able to be sustained. Longer timescales would have been better to make a real difference. As such, the group aimed to improve activity already being delivered in a bid to gel with current activity whilst linking local activity with regional BME organisations through a communications infrastructure.

Key difficulties include apprehension that appropriate outcomes of the highest quality are achieved in order to be satisfied that the funding is adding value. It is thought that the process has helped, although representing only the tip of the iceberg of what could be achieved. In terms of outputs, it is hoped that the increased unit costs of working with the VCS are recognised.

*LSC North Yorkshire* is using existing providers for courses including Assessor Professional Development. This is rolled out regionally (£70,000). Looking to attract predominantly new BME learners and the providers working with them through BME community networks and LSC/VSC partners whilst looking at barriers to engagement with BME (inter professional development). The ultimate aim is to develop BME Champions – an idea that could be developed further with sufficient time/resources.

LSC Humberside is delivering training through Humberside Learning Consortium (HLC), which provides a strategic overview in ascertaining what the needs of the sector are and how much funding is required. WAPAF and LID funding had been affecting similar work in taking organisations through the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). GO-YH research revealed problems in Humberside within a small but disparate BME population which had little or no support so looking to develop support network from which to identify need through consultation.

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LSC West Yorkshire has utilised £30,000 for regional capacity building and invested £45,000 to enhance the capacity of the five Learning Partnerships in West Yorkshire (£9,000 each) with specific reference to BME groups.

*LSC South Yorkshire* has built upon the benefits from similar capacity building projects funded through Objective 1. £30,000 has been used to support capacity building amongst BME organisations including a small scale local capacity building programme for a group of BME VCS organisations to deliver ESOL provision. Other activity includes desk research to establish a strategy to engage with disaffected groups, self-assessment reporting for 10 BME organisations, delivery of awareness training sessions to follow on from STAR in relation to CIF, OFSTED ALI inspection and introduce ESOL curriculum and “Skills for Life” programme and the delivery of training sessions on LSC financial procedures and systems.