

# **Mutual Advantage:**

**Working with Voluntary  
and Community Organisations  
on Learning and Skills**

### ***Acknowledgements***

This report was written by EDuce Ltd under contract to Hampshire TEC, as part of a DfEE project funded under the Education and Training Development Agenda.

The views expressed are not necessarily those of Hampshire TEC, DfEE or any other Government Department.

Hampshire TEC and the authors would like to thank all those who contributed to the project: partner TECs in Sandwell and Wigan, local voluntary sector participants in each area, and the organisations which provided case study and other illustrative material.

Particular thanks go to members of the project management group: Jacqui Bridges (DfEE), Skinder Hundal (Sandwell TEC), Venika Kingsland (Hampshire TEC), and Elaine Walsh (Wigan CCTE).

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ISBN: 1 84185 442 5

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Copies of Part 2 are available on the DfEE website at [www.dfee.gov.uk/led](http://www.dfee.gov.uk/led) and from DfEE Publications, see page 41.

# Mutual Advantage: Working with Voluntary and Community Organisations on Learning and Skills

## Summary

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) with its local arms, the Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs), cannot achieve its goals without effective partnerships with the voluntary sector. Voluntary and community organisations have many and varied contributions to make, through promoting the benefits of learning, widening access to opportunities for all sections of the community, and integrating learning and skills into economic and social regeneration activities. They constitute a significant sector, with more than 500,000 jobs (larger, for example, than agriculture or publishing and printing) and have their own workforce development needs to address.

There are challenges to LLSCs and the sector itself, however, in realising the potential that the new learning and skills policy agenda offers for benefiting the people who are served by - and who work in - the sector.

One key to moving forward is the pursuit of **mutual advantage**: LLSCs, voluntary and community organisations and other partners working together to help each other achieve their goals - to the benefit of the people and communities they serve.

The report has been produced to share some of the lessons and good practice that already exists in partnerships involving TECs and the voluntary sector which will be relevant to the work of local Learning and Skills Councils. It draws on development work in three TEC areas (Hampshire, Sandwell and Wigan) and developments in other parts of the country including Birmingham, Calderdale and Kirklees, Sheffield, Norfolk and London.

Materials have also been produced to help voluntary organisations and LLSCs:

- follow up relevant networks and contacts
- review roles and potential contributions
- identify resources for building organisational capacity in the voluntary sector
- work better together

### 10 KEY MESSAGES

The "Mutual Advantage" report sets out and develops 10 key messages in response to the question, "**what do we need to do to make more of a difference on learning and skills?**".

### Key Messages for the Voluntary and Community Sector

#### 1 *Appreciate the opportunities in the new learning and skills agenda*

There are many opportunities for voluntary and community organisations to take in the new learning and skills agenda, relevant depending on their purpose and the needs of their users, members, clients, staff and volunteers. For some, providing education and

training opportunities is the major part of their activities. Others may have no such involvement but could develop their contribution in signposting, promoting learning, providing feedback on the needs of learners and potential learners, and ensuring that learning opportunities feature as part of community development and regeneration activities.

#### 2 *Promote what the sector has to offer*

While there are many clear signals from the Government that the voluntary and community sector has an important part to play - not least in relation to providing 'first rung' learning opportunities - there is a need to promote what individual organisations and the sector as a whole has to offer. Crucial arguments are how the sector can:

- reach many potential individuals whom others cannot, or find difficult to attract into learning
- promote learning within the voluntary sector workforce
- inform and guide personal development and learning choices made by service users

#### 3 *Improve networking, organisation and capacity for partnership*

Voluntary and community organisations have less of a say than they could have in the learning and skills agenda, because they are often not organised around such matters. Even where there are representatives from the sector on partnership bodies, these individuals are not necessarily well linked to the wider sector and often lack the backup, knowledge and confidence to deal on equal terms with others around the table. Partners may not realise the costs and time involved for voluntary organisations in taking part in partnerships and in the networking, communications and consultation needed to raise awareness and promote involvement.

If the situation is to change, it is important that the sector itself addresses these issues, articulating the learning needs of the sector's clients and workforce (staff and volunteers), and seeking to influence LLSC plans and the activities of local Learning Partnerships. There is also a need to strengthen collaborative skills and knowledge, to be able to play a fuller role in strategic partnerships and to develop and manage joint projects.

#### 4 *Invest more in training and quality*

Voluntary sector participants in the project strongly advocated more investment by the sector in training staff, volunteers and trustees as a route to more successful performance. In addition to partnership skills, development needs include fundraising, IT and management skills. There are barriers which need to be tackled - typically, course costs, time pressures and limited staff resources. Participants were

keen to work with LLSCs to find cost-effective solutions, including collaborative models (such as learning networks, ‘piggy-backing’ on training run by larger organisations, brokerage to help organisations define their needs and team up with others, etc).

The value of investing in quality was also stressed: both in relation to service quality and organisational development, and to the provision of learning opportunities, advice and guidance (in those cases where voluntary organisations are, or could become providers). Pursuit of general standards (such as Investors in People, PQASSO and Quality First) can assist voluntary organisations develop their approach to quality, in ways which enable them to make a more effective contribution to social inclusion, employability, etc. Work towards such quality standards also provides a stimulus to identifying and meeting skill needs and encouraging organisational learning.

## Key Messages for Local Learning and Skills Councils

### **5 Appreciate the nature and importance of the voluntary and community sector**

Success in achieving Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) objectives demands that LLSCs treat the voluntary and community sector as a priority, in developing stakeholder relationships and in targeting services. There are the many constructive roles that voluntary and community organisations can play in the learning and skills agenda, and the sector has an economic and social significance which has often not been recognised in the past. It is important that LLSCs understand the diversity of the sector, what makes it tick and how best to engage and work with individual organisations and groups.

### **6 Encourage sector involvement**

LLSCs can promote the involvement of voluntary and community organisations across all aspects of their business, and can seek to ensure that other partners (eg, members of Learning Partnerships) effectively engage the sector. LLSCs can assist involvement more generally through support of voluntary sector forums, providing appropriate briefings - as free as possible from jargon - and allowing good time for consultations. TEC experience also suggests the value of having a lead contact within the organisations for dealings with the sector. There is also a need to recognise the costs for voluntary sector representatives of participating in partnerships.

### **7 Help the sector build its capacity**

LLSCs have important decisions to take in allocating their Local Initiative Funding. There will typically be many competing claims, and LLSCs have to judge which will offer the best returns in pursuit of national and local objectives, including community capacity building. LLSCs are expected to work with learning providers to improve standards, and to support new providers - potentially from the voluntary sector - which serve particular groups.

LLSCs will share a common interest with a range of other partners (eg, local authorities, health authorities, registered social landlords)

who are also interested in building capacity in voluntary and community organisations and who need to engage with the sector more effectively. It will be essential (for example, in the context of Local Strategic Partnerships) to look with the sector at the resources available and how to make best use of them. The report provides many examples of ways in which TECs have been supporting organisational capacity building in the voluntary sector, including actions in support of providers of training or information and guidance.

### **8 Develop internal capacity for working with the sector**

According higher priority to working with the sector has implications for the approach LLSCs may adopt. Three aspects were highlighted by the project:

- understanding what’s needed in promoting bottom-up community development
- practising the behaviours and approaches which make for effective partnership working
- implementing performance management and staff appraisal policies which recognise and support successful outcomes in working with the sector

## Key Messages for Collaboration

### **9 Implement Compact principles**

There is a need for everyone to ‘get smarter’ at partnership working: in strategic partnerships, to create and maintain the conditions for effective partnership; and at a project level, to improve the management of collaborative projects.

Much of what needs to change at a strategic level is recognised by work at a national level in establishing the Compact: the agreement between the voluntary and community sector and government to improve their relationships for mutual advantage. Local Compacts aim to develop this between the sector, local authorities and other local public bodies, including health authorities and local Learning and Skills Councils. The underlying concern is to strengthen the sector, and enable more to be achieved together than would otherwise be possible. Compact principles include equal weight for all partners in decision-making, mutual respect for the different contributions partners are able to make, and contracting regimes which enable the sector to bid on equal terms.

More successful outcomes depend on changes on the part of both voluntary bodies and public agencies. One inter-agency priority in the public sector is to develop a more common and coherent approach, eg, to requirements for reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and to the terms of funding of voluntary organisations.

### **10 Pursue joint capacity building**

Greater effectiveness in partnership working requires joint capacity building: all partners need to develop and update their capabilities for ensuring successful outcomes through collaboration. Partnership needs to be worked at continually, and can be progressed effectively through joint projects and joint training.

*“Too many people are excluded from the benefits that learning can bring.”*

*“Aspirations and staying on rates remain too low.”*

*“The system fails a significant section of the community, often the most vulnerable.”*

*“People with low skills and poor qualifications are locked in a cycle of disadvantage.”*

*“We must also make education and training more relevant and accessible to both individuals and employers.”*

*“Learning to Succeed”, White Paper Cm 4392*

### **partnership as the way ahead**

For the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), co-operation and collaboration with the voluntary and community sector will be vital. The challenge posed by the White Paper, "Learning to Succeed" implies a significant role for the sector if a real difference is to be made - and one which extends beyond

practices of the past. The sector can make many and varied contributions, through promoting the benefits of learning, widening access to opportunities to all sections of the community, and integrating learning and skills into economic and social regeneration activities.

### **What will the Learning and Skills Council need to do?**

*"Developing a strategy that inspires and that is shared and owned by a wide range of partners will be critical to its success . . . Its mission will be to build a new learning culture which will underpin our national competitiveness and personal prosperity and help build a cohesive society . . . **We want the LSC to make a real difference to people's lives** - to help support families, build stronger neighbourhoods, support the regeneration and the capacity building of communities and support competitive businesses."*

*DfEE (2000) The Learning and Skills Council Prospectus*

Guidance for the LSC's first Corporate Plan, issued in November 2000, emphasises strategies to:

- achieve post-16 National Learning Targets for qualifications and participation in learning
- enhance equality of opportunity
- encourage young people to stay on in learning
- increase demand for learning by adults
- maximise the contribution of education and training to economic performance
- raise standards in teaching and training

### **the voluntary sector and learning, skills and regeneration**

The distinctiveness of the sector comes from its reach in to all sections of the community - including those most disadvantaged and hard to engage in learning, its *diversity* of interests and approaches, and its *contribution to community development*.

Its potential contribution is highlighted, for instance, by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in looking at "Joining It Up Locally", as part of the work in developing the National Strategy on Neighbourhood Renewal.

## Contribution of the voluntary and community sector

- fill the gaps between disadvantaged people and service providers
- provide services alongside the public and private sector
- respond to the expressed needs of the community rather than to the perceived needs or 'agency' agendas of the public sector
- reach people and involve those whom the public sector have failed to reach
- mobilise both human and financial resources which the public sector cannot
- carry the trust of local people, because of its independence
- take risks and more easily develop creative ways of working
- connect "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches to renewal

*PAT 17, "Joining It Up Locally"  
(Social Exclusion Unit, 2000)*

Many of the "Key Ideas" contained in the National Strategy relate to the common interests of LLSCs and voluntary and community organisations:

- making adult skills a priority in deprived neighbourhoods
- improving IT in deprived neighbourhoods
- helping people from deprived areas into jobs
- supporting and promoting business - including social enterprise
- making it easier for local organisations to get funding
- involving community and voluntary organisations in service delivery

The SEU's Policy Action Team on Skills (PAT 2) drew attention to weakness in local capacity to develop and sustain initiatives which can help people improve their skills in many disadvantaged areas. This is seen as a key to addressing a situation where local residents feel that they have nothing to gain from improving their skills and that, no matter what they learn, it will make no difference to their prospects, in the labour market or more generally.

## converging policy developments

Figure 1 highlights a range of converging policy developments which have implications for the voluntary and community sector, some from the new learning and skills agenda, others in overlapping areas.

These include:

- Modernising Local Government, with the introduction of Best Value, the duty for community planning, and Local Strategic Partnerships
- the setting up of national and local Compacts to improve relationships between government and the voluntary sector
- Regional Development Agencies, and their new unified budgets incorporating the Single Regeneration Budget
- the development of the Small Business Service, with part of its brief for enterprise and social inclusion
- the Active Communities Initiative of the Home Office, leading central government action on volunteering and active citizenship
- the National Lottery, with channelling of funds to the voluntary sector, eg, through the National Lottery Charities Board and the New Opportunities Fund
- Race Equality in Public Services, and the thrust to mainstreaming of equal opportunities in government policies and programmes
- the new Connexions service, Welfare to Work and the New Deals for Young People, Disabled People, Lone Parents, etc - with increasing roles for voluntary and community organisations

Behind each of these developments is thinking described in the White Paper, "Opportunity for All", which sets out the government-wide approach to tackling poverty.

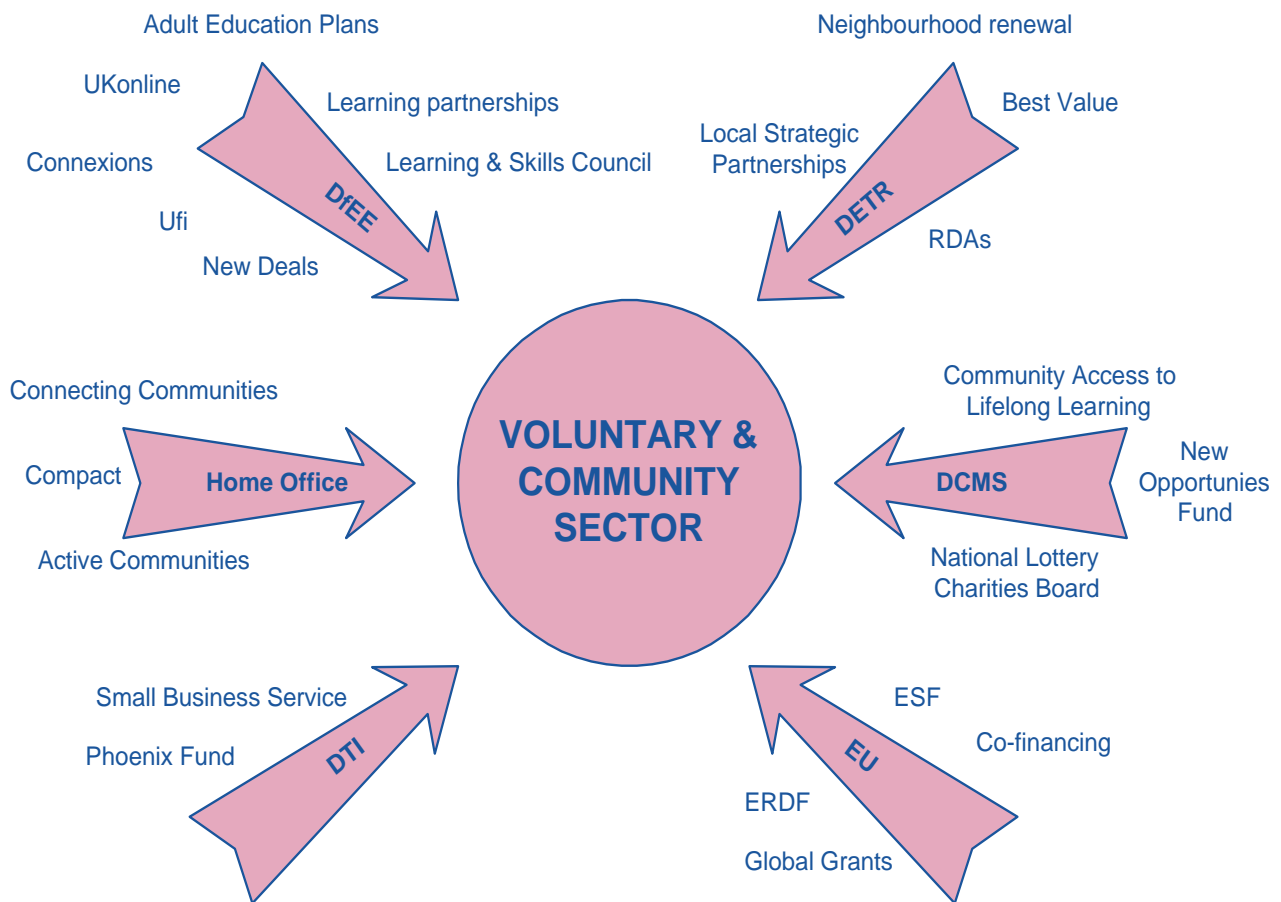
## "Opportunity For All" - Policy Objectives

- tackling the causes of poverty and social exclusion, not just the symptoms
- creating a fairer society in which everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential
- investing in individuals and communities to equip them to take control of their lives

### *which needs...*

- long term solutions which will pass the test of time
- flexible action geared to local needs
- joined-up government

**Figure 1 Converging Policy Developments**



*DfEE* Department for Education and Employment  
*DCMS* Department of Culture, Media and Sport  
*DTI* Department of Trade and Industry  
*DETR* Department for the Environment, Regions and Transport

*ERDF* European Regional Development Fund  
*ESF* European Social Fund  
*EU* European Union  
*RDAs* Regional Development Agencies  
*Ufi* University for Industry

As an annex to this report, Resource 6 (in Part 2) provides a full Glossary of relevant abbreviations, acronyms and definitions.

Developments in European Union (EU) policy and funding are also relevant, with a wealth of opportunities for voluntary sector participation in the European Structural Funds - European Social Fund (ESF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the Rural Enterprise Scheme. The European Commission has a strong desire to see the development of a vibrant 'social economy' (the voluntary sector and all forms of mutual/co-operative enterprise combined).

***economic and social significance***

The voluntary and community sector also matters from an economic perspective, with employment in the sector greater than sectors such as car manufacturing and agriculture. It has interests, like other sectors, in developing the skills of its workforce (paid and voluntary) and in becoming more

effective and efficient in what it does. It thus constitutes one part of the audience for business and workforce development services funded or provided by the Learning and Skills Council and the Small Business Service.

The sector has a social significance which extends beyond that of its direct contribution to the economy, in that it:

- acts as a vehicle for self-help and collective action
- provides a significant proportion of health and social services
- contributes to social inclusion
- engages volunteers on a very great scale
- generates and distributes resources (through trusts) for social and educational purposes
- campaigns and provides a voice for many socially excluded people and special interests



## What do we mean by the “voluntary and community sector”?

We follow NCVO's definition of the voluntary sector as organisations having the characteristics of:

- **formal** - organisations with a recognisable structure with a constitution or formal set of rules
- **independent of government and self-governing**
- **non-profit distributing**
- **voluntarism** to a meaningful degree in terms of contributions of time or money
- **public benefit** - beyond that of the organisation's own membership

The **community sector** is the wider set of informal groups or networks run by people to pursue common interests or tackle joint problems. Many are concerned with single issues or needs; some have a geographical focus, others not. They may or may not evolve as more formal organisations.

## choices for the voluntary and community sector

From a voluntary and community sector perspective, the interest on the part of government can be a two-edged sword. Yes, there are many ways in which voluntary organisations can contribute to policy goals - but on the other hand, these goals may not be shared and they may pose big issues or choices. The opportunities must be weighed up. Which fit best our reason for existing? Which will benefit our service users most? How will we resource new or expanded activities?

For the sector as a whole there are questions to be answered:

### Learning to Succeed - the new policy agenda: Questions posed by voluntary organisations

- how can the voluntary sector become more and more closely involved in the learning and skills agenda?
- how can voluntary organisations best take advantage of the new regime, to benefit service users, their staff, volunteers and organisations?
- how can we work better with public agencies to “join up the dots”, and respond constructively to all the calls from government for active voluntary and community sector involvement in partnership?
- how should the sector be seeking to influence developments locally?

## challenges for the sector and LLSCs

All these developments combine to present a set of challenges for **Local Learning and Skills Councils and voluntary and community organisations if they are to succeed together in making a difference to the challenge posed in “Learning to Succeed”**.

LLSCs and voluntary and community organisations are at the sharp edge of action to ensure that learning plays its full part in economic regeneration and social inclusion. There are potential implications, for example, for:

### voluntary and community organisations

- levels of awareness of opportunities arising from policy and funding developments
- raising awareness of what the sector can offer
- resourcing networking and building capacity for partnership working
- developing the people who work in the sector
- developing the organisations themselves - raising quality and effectiveness

### LLSCs

- the value placed on working with the voluntary and community sector
- how best LLSCs can promote and support the involvement of voluntary and community organisations
- effective and appropriate ways of working (partnerships, consultation methods, etc)
- priorities in the allocation of resources, including Local Initiative Funds
- decisions on contracting and support for quality improvement amongst education and training providers
- how performance is managed

### joint working

- improving approaches to collaboration
- engaging more difficult to reach groups and communities

There is a common strand of **capacity building** in voluntary and community organisations and amongst individuals who can play leading and supporting roles in projects and strategies: development work that strengthens the ability of people to build their organisations and skills so that they are better able to achieve their goals, manage projects and take part in partnerships.

## Defining “Capacity Building”

“Development work that strengthens the ability of community organisations and groups to build their structures, systems, people and skills so that they are better able to define and achieve their objectives and engage in consultation and planning, manage community projects and take part in partnerships and community enterprises.

“It includes aspects of training, organisational and personal development and resource building, organised in a planned and self-conscious manner, reflecting the principles of empowerment and equality.”

*Steve Skinner (1997) “Building Community Strengths: A Resource Book on Capacity Building” Community Development Foundation*

### guide to the report and materials

This report and the accompanying materials reflect on these implications, drawing on a project undertaken under the Education and Training Development Agenda<sup>1</sup> (ETDA) of the Department for Education and Employment. It has involved development work three TEC areas (Hampshire TEC, Sandwell TEC and Wigan Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise), and case study research elsewhere.

**Part 1** explores the implications and identifies on key issues, messages and pointers for good practice, relating to voluntary and community organisations, local Learning and Skills Councils and joint action.

**Part 2** (available on the internet and a limited print run) features profiles of work in the three TEC areas, the six further case studies, and resources for use by LLSCs, voluntary sector and other partners.

The six *case studies* are:

- Birmingham Voluntary Sector Quality Development Programme
- Calderdale & Kirklees TEC
- CITINET (learning centre network in Sheffield)
- North London TEC
- Pan-London Community Regeneration Consortium
- Voluntary and Community Alliance Across Norfolk (VOLCAAN)

The *resources* contain:

- 1) Developing Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in LLSC Activities
- 2) Voluntary and Community Sector Roles in Learning and Skills
- 3) Funding for Organisational Capacity Building
- 4) Partnerships and Trust
- 5) Networks and Contacts
- 6) Glossary

### ETDA project activities

In each of the participating TEC areas, the project pulled together information on the voluntary and community sector and the scale and nature of the sector’s involvement with the TEC. This led to action to progress common agendas and help prepare the ground for the work of the local Learning and Skills Council in the next year. The ETDA project sought to add value locally and generate valuable outputs for national dissemination.

The three areas shared an interest in exploring the roles of voluntary and community organisations as stakeholders, customers, communication channels, etc, and ensuring that there was a legacy for the LLSC from existing good practice and relationships.

Partnership development activities were designed to inform voluntary and community organisations better about the new Learning and Skills agenda, the potential opportunities for the voluntary sector, and how relationships and joint working can be improved.

A consistent theme was the **pursuit of mutual advantage**, exploring ways in which TECs/LLSCs and the voluntary sector can best address a shared agenda and help the other achieve their own goals - to the benefits of local communities and individuals.

Typical activities in the three TEC areas were workshops (a) with TEC staff, (b) with Councils for Voluntary Service and other voluntary organisations interested in learning and skills, and (c) bringing TECs and voluntary organisations together to address partnership development issues. The internal TEC workshops served to map voluntary sector involvement in the TEC part of the learning and skills agenda and broadening participants’ understanding of this,

<sup>1</sup> The Education Training and Development Agenda provides a framework for development projects with DfEE partners to improve the design and delivery of education and training projects and key elements of national policies.

while the voluntary organisation events focused on Learning and Skills Council developments, providing a chance for participants to begin to weigh up the opportunities.

Additional inputs, varying by area, included the results of an in-depth review of TEC:voluntary sector relationships (in Wigan, carried out as a separate project by CEDA) and a

review for voluntary organisations of the European Social Fund regime 2000-06 and good practice in partnership-based bids and project delivery (in Hampshire).

Details of the local project, issues and lessons in each of the three areas are contained in the Project Profiles in Part 2. Table 1 below illustrates some key features of TEC and voluntary sector activity in the three areas.

**Table 1 - Key Features of the Three TEC Areas**

Hampshire	Sandwell	Wigan
<i>Voluntary &amp; Community Sector</i>	<i>Voluntary &amp; Community Sector</i>	<i>Voluntary &amp; Community Sector</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at least 10,000 voluntary organisations addressing needs across a large and diverse county (disadvantaged urban populations Portsmouth and Southampton, scattered rural deprivation areas and prosperous commuting areas)</li> <li>fragmented sector, needing further to develop and articulate common learning agenda</li> <li>growing involvement of the sector in learning and regeneration, but still on a limited scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>over 1,500 voluntary and community organisations, with a significant proportion run by ethnic minority groups</li> <li>constitutes third largest employment sector in the borough</li> <li>Compact with Sandwell Regeneration Partnership/Sandwell Council to improve public/voluntary sector relations</li> <li>challenge to look at interests across four boroughs with the coming of the Local Learning and Skills Council for the Black Country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fairly active sector, but with a fragmented and underdeveloped network (almost 1,000 registered groups)</li> <li>traditional dominance of the public sector in the delivery of social welfare services has limited the role of the voluntary sector in the past and conditions how voluntary and public sectors work together</li> <li>Compact development under way</li> <li>new organisations and structures emerging out of regeneration activities, with growing interest and involvement in lifelong learning</li> <li>sector needs to develop capacity to play a fuller role in learning and regeneration</li> </ul>
<i>TEC Activities</i>	<i>TEC Activities</i>	<i>TEC Activities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wide and diverse range of networks and contacts (eg, funding, advising and seeking views, contracting provision) and initiatives</li> <li>corporate strategic and operational focus through role of the Community Partnerships Manager (Partnerships and Projects team) and TEC Equal Opportunities Strategy</li> <li>success in promoting take-up of Investors in People and other capacity building activities amongst voluntary organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Development programme making full use of SRB, ESF and TEC funds in ways which have improved organisational effectiveness in the voluntary sector and improved TEC performance</li> <li>development of black and ethnic minority providers a TEC priority, leading to increased take-up of guidance and training services</li> <li>other support measures have included management training and study visits</li> <li>TEC activities embedded within framework of Sandwell Civic Partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>operating in a local inter-agency culture where, for many people, partnership is the expected way to do things</li> <li>active in progressing the community development agenda for the borough, working with Wigan Council and Wigan and Leigh CVS</li> <li>enabling role in support of voluntary and community organisations (eg, assistance in obtaining funding)</li> <li>strong top-down commitment to championing partnership with the voluntary sector</li> </ul>

The case studies, also to be found in Part 2, feature innovative approaches and initiatives concerning ways of developing capacity in voluntary and community organisations and were chosen to complement the experience of the three ETDA project areas. Between them, they illustrate successful collaboration between the voluntary/community sector and the TEC, strategic thinking within the TEC on working with the voluntary/

community sector as partners, and capacity building initiatives led by the voluntary sector.

We highlight these and other relevant initiatives elsewhere in the body of Part 1 of the report. (Contact details are provided in an Appendix at the end of Part 1, with a fuller version included in Part 2 as Resource 5.)

## What did we find in the three TEC areas?

In each of the participating TEC areas, we found:

- many well developed and productive relationships between the TEC and the voluntary sector . . .  
*but* a lack of an TEC-wide overview and strategic approach to involving the sector
- enthusiasm to work together on the new learning and skills agenda . . .  
*but* many uncertainties about opportunities for voluntary and community organisations and how these can be resourced
- growing awareness of the strengths to build on, and scope for change and improvement in moving to the new local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) . . .

*but* issues of capacity and joint working which need to be addressed if LLSCs and the voluntary sector are to make more of a difference together

**From the experiences in the participating TEC areas and the case studies, typical needs and challenges emerge which have to be tackled if LLSCs and the voluntary sector are to work together most effectively to the benefit of learners and local communities.** Further recent evidence of these needs has been provided, eg, by regional seminars organised by NIACE (National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education) and WEA (Workers Educational Association) on the Learning and Skills Council and the voluntary sector.

**Table 2 - Needs and Challenges Identified by Project Participants**

<i>on the part of TECs</i>	<i>on the part of voluntary &amp; community organisations</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited appreciation of what the voluntary and community sector is and what it can do</li> <li>• views that voluntary and community organisations are amateur, difficult and 'political'</li> <li>• limited awareness of how TECs and other agencies may <i>hamper</i> voluntary and community involvement in partnership - and about what to do to bring about change</li> <li>• need for improved knowledge about, and access to, harder-to-reach learners and communities; and better tailoring of provision to their needs</li> <li>• finding routes into the sector (for promoting services and encouraging involvement) and gaining representative views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raising awareness and weighing up the opportunities offered by LSC developments</li> <li>• finding the time and resources to take advantage of the opportunities</li> <li>• developing the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to play a full part in partnerships</li> <li>• balancing involvement with needs to put their own organisations onto sounder financial footings - and not be forever chasing the funds...</li> <li>• building the infrastructure within the sector to support involvement</li> <li>• finding ways of representing the diverse interests within the sector</li> </ul>
<b><i>on the part of all - partnership issues</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>missed synergy:</b> opportunities and benefits missed through insufficient organisation and</li> <li>• <b>unequal partnerships:</b> deal with what participants see as uneven relationships, with dominant public sector partners</li> <li>• <b>cultural divides</b> concerning, eg, attitudes to participation and decision making, evaluation and targets, marketing and timescales needed to achieve results</li> <li>• <b>plain language</b> lacking in a partnership setting - overuse of jargon by the public agencies</li> <li>• <b>insufficient time</b> - to consult, to build capacity, relationships and partnership</li> <li>• <b>weaknesses in partner relationships</b> - concerning, eg: trust, transparency, openness; communications; lack of give and take</li> <li>• <b>lack of clarity</b> - in roles, responsibilities, contributions - and reasons for being at the partnership table...</li> </ul>	

Below, we draw out the main messages to emerge from the project, if local Learning and Skills Councils and the voluntary and community sector together are to make more of a difference to learning, skills and regeneration. In turn we consider needs and implications for voluntary and

community organisations, for the LLSCs and for joint working. (A number of the points on the LLSCs and on joint working apply equally to other public agencies such as local authorities, health authorities and the Small Business Service.)



## ***Key Messages for Voluntary and Community Organisations***

***What do voluntary and community organisations need to do to make more of a difference in working with Local Learning and Skills Councils?***

### **Key Messages to Voluntary and Community Organisations**

- 1. Appreciate the opportunities in the new learning and skills agenda***
- 2. Promote what the sector has to offer***
- 3. Improve networking, organisation and capacity for partnership***
- 4. Invest more in training and quality***



# 1 APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEW LEARNING AND SKILLS AGENDA

There are many ways in which voluntary and community organisations may be involved with Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) (see Figure 2 for LLSC objectives

and responsibilities) and many potential benefits to be gained.

**Figure 2 Local Learning and Skills Council Objectives and Responsibilities**



## The Learning and Skills Agenda: Potential Benefits for the Voluntary and Community Sector

### *benefits to communities served*

- new and improved learning opportunities
- more of a 'learner voice' in reviewing and developing provision
- resources for new provision tailored to needs
- opportunities which enable learners to progress further

### *benefits to voluntary and community organisations*

- access to services and resources to improve organisational and group effectiveness
- strong links between what LLSCs do/fund and wider regeneration and community development activities
- greater influence over learning plans and provision determined by local Learning and Skills Councils
- provision which reinforces wider capacity building and community development activities

Resource 1 in Part 2 provides examples of how voluntary and community organisations are already addressing LLSC objectives and responsibilities. It offers a format for reviewing how and where the voluntary and community sector can play more of a role in future.

How significant the opportunities are, and whether they are realised, will depend in part on the circumstances of individual organisations and how effectively the sector works with local Learning and Skills Councils. The starting point is, however, often one where there are marked variations in levels of involvement and awareness. Typically there is a small number of organisations who have direct business relationships with TECs as providers of training and employment services, perhaps to particular groups such as people with special needs. Others may be involved in the education and training field through grant funding (Lottery monies, European Social Fund, Adult and Community Learning Fund, etc) or through relationships with colleges and local authority adult education services. A larger number have a more general interest in training and employment opportunities for their users, clients or members. Some will also be customers of services provided or funded by TECs (eg, Investors in People, Modern Apprenticeships in the care sector).

For other organisations, however, there may be little or no connection. This was brought out by local research in one TEC which found that over 50% of the voluntary and community organisations approached had had no contact with the TEC and had little or no awareness of how it could matter to them.

Looking forward, there is a need amongst these different groups to understand the job of local Learning and Skills Councils and what is relevant for them:

## Local Learning and Skills Councils: Aspects of Their Functions

- a **strategic role** in relation to meeting local learning and skills needs, covering **all education and training post-16** other than higher education, and **contributing to business competitiveness and social inclusion**
- a significant **Local Initiatives Fund** - but with many calls on it
- **funding a variety of learning outcomes**, not necessarily qualifications
- **participation in partnerships** for regeneration and economic development
- working practices which are open and transparent and a **culture which is responsive and collaborative**
- establishment of a **level playing field for funding** and a constructive approach to raising quality across the board

Importantly from a voluntary and community sector perspective, there is recognition of the need to approach 'first rung' provision in different way from standard funding systems covering the bulk of post-16 education and training:

*"It can take a very long time to build such provision, to get the confidence of the people concerned, to build in them the confidence that they can learn, that it can be fun as well as useful to learn. And it can take time to build new providers and to help them make sure that everything that is funded from the public purse is of high quality."*

*Source: DfEE (2000) Individual Learning News Autumn 2000*

Fuller participation from the sector requires **publicity, networking and dissemination** to generate awareness and help organisations weigh up the opportunities and determine what is best for them to pursue. Part of the need

is for **interpretation**, making sense of the work of the Learning and Skills Council for, in effect, a lay audience.

*“There’s a job to be done in making the learning and skills agenda immediate and intelligible within the sector.”*

There is a challenge to provide information in digestible bits, available when and where it is needed, and constantly updated, with the internet an obvious communications channel. However, as voluntary organisations have frequently pointed out during the project, access to the internet amongst the sector is far from universal, and other mediums are needed as well.

With the initial impetus given by the ETDA project, networking is being promoted in the project areas, eg, through Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations and Southampton Voluntary Services. The North London TEC case study features a Voluntary Sector Forum which participants have valued. For the TEC it has been vital in

addressing equal opportunities and regeneration priorities. The Forum is being positioned to play a continuing role in relation to the LLSC in North London.

In Wigan, it was noted that many organisations are aware of opportunities, but the challenge for them is, what should they pursue, given their mission, limited resources, and other choices?

*“Typically, there are many new activities that we could pursue, but which are most likely to provide the best outcomes, without us having to spend a ridiculous amount of time to chasing the money to let us do it?”*

### **participating in Learning Partnerships**

A key to understanding and influencing is to participate in the work of Learning Partnerships, which play an important role in the new institutional framework. In each of the three TEC areas, voluntary organisations have been encouraged to take an interest in the local Learning Partnerships, but as yet there is limited wider awareness within the sector of the Learning Partnership role.

## IN PRACTICE

### **Learning Partnerships and the Voluntary Sector**

Learning Partnerships (LPs) have an important role alongside local Learning and Skills Councils. They are charged with the tasks of

- promoting collaboration amongst learning providers (colleges, schools, private training providers, voluntary sector providers, etc), filling gaps and avoiding duplication
- articulating needs, being expected “to reach out into local communities to find out what people really want in terms of learning opportunities”

Local Learning and Skills Councils are expected to consult with the Learning Partnerships on their patch in determining plans and spending priorities. It is vital for voluntary and community organisations to provide evidence of needs and make the case for Learning Partnerships and LLSCs to address their needs as organisations and the needs of their service users.

Voluntary sector involvement in Learning Partnerships has varied across the country, from very active (eg, as full members of the partnership and on task groups) to minimal roles as consultees on plans. Guidance to Learning Partnerships stresses the importance of involving the sector, though acknowledges that the very diversity of the sector can pose difficulties in determining how best to manage involvement and consultation.

#### ***in the project areas***

In Wigan and Sandwell, the Learning Partnerships form one of the partnerships under the umbrella of an overarching strategic partnership (Sandwell Civic Partnership, Wigan Leaders Forum), with a voluntary sector presence at each level. In Hampshire, there is also voluntary sector representation on the two Learning Partnerships (Southampton Lifelong Learning Partnership and the Southern Strategic Partnership covering the Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council areas).

Learning Partnerships can also be a gateway to funding, where bids need local endorsement. In Wigan this has led to success in securing funding from the Further Education Funding Council for learning which does not result in qualifications (“Non-Schedule 2”) and for basic skills provision.



Voluntary and community organisations should also be aware of other areas of partnership working which relate to role of Learning Partnerships, notably:

- Widening Participation partnerships in Further Education, which often involve voluntary and community organisations working with colleges to provide outreach provision

- Information, Advice and Guidance partnerships, which may involve voluntary and community organisations in roles advising or informing clients about education and training options
- Adult Education Plans. In preparing these, local authorities are expected by the LSC to involve voluntary and community organisations in developing, organising supporting and delivering provision.

## 2 PROMOTE WHAT THE SECTOR HAS TO OFFER

In order to take full advantage of policy and funding developments, participating voluntary organisations saw the need to promote actively what the sector has to offer, drawing out the distinctive contributions that they can make.

*“We need to influence more and play an enhanced role, and we can do that by organising ourselves better. We shouldn’t just wait for the LLSC to come to us.”*

*“It is not enough for us to say to the LLSC that ‘we’re different’ and ‘you ought to give priority’. We have to make the case describing what we can do and the benefits we can bring”*

The need is for voluntary and community organisations to think through what they offer, relating that to what the local Learning and Skills Council and partner bodies (like the local authority, FE colleges, etc) will value. It will be important to play on:

- how they can reach those people whom others cannot, or find difficult to approach and involve
- the importance of the sector as an employer and as a route to employability for many users and volunteers
- evidence of learning needs in the sector
- the impact of services and activities on social inclusion, equal opportunities, regeneration and community development
- how the sector can provide the “voice of the learner”: the feedback on needs and learners’ experiences that

the local Learning and Skills Council and Learning Partnerships want

It is important in any partnership setting to understand how and when other partners can be influenced - critically how you can help them deliver their goals. So for instance, LLSCs have a target for increased numbers of organisations achieving the Investors in People standard, a standard which is relevant for those voluntary organisations seeking to improve their performance through investing in their people - their staff, volunteers and trustees. Promotion of liP can bring benefits to voluntary organisations and at the same time help LLSCs meet their targets. And this can be combined with promotion of Individual Learning Accounts which can be used to meet some of the costs of training needs identified.

### **defining the roles voluntary organisations can and want to play**

Promoting what the sector can offer was helped in our project by drawing out the different roles that voluntary and community organisations play in relation to learning and skills. This helped to clarify contributions, expectations and choices:

- the different contributions that voluntary and community organisations may want to make
- the expectations that LLSCs and public partners may have of voluntary and community sector contributions
- the choices that voluntary and community sector organisations may need to make and the approaches they need to take

Figure 3 Voluntary and Community Sector Roles in relation to Learning and Skills



Using this typology proved very helpful for voluntary organisations in thinking ahead, anticipating possibilities and choices to be made. (Resource 2 in Part 2 provides a tool that can be used by voluntary organisations or by LLSCs.) Individual organisations may consider, for example:

- where do learning and skills fit in relation to our organisation's purpose and strategy?
  - ◆ should we do more as *promoter* of learning opportunities for our users?
  - ◆ do we do enough as an *advocate* of the needs of our clients, and are we approaching the right people in the right forums?
  - ◆ should being a *provider* of learning opportunities be part of our core activities? Or should we simply provide access?
- are there *projects* which we should be developing, or pushing for others to develop, which will benefit our service users and the wider community?
- should we be taking more advantage - as a *customer* - of training and development services in building our organisation?

For some of the voluntary sector participants in Hampshire, this analysis helped clarify what role they are able to play on the basis of their existing services and funding, and what role they could play, *given additional resources*. A Council for Voluntary Service, for example, may see a development of its current role as a channel for information as an activity to be funded from existing resources. On the other hand, any projects which extend this role into outreach work, eg, working with local people or organisations to clarify their learning needs and how best to meet them, will require additional funding.

*“As voluntary organisations we have to put a price on our involvement. We should not be regarded by others as a cheap source of solutions.”*

So if the LLSC, for example, wants the CVS to lead in this way, it has to consider the resource implications, including potential funding and/or assisting the voluntary organisations to secure funding elsewhere. (The Pan-London Community Regeneration Consortium and Voluntary and Community Alliance Across Norfolk - VOLCAAN case studies in Part 2 provide examples of where resources have been attracted for outreach with organisations; Ethnic Pride in Portsmouth in the Hampshire project profile is one example of outreach with individuals.)



## 3 IMPROVE ORGANISATION, NETWORKING AND CAPACITY FOR PARTNERSHIP

Voluntary sector participants in each of the three TEC areas raised the need for more effective networking, collaboration and a stronger and more strategic voice in partnership working. The very diversity of the sector, however, makes it difficult to organise, and there can be resistance in some quarters to having formal representation.

*“Our diversity is a strength and a weakness. Sometimes we don’t get our resources and responses together when it matters.”*

*“We need to be structured, strong, coherent in how we engage.”*

### Issues identified by voluntary and community sector participants – included:

- fragmentation within the sector: lots of different interests; lack of a common focus on learning and skills; many groups and organisations not being part of established networks
- doubts about there being a shared definition of the sector – Does it include housing associations? Churches?
- limited resources amongst umbrella bodies (eg, Councils for Voluntary Service) affect their ability to play roles in partnership - and some are better resourced than others
- staff development, support for networking and partnership involvement are often not priorities for voluntary organisation boards
- little engagement of many smaller organisations and groups with others in the sector

Actions to facilitate networking, improve communications and develop shared views being pursued or suggested included:

*in relation to strategic partnerships*

- identifying and making resources available from within the sector to take part in strategic partnerships (eg, recruiting volunteers, sharing roles amongst CVS boards)

- obtaining funding from other sources (public sector, foundations, private sector) to fill resource gaps
- providing a sounding board and contributing strategic views (eg, to Learning Partnerships and LLSCs)
- facilitating consultations, by maintaining contacts databases, organising events, etc
- improving communications through newsletters, websites, etc

*in relation to project development and implementation*

- identifying and creating opportunities for projects benefiting voluntary/community organisations
- sharing ideas and good practice
- collaborating on bidding: making stronger, more coherent bids, avoiding duplication

Many of the participants in the project saw these networking and organisational needs not just in relation to learning and skills, but also to the wider context of regeneration and community development. This reflects their own organisational purposes and the needs of their service users/members. They want to see the benefits of more, and more genuine, joined-up working between public agencies.

*“We need to have a handle on how all the bits fit together. There’s lots of talk about joined-up working - which we support and need - but we don’t see much evidence of it.”*

*“We suffer from ‘Initiativitis’ – we are in a pilot area for everything under the sun.”*

The new regional networks for voluntary organisations and for ethnic minority organisations (see Resource 5 in Part 2) should help, not least in providing a bigger regional picture and contribution to the regional policy agenda. There are also existing sub-regional or local networks (eg, convened on EU funding, such as Southern Association of Voluntary Action Groups for Europe - SAVAGE in Hampshire/Wessex).

It will be a big benefit to LLSCs to be able to engage with voluntary and community sector networks on learning and skill matters, to promote dialogue, better understanding of needs and new collaborations. Communications and consultation with and through such networks can help satisfy calls for local accountability for LLSCs.

**opportunities for collaboration within the sector**

Networking can also lead to collaboration amongst voluntary and community organisations. Some participants in Hampshire went as far as arguing that the creation of the Learning and Skills Council was an opportunity to look hard at what individual organisations were doing in the learning and skills field,

*“We need to gather together: review what do we do, be brutally honest and play to our strengths.”*

*“We could give ourselves the prospect of greater outcomes and fewer blind alleys.”*

Benefits of Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● potential to make more of an impact, sooner</li> <li>● improved access to funding – including match funding from partner organisations</li> <li>● matching strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>● sharing of skills and knowledge (including intelligence about needs; subject expertise; technical skills in bidding and project delivery)</li> <li>● sharing of risks</li> <li>● sharing of resources (eg, for project administration)</li> <li>● better understanding of what others are doing</li> </ul>

Particular interest was expressed in ways of collaborating for ESF bids, with one organisation acting as the lead, and assuming full project management responsibilities. There are many concerns about administrative burdens with the ESF; hence the attractiveness of such joint bids. Project management can be very complex: Norwich and Norfolk Voluntary Service, for example, had the task of co-ordinating over 20 distinct projects as part of the VOLCAAN project (see case study in Part 2). They carried this out successfully, but acknowledge how very taxing such demands are for a small organisation.

IN PRACTICE

**CITINET, Sheffield**

CITINET is Sheffield’s learning centre network, which brings together employers, voluntary and community organisations and the public sector to widen access to learning. Central to its role is to facilitate links between centres and develop collaborative bids. Bids, for example, under Community Access to Learning (see Resource 3, “Funding for Organisational Capacity Building”) are used to draw new organisations into the network and enable their access to funding. Typically, community organisations new to running ICT learning centres are helped to buy in appropriate training provision and technical support in the first two years, meanwhile developing their own capacity to deliver. (See CITINET case study in Part 2)

Collaboration may be most attractive to small organisations, which have little or no resource to devote to bidding and project management. They may also be poorly placed to strike up relationships with other organisations with similar interests – hence the setting up in Hampshire of PINDA:

IN PRACTICE

**PINDA**

PINDA (Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Information Network and Database Access) is a service to enable small and very small voluntary and social economy organisations identify others with common interests and form partnerships, not least to access funding opportunities. The database is intended to be accessed through a variety of formats including the internet, and a bulletin board allows users to exchange views and seek the experience of others. Over time the intention is to build a community of users.

There may also be collaboration options cross-sector, eg, where colleges assume responsibilities for project management, quality assurance, etc, and voluntary and community organisations perform relevant roles in promotion or delivery, without having to take on the full financial and administrative responsibilities which they would have to as lead agent.

## enhance capacity for partnership working

Time and again during the project, needs relating to capacity within the voluntary and community sector for partnership working emerged - capacity in relation to:

- *structures* (to engage with partners on learning and skills)
- *systems* (to help voluntary and community organisations play an effective role, including communications, IT links, quality systems)
- *people* (the vital resource to take part in partnerships and activities)
- *skills* (the skills they need to play an effective role in partnerships, in managing their own organisations, in developing and managing projects, etc)

### Capacity Building & Partnership Working: Issues

#### structures

- finding acceptable means of representation and consultation
- effective consultation mechanisms
- research/briefing/secretarial resources

#### systems

- communications
- use of the internet (networking, research, etc)
- consultation and dissemination arrangements within the sector

#### people

##### for the sector

- recruiting enough people to represent the sector, and ensuring that they are well-networked and accountable to the sector
- under-representation of particular groups on partnerships

##### for the individuals concerned

- finding the time and coping with the pressures - and the jargon
- covering associated financial costs: childcare, travel costs, staff cover
- confidence to play an effective role

#### skills, knowledge & understanding

##### for example:

- consensus building
- understanding roles and motivations of partners
- understanding learning, skills and regeneration policies and programmes
- bidding/fundraising
- project/team management
- monitoring and evaluation
- knowledge of 'what works' elsewhere

In relation to 'people' aspects of capacity building, the need is often to overcome the very tangible barriers that individuals face in playing an effective role, dependent, for example, on the time they have to devote, their knowledge and confidence, support available and what it may cost them to take part. Staff in public agencies may not appreciate how significant out of pocket expenses (eg, childcare, travel) may be, that in some circumstances representatives could face loss of earnings. They may also take for granted the information and knowledge resources at their disposal within their own organisations.

Positive action to involve people from under-represented groups is a particular challenge. One notably ambitious venture is being pursued by Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO):

#### IN PRACTICE

### CEMVO & Capacity Building

A cornerstone of the Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisation's plans is the London Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Capacity Building Programme, a £5m SRB Round 5 programme with £1m TEC and local authority match funding.

The funding is being used to deliver and augment an MBA course for 15 ethnic minority professionals. This is followed over a five year period with supervision and co-ordination of their work. The programme continues after they return to their host organisation, as each agrees to transfer his or her knowledge to a further 40 ethnic minority voluntary organisations. This is seen as the start of establishing a new volunteer movement of ethnic minority professionals (who could go on to boards and committees of up to 1,200 ethnic minority voluntary organisations).

The project also supports ethnic minority organisations in achieving quality standards, eg, IIP, PQASSO (see Key Message 4 below). There are plans for similar initiatives in other regions.

CEMVO is the operational arm of the Ethnic Minority Foundation, which aims to build an endowment fund of £100m as a dedicated source of funding for voluntary activities in ethnic minority communities. Ethnic minority professionals are encouraged to make donations to the Fund and provide help in kind, as mentors, advisers and trustees to minority ethnic organisations.

In relation to skills aspects of capacity building, there is a clear message from the project that training and development activities must be driven by voluntary and community organisations, not imposed by funders.

There is increasing attention to meeting the skills and knowledge needs of voluntary and community sector

participants in partnerships. Examples include the Pan London Community Regeneration Consortium (see case study in Part 2), community training programme on local economic development (see Calderdale and Kirklees TEC case study) and partnership training developed by Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

#### IN PRACTICE

### Pan-London Community Regeneration Consortium

The purpose of the Pan-London Community Regeneration Consortium (PLCRC) is to build the capacity and facilitate the involvement of voluntary and community organisations in regeneration partnerships. It does this through information, advice and consultancy to individual organisations and partnerships, and sponsors the work of the London Regeneration Forum. Along with events the Forum organises 'organisational raids', structured study visits to enable participants to learn from more experienced organisations.

#### IN PRACTICE

### Skills for Partnership Working (Wales)

VSNT0 in Wales (through Wales Council for Voluntary Action) have introduced a two day course in partnership working skills. This has been designed to raise awareness of the barriers to participation and skills needed for partnership working while providing an opportunity to practise skills of negotiation, presentation, facilitation, influencing and resolving difficulties.

Aside from gains in confidence, one of the main benefits for participants in the pilot programme was the opportunity to clarify their reasons for being involved in partnership and the nature of their role and contribution. There was value in reviewing their objectives, considering what they would be prepared to give up (and what they would not), and how to influence from within the partnership.

#### IN PRACTICE

### Local Economic Development: Community Training Programme (Calderdale and Kirklees)

Calderdale and Kirklees TEC has supported training for local activists to give them a better feel for regeneration processes (both strategic and operational) and an understanding of broader issues. It has been designed to help participants build their confidence and develop informed opinions - and reduce the sense to which people "feel lost in the bureaucracy".

Following a successful pilot under the EU LEDA (Local Employment Development Action) programme, further programmes, involving 40 participants, were funded under ESF Objective 3 Priority 4. Topics covered in the course of nine sessions include Understanding the Local Economy, Understanding the Community, Making Partnerships Work, Economic Development Policy, EU and UK programmes, and Monitoring and Evaluation.



# 4 INVEST MORE IN TRAINING AND QUALITY

Voluntary sector participants themselves recognised that their own organisations need to give greater priority to training and quality, to improve service standards and effectiveness, develop and retain staff and meet challenges resulting from changes in needs, policy and technology.

## developing the workforce

There was a strong concern to build on current initiatives to identify and address learning needs within the sector, amongst staff, volunteers and trustees/committee members.

*“Often, staff training comes low on the list of items which the board will approve.”*

*“At our salaries we buy people who have to grow into the job.”*

Comments by participants have mirrored research findings from the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation (VSNTO) whose role is to promote workforce development in the voluntary and community sector. Their recent report, “Skills Matters” has highlighted key needs around fundraising, IT, collaborative working and a variety of management skills, driven by factors such as the need to exploit ICT, partnership arrangements required by funders, and an increasing proportion of funding tied to specific projects (See Table 3). A significant proportion of organisations (30% of those with no paid staff, 65% those with 11 – 50 staff) said they would need more skills to help cope with these changes.

<b>Management skills</b>		
• how IT can best help the organisation	50%	
• planning and forward thinking	40%	
• monitoring and evaluation	31%	
• implementing quality systems	30%	
• management of volunteers	30%	
• project management	29%	
<b>Fundraising</b>		
• knowledge of where to apply for funds	48%	
• how to complete forms	38%	
• techniques, eg, direct marketing	33%	
<b>IT</b>		
• basic skills	38%	
• technical aspects	33%	
<b>Promotion &amp; publicity</b>		35%
<b>Technical/specialist skills</b>		31%
<b>Team working skills</b>		30%
<b>Health &amp; safety</b>		30%

Source: VSNTO (2000) “Skills Matters”

A survey in London “Competitiveness and Social Inclusion - Investing in Third Sector Skills Development” found similar needs and noted low levels of investment in staff development: one quarter of organisations spend nothing, and only a quarter spend more than 2% of their turnover on training. This survey also identified that by far the main barrier to training was “lack of money”, cited as the most significant obstacle by 57% organisations, and as a factor by 84%. The other main factors were “no one to do the job whilst staff training” and “lack of time”, the most significant factor for 20% and 17% organisations respectively. Lack of information, lack of ability to assess needs, and lack of suitable courses rated low as significant concerns.

There are growing numbers of structured responses throughout the country to deal with these needs and issues. Many are a development of the role of Councils for Voluntary Service and Rural Community Councils (the CVS equivalent in rural areas) drawing on a range of funding sources such as the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Charities Board. Project examples include VOLCAAN in Norfolk and LADDER in Hampshire. There is interest in promoting collaborative solutions which can help:

- reduce training costs for individual organisations
- improve the quality and relevance of opportunities available
- address needs which would not otherwise be met
- promote action-based learning, sharing experience and expertise

### IN PRACTICE

#### **VOLCAAN - Norwich and Norfolk Voluntary Service**

VOLCAAN (Voluntary and Community Alliance Across Norfolk) promotes collaboration to build skills and organisational capacity in the voluntary and community sector in the county. Led by Norwich and Norfolk Voluntary Services, VOLCAAN brought together 31 different organisations and pursued a wide range of projects, including a survey of the economic significance of the sector (Voldata) and support for new community forums in Norwich. It was developed with ESF funding with individual projects managed

different lead organisations and the overall project management by NVS.

Part of VOLCAAN has been to develop the Training Development Service provided by NVS for voluntary and community organisations. Activities have included:

- training seminars (eg, on the Use of the Internet, Developing a Learning Organisation, Management Committee Roles and Responsibilities, Workplace Communications)
- digest of training opportunities; access to training resources; Training Network conference and Training Fair
- free organisational reviews
- toolkit for Voluntary Services Co-ordinators employed by NVS (resource pack on topics such as roles of paid workers and management committee members, funding and fundraising, recruiting and managing volunteers)

VOLCAAN has led to increased take-up of training and demand for new initiatives. Work on a framework for continuing professional development in the voluntary sector is now underway, to improve the match between demand and supply of training and ensure that there are learning and qualifications routes to progress throughout the spectrum from basic volunteer training to masters level. (See case study in Part 2)

#### IN PRACTICE

### LADDER

LADDER (Learning and Database Development Education Resource) aims to promote learning within the voluntary and community sector in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and ensure that training needed is readily accessible, that duplication and over-provision is avoided, and gaps are identified and filled. It was instigated by Community Action Hampshire. Following initial development funding from Hampshire TEC, LADDER has attracted support from other sources including Whitbread in the Community, Hampshire County Council and Lloyds TSB Foundation. Objectives include promoting new methods of learning and encouraging the sharing of provision across sectors, opening up places, for example, on IT and management training courses run in-house by large local employers.

LADDER is developing its web presence with the support of the Hampshire TEC Information and Guidance project. This is being undertaken in conjunction with work on the Link2Learn service (which provides information about learning opportunities across the board and is linked to the national learndirect service). A concern for LADDER is to ensure that voluntary organisations are able to make full use of the internet in ways that help address their learning needs and those of their service users.

TECs have supported a number of these initiatives, and acted directly in relation to their own services, eg, through promotion of Investors in People to voluntary organisations.

#### IN PRACTICE

### Investors in People and the Voluntary Sector in Hampshire

Larger voluntary and social economy organisations in Hampshire have responded positively to promotion of Investors in People by Hampshire TEC. The liP standard provides a structured framework for continuous improvement for both the organisation and the paid staff, volunteers and trustees, linked to achievement of the organisation's goals.

Learning from experience, the TEC set up a learning network, similar to groups operating in a other sectors. This has the advantage of reducing the costs to individual organisations of attaining the standard and sharing experience amongst comparable organisations sharing similar pressures and operating environment. Past efforts to promote liP had foundered as a result of promoting inappropriate messages and deploying consultants who did not understand the nature of the sector.

The revised standard introduced in 2000 also fits better the value base of voluntary organisations (eg, with an emphasis on equal opportunities) and is open to all sizes of organisation (including those with volunteers but no paid staff).



The VSNT0 survey, "Skills Matters" found that 2% of voluntary organisations surveyed had achieved liP (primarily in training/education and social care/health sectors), 4% were working towards the standard and 10% were thinking about it. Approaching half (45%) did not regard it as relevant (as being, for example, "too time consuming/costly" or something for larger organisations) and 39% did not know what it was.

### ***pursuing quality standards***

Two dimensions to quality standards come into play, one - general - relating to service quality and organisational development, and the other - specific - to the provision of learning opportunities, advice and guidance. Pursuit of the general standards can assist voluntary organisations develop their approach to quality, in ways which will enable them to meet the latter standards, provided that they have the resources and competence in teaching and training. They also provide a stimulus to identifying and meeting skill needs and encouraging organisational learning.

The pursuit of organisational quality standards is increasingly viewed by voluntary organisations as an important vehicle for improving service quality, developing the organisation, and demonstrating professionalism to funders. Nationally, their use is being promoted by NCVO's Quality Standards Task Group, and participants in each of the three TEC areas agreed that more needs to be done to convert the growing interest into action to raise quality on the ground. This view has been encouraged by related policy developments, such as Best Value in local government - given that such a large part of the "business" of the voluntary sector is with local authorities.

*"Best Value means that we have to be slicker, more on the ball."*

Critical implications of Best Value for voluntary organisations include a challenge to existing service delivery, contractual and grant funding arrangements and opportunities for new forms of service delivery by the sector, or in partnership - provided that the overall aim of Best Value - continuous improvement - is achieved. Best Value considerations are also relevant to funding decisions by local Learning and Skills Councils.

Investors in People (liP) is one relevant standard; others include the European Foundation for Quality Management/Business Excellence Model, ISO 9000 and Social Audit. The Quality Standards Task Group produces a short and very useful guide to choosing the right standard for organisations at whatever their stage of development and plans for the future. The choice of model to pursue will depend on a range of factors, such as:

- demands on staff time
- need for external support
- training required to implement the standard
- cost

Options tailored particularly to the needs of smaller voluntary organisations include PQASSO and Quality First, which have featured as part of a major project, the Birmingham Voluntary Sector Quality Development Programme (see case study in Part 2).

### **Quality Frameworks for Small Voluntary Organisations**

**PQASSO** (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) sets out organisational standards in 16 areas including service provision, staffing, training and development, monitoring and evaluation, and commitment to quality. Organisations assess themselves and build up a dossier of evidence illustrating how they meet the standards. The process helps to identify training needs and establish consistency across organisations and in the services they provide. Needs of voluntary organisations are well-reflected in the design of the framework, eg, in recognising the role of service users in shaping and influencing organisational planning, and focusing on working with volunteers and the role of management committees.

**Quality First** was designed, following the experience of PQASSO, for smaller organisations with no paid staff. It works as a process, not a standard of attainment, looking at fewer organisational areas.

It is based on basic principles of: say what you do; do what you say; monitor and review progress regularly; and see improvement as a result.

## Birmingham Voluntary Sector Quality Development Programme

The Birmingham Voluntary Sector Quality Development Programme has promoted take-up of quality frameworks by smaller voluntary community organisations, heavily targeted towards minority ethnic groups. The programme is led by Birmingham Voluntary Services Council, in partnership with Birmingham and Solihull TEC. It has drawn on other funding sources such as the Single Regeneration Budget.

Activities have included promotional events, training of facilitators, implementation grants and networking, first in support of PQASSO and subsequently Quality First - which they developed with Tony Farley. Participation in the programme has benefited over 100 organisations, with use of the frameworks typically prompting organisational review, a harder look at what quality means, and increased investment in developing staff, volunteers and trustees. The programme has also involved support for organisations to pursue liP - an appropriate next stage as organisations become more experienced in their approach to quality and continuous improvement.

The TEC's willingness to fund the programme stemmed from their recognition of the economic significance of the sector, its role in relation to regeneration and as a vehicle to help the TEC achieve its business objectives, and the role that quality standards can play in promoting workforce development. Better managed voluntary organisations, on a more robust financial footing, are more likely to serve their users well, achieving their own organisational goals and contributing effectively as partners and contractors to the achievement of public policy objectives.

### **standards for learning provision**

In the context of the Learning and Skills Council, voluntary and community organisations will need to be aware that there are separate standards, developed by the Adult Learning Inspectorate and covering all providers of education and training. Inspections seek to answer the question, "how effective and efficient is the

provision of education and training in meeting the needs of learners, and why?" The new framework covers, for example, achievement by learners (not necessarily qualifications), adequacy and suitability of staff and resources, guidance and assessment of learner needs and progress, responsiveness to learner needs, and management. The government is particularly concerned to ensure that there is minimal drop-out from courses, that there are high completion rates, and that learners progress in ways appropriate to them (further learning, better jobs, etc).

### Adult Learning Inspectorate: Key Questions

#### **Achievement & standards**

- how well do learners achieve?

#### **Quality of education and training**

- how effective are teaching, training and learning?
- how are achievement and learning affected by resources?
- how effective are the assessment and monitoring of learning?
- how well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?
- how well are learners guided and supported?

#### **Leadership & management**

- how effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

*Ofsted/Adult Learning Inspectorate "Common Inspection Framework for Inspecting Post-16 Education and Training" (September 2000)*

Those voluntary and community organisations which provide, or wish to provide learning opportunities need to be aware of these standards and be willing to meet them. There is an expectation that local Learning and Skills Councils will work with providers to ensure that standards are met, and that there is continuous improvement over time. Strategic guidance to the Learning and Skills Council in November 2000 indicates the Government's wish to see more ethnic minority and other specialist training providers enter the market.

## Key Messages for Local Learning and Skills Councils

*What do local Learning and Skills Councils need to do to make more of a difference in working with voluntary and community organisations?*

### Key Messages to LLSCs

- 5. Appreciate the nature and importance of the voluntary and community sector**
- 6. Encourage sector involvement in the learning and skills agenda**
- 7. Help the voluntary and community sector build its capacity**
- 8. Develop internal capacity for working with the sector**



## 5 APPRECIATE THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Participants from each of the three TECs expressed concerns that the voluntary and community sector was not being given high enough prominence in TEC plans and activities, in line with the sector's significance - economic and social - and its potential contribution to the learning and skills agenda. Similar concerns in other areas have led other TECs to support surveys of the sector to explore this further.

### Key Facts about the Voluntary Sector

- 136,000 active general charities in the UK
- gross annual income of the voluntary sector: £13.1 billion
- growth rate 2% faster than GDP
- almost 90% of gross income is accounted for by the 10% largest charities - those earning over £100,000 pa
- 45% earned income is from government sources (of which two thirds relates to personal social services, funded by local authorities and health authorities)
- around 500,000 employees in the sector range (equivalent to 350,000 full-time jobs)
- growth in employment largely in the social work/care sector; and two thirds women
- around 3 million unpaid workers
- three out of four voluntary organisations employ no staff

*NCVO "The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2000"*

At the national level, NCVO reckon that more people work for a charity or voluntary organisation than in car manufacturing or in agriculture (NCVO Salary Survey 1998). The latest UK Voluntary Sector Almanac highlights the scale, nature and growth of the sector.

The voluntary and community sector is even bigger if charitable housing associations are added. In each of the three project areas, there are significant examples of partnership working between housing associations and the TECs on employment and regeneration projects. Portsmouth Housing Association is a significant player, themselves leading or a partner in over 20 EU-funded projects. They are involved with the TEC, for example, in the Portsmouth Foyer Employment Access Centre and the Portsmouth Area Regeneration Trust (an initiative to overcome financial exclusion and fund small and social enterprises). In Sandwell the Black Country Housing Association (BCHA) which is involved with the TEC in PACE (Practical Award in Community Excellence), which promotes Quality First and PQASSO. BCHA pursues a wide range of 'community investment' activities, including backing a repairs business set up by residents groups, and employs tenants to carry out its community development work. It is a partner in the 'Empowerment' transnational project (ESF-funded) which has provided training for long term unemployed tenants in community work,

communications and computer skills. In Wigan, the TEC is a partner with Grosvenor Housing in the Coops Foyer, where activities include level 1 IT training which feeds into mainstream TEC programmes.

The local studies undertaken with TEC support (eg, in Devon, Humberside, Lincolnshire and Norfolk) have broadly confirmed the scale and significance of the sector. Each time such an exercise has been undertaken, the results have surprised those involved from the voluntary and public sectors, with the scale commonly exceeding expectations. In 1999, an exercise in Sandwell found the sector employing over 1,000 staff (55% full-time) which ranked the sector the third largest in the borough. The Voldata research in Norfolk (part of VOLCAAN - see case study) found at least 3,500 organisations and groups, involving at least 50,000 volunteers. The great majority of these organisations are entirely or almost entirely voluntary, though there is a core of relatively large organisations employ at least 2,500 staff between them. (Of the 338 organisations which employ staff, 50% have only one full or part-time employee.) The value of volunteer input is estimated at £10m pa.

These exercises have also pointed to the scale to which voluntary and community organisations are involved in the learning and skills field beyond areas of direct TEC interest, eg, through collaboration with local authority adult education services and FE college outreach provision. The Voldata research in Norfolk further emphasised the role that voluntary and community organisations play in employability, providing a vehicle for individuals to build

their skills and current work experience as a route to a new or better job. Voluntary organisations do much to provide the “first rung” opportunities stressed by National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

These studies - along with others looking at skills needs (mentioned under Key Message 4 above) - serve to emphasise for LLSCs the importance of the voluntary and community sector to their activities, having a workforce of a substantial size (staff and volunteers), with significant development needs - and real constraints on their ability to pay for training.

### *understanding nature of the sector*

Studies of the voluntary sector constantly stress the diversity of the sector. It is important to understand this when considering how best to involve voluntary and community organisations and which to target in relation to particular LLSC activities. We note above that many voluntary organisations employ no staff and that almost 90% of gross income is accounted for by the 10% largest charities. And there is a wide spread of activities across health and social welfare, recreation, disadvantaged groups, third world development, etc. The Voldata survey in Norfolk demonstrated the degree to which voluntary organisations are significant service providers, primarily in the care sector, arts, environment, heritage, education, information and advice, and community development

The diagram below sets out some of the key dimensions which characterise differences within the voluntary and community sector:

**Figure 4 Characteristics of Voluntary Organisations**

<b>Size</b>	large	←————→	small
<b>Function</b>	service delivery	←————→	self-help
<b>Values</b>	philanthropic	←————→	campaigning
<b>Staffing</b>	paid staff	←————→	volunteers
<b>Staff roles</b>	specialised	←————→	flexible
<b>Coverage</b>	national	←————→	local
<b>Decision-making</b>	national	←————→	local
<b>Member/user involvement</b>	extensive	←————→	limited
<b>Structure</b>	bureaucratic	←————→	participatory
<b>Income</b>	contracts & grants	←————→	donations

It is important too, to understand what makes individual organisations tick (to do, for example, with their sense of purpose and the reasons they attract staff and volunteers), and what can be different about running voluntary organisations compared to management in the public and private sectors. Often these organisations are “dancing to a different drum”, with a different set of prerogatives from

partner agencies - giving rise to issues about how different sectors can work best together (see Key Messages 9 and 10 below). And the non-hierarchical nature of the sector (meaning that “people can't speak for the sector”) can cause difficulties when seeking representatives and a common position, eg, in response to consultations.

## What's different about the voluntary and community sector?

*What voluntary sector participants said during the project:*

- “we don't have a conventional workforce - our mindset is around volunteers”
- hybrid organisations in management terms, constantly needing to balance organisational (business) and social goals and the demands and expectations of multiple stakeholders/constituencies
- “we are all too stretched in too many directions” – reflects the pressures of needs-led provision and time spent chasing resources
- flexible, innovative (but not true of all)
- close to users/members (but not true of all)
- accountability to committees/boards “who often don't really have the breadth” of knowledge and understanding that's needed
- typically flat organisational structures
- reliance on trust and reluctance to address issues of authority
- values-driven (participation and equality as operating principles)

A review sponsored by the Home Office, “Strengthening the BME Voluntary Sector” highlighted a further important dimension: the different experience of volunteering between the black and minority ethnic (BME) sector and the established wider voluntary sector. The report noted that: *“The BME voluntary sector has been created on a self-help basis by people directly affected by the problems to be addressed. The wider sector however emerged mainly from*

*middle class people taking a benevolent interest in the disadvantaged. One consequence of this difference is that the BME voluntary sector tends to be closer to and much more accountable to its users and members than the wider sector.”* This also means that the BME sector has more of a role of challenging current public sector practices - important in the context of mainstreaming equal opportunities (a high priority for LLSCs).



## ENCOURAGE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE LEARNING AND SKILLS AGENDA

There are many ways in which LLSCs may promote and encourage the involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the learning and skills agenda. Picking up on Key Message 2, it is important for LLSCs to consider what roles they would like the sector to play, which organisations to target and approach, and how best to interest and engage them. This reflects one of the difficulties faced by many

TECs, where existing levels of knowledge about the sector were not high, and the sector itself was not organised locally in relation to learning and skills matters.

Table 4 illustrates ways in which voluntary and community organisations are currently involved with TECs, set against LLSC responsibilities:

**Table 4 - Voluntary Sector Involvement and LLSC Responsibilities: Project Examples**

LLSC Responsibility	Current Voluntary Sector Involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifying learning and skill priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reviews of skill needs in the sector (Sandwell)</li> <li>representation on local Learning Partnerships</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>agreeing plans and budgets with training providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivery of training programmes and adult education by individual voluntary organisations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using their Local Initiatives Fund to support innovative projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>partnership with college in delivery of non-accredited learning (Wigan)</li> <li>participants on community leadership programmes (Calderdale &amp; Kirklees, Wigan, Sandwell)</li> <li>positive action programmes (Calderdale &amp; Kirklees)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>driving up quality in all post-16 learning and developing the local provider infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>working with TEC to standards for training delivery and information, advice and guidance (North London, Sandwell, Wigan)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promoting the demand for skills and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>encouragement of clients/users to take advantage of learning opportunities</li> <li>take-up of Investors in People</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>widening participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outreach projects (eg, Ethnic Pride, Hampshire; Sandwell)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>drawing up local workforce development strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>national lead for the sector by Voluntary Sector NTO</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing learning centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>community-led learning centres in Kirklees</li> <li>networking, training and technical support in developing ICT learning centres (CITINET, Sheffield; Sandwell)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tackling poor adult basic skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>training of volunteer tutors (Wigan)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mainstreaming equal opportunities in all local policies and programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>capacity building support targeted on minority ethnic organisations</li> <li>training contracts with organisations dealing primarily or exclusively with disadvantaged groups</li> <li>promotion of Modern Apprenticeships to minority ethnic communities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>integrating activities with economic development &amp; regeneration activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>participation in regeneration partnerships and projects (community strategies, New Deal for Communities, etc)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>liaising with the Connexions service for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>participation in Connexions partnerships</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>supporting development of information, advice and guidance for adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>access points for information, advice and guidance - referrals and use of the internet (eg, Link2Learn Network, Hampshire)</li> <li>training staff in initial education and vocational guidance (Sandwell; VOLCAAN, Norfolk)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>local marketing and publicity about opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>participation in Learning Partnership promotional campaign (Sandwell)</li> <li>promotion of learning opportunities for the voluntary sector (LADDER, Hampshire; VOLCAAN, Norfolk)</li> </ul>

Resource 2 (in Part 2), which was designed to help voluntary organisations think through the roles that they want to play, can also be used by LLSCs to consider how they want to see the roles of voluntary and community organisations develop and how they can encourage and assist the process (see Key Messages 7 and 8). LLSCs may want, for example, to work with Learning Partnerships (see Key Message 1) to foster voluntary sector involvement. The diagram setting out Voluntary and Community Sector roles can also be used to consider the roles which fit best different categories of voluntary organisation (umbrella bodies like CVSs, local branches of national charities, community groups, special interest groups, etc). One issue to consider is likely to be whether or not to nominate a senior member of staff as a lead contact for the sector. TEC experience suggests the value of this in helping to ensure good communications.

Aside from the wider benefits of the contribution that voluntary and community organisations play in relation to community development, regeneration and social inclusion, the experience of Birmingham, Calderdale and Kirklees, North London and Sandwell TECs all bears out the value of links with the sector from a TEC perspective.

Benefits they point to include:

- widening access and attracting difficult to reach groups (increased take-up of provision; better information about needs)
- developing pre-vocational training which feeds into mainstream programmes
- success in attracting additional government and EU funds to the area
- greater priority within the voluntary sector to training and development
- development of services better tuned to customer (voluntary organisation) needs
- stronger relationships and partnerships

There is a strong link with their TEC Equal Opportunities strategies, in which voluntary and community organisations feature prominently. Given that the Learning and Skills Council is expected to build equality of opportunities into all its policies, programmes and actions, work with the sector will assume even greater importance. Voluntary organisations taking part in our project themselves note that equal opportunities practices within the voluntary sector were not always something to be proud of, but that their record was better generally than the public and private sectors and something on which to build.



## HELP THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR BUILD ITS CAPACITY

From the three TEC areas and the case studies, there are many examples where TECs have been investing in building capacity in voluntary and community organisations, both in relation to the delivery of TEC or TEC-related services (eg, delivery of TEC training programmes, pre-vocational training and information, advice and guidance),

and more generally assisting organisations become more effective and efficient.

Table 5 illustrates the wide range of ways in which TECs have been supporting organisational capacity building either directly, or along with other funders.

**Table 5 - Capacity Building: Support for Organisational Learning**

Forms of Capacity Building	Project Examples Supported by TECs
<b>Skills development</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>management development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dale Carnegie Management Training (Sandwell)</li> <li>Social Economy Management Programme (Hampshire)</li> <li>Project 2001 - standards-based management development (Calderdale &amp; Kirklees/RSA)</li> <li>Black Leadership Programme (Pan London Consortium)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>partnership working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common Purpose (North Hampshire, Sandwell)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bidding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advice from TEC partnerships and funding teams</li> <li>support for collaborative bids (CITINET)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>administration and finance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advice from TEC finance, audit and contract management teams</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>web development and use (LADDER, Hampshire)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>project management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>training courses (Pan London Consortium)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>quality management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>facilitator training (Birmingham)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>people management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>personnel and employment service (Pan London Consortium)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>regeneration policies and processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>training programme (Calderdale &amp; Kirklees)</li> </ul>
<b>Consultancy/technical assistance</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>needs analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>survey (Calderdale &amp; Kirklees)</li> <li>organisational reviews (VOLCAAN)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>business planning/organisational development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>grants (Calderdale &amp; Kirklees TEC/Calderdale Community Foundation)</li> <li>voluntary sector advisers (North London and Sandwell Business Links)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>quality management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support for PQASSO and Quality First standards (Birmingham, Sandwell)</li> <li>support for liP (Birmingham, Hampshire)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>service delivery standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advice on achieving TEC standards for training delivery (North London)</li> <li>advice on achieving Guidance Council standards for information, advice and guidance (Sandwell, Wigan)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>professional services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pro-Help Group (Pan London Consortium/Business in the Community)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>partnership development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership Initiative Project (Pan London Consortium)</li> </ul>
<b>Networking</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North London Voluntary Sector Forum</li> <li>London Regeneration Network, Black Regeneration Forum (Pan London Consortium)</li> <li>Sandwell Voluntary Sector Lifelong Learning Group (Sandwell CVO)</li> <li>Birmingham Voluntary Sector Quality Development Programme</li> <li>CITINET learning centre network</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>benchmarking/study visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'organisational raids' (Pan London Consortium)</li> <li>site exchanges (Sandwell)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>peer group support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hampshire liP learning networks</li> <li>Building Leadership buddying/mutual support (Pan London Consortium)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICT-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>database of smaller community organisations - PINDA (Hampshire)</li> </ul>
<b>Information and advice</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>briefings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>briefings on Learning and Skills Council developments (Hampshire, Sandwell)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information on voluntary sector learning opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LADDER (Hampshire), VOLCAAN</li> </ul>



Methods of skills development provision may include courses, on-or off-the-job; coaching and mentoring.

Feedback from the TECs concerned suggests that these investments of time and money have been well worthwhile, helping to achieve the benefits noted in Key Message 6 and provide value for the organisations concerned, eg, in their ability to serve their users well, in attracting new funding, and in putting their organisations onto a more stable footing. The North London TEC case study illustrates how several local voluntary organisations were enabled to meet TEC standards and subsequently proceeded to win other contracts (eg, with the Employment Service). The Calderdale and Kirklees TEC case study illustrates one example whereby an organisation (Indian Muslim Welfare Society) has been enabled to develop its asset base through ERDF funding and become more of a centre for community development, as well as a partner in delivery of basic skills provision. Sandwell TEC have measured the benefits in terms of improved TEC performance: eg, in increasing the share of Modern Apprenticeships taken up by minority ethnic groups from 3% to 11%.

LLSCs will need to assess the role that they can best play in their area in building organisational capacity within the voluntary sector, in conjunction with voluntary organisations themselves - which, as Key Message 3 points out, need to drive the capacity building activities themselves. Part of the challenge will be to help make the most of resources which can be accessed, as there are several funding “pots” available and other local bodies (eg, SRB partnerships, local authorities, housing associations, health authorities) are increasingly interested in how they can also promote capacity building. The DETR guidance on Local Strategic Partnerships suggests that partners will want to work together to clarify the capacity building role of ‘community support organisations’ (CVSs, development trusts, volunteer bureaux, etc).

The Small Business Service also has a potential role to play, given its brief for enterprise and social inclusion. One way of ensuring a business contribution to inclusion is by helping voluntary organisations become more effective and efficient, make more of trading activities, and help develop new social enterprises. Sandwell and North London Business Links both offer examples where advisers have been employed to work specifically with the voluntary sector.

**Table 6 - Resources for Developing Capacity in Community and Voluntary Organisations**

<i>Support towards:</i>	<b>Learning provision</b>	<b>Training costs</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>
<b>Source</b>			
Active Community Grants			▲
Adult & Community Learning Fund	▲		
Charities Aid Foundation			▲
Coalfields Regeneration Trust	▲		
Community Access to Lifelong Learning	▲		
Community Champions Fund		▲	
Community Development Learning Fund	▲		
Connecting Communities			▲
Ethnic Minority Foundation			▲
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)			▲
European Social Fund (ESF)	▲	▲	▲
Individual Learning Accounts		▲	
Lloyds TSB Foundation			▲
Local Learning & Skills Councils	▲	▲	▲
National Lottery Charities Board			▲
New Deal for Communities	▲		▲
Single Regeneration Budget	▲	▲	▲
Skills Development Fund	▲	▲	▲
Small Business Service			▲
Voluntary & Community Basic Skills & ESOL Fund	▲		

There is currently plenty of scope to attract funding for capacity building for the voluntary and community sector, as set out in Resource 3 (Funding for Organisational Capacity Building in Part 2). Especially relevant are the National Lottery Charities Board (NLCB), Home Office Active Community Grants and the European Social Fund. New avenues are opening up, as possibilities under programmes such as the Rural Enterprise Scheme funded by the EU for socio-economic development in rural areas. Table 6 sets out some of relevant sources - more sources and detail can be found in Resource 3 in Part 2.

Such is the diversity of sources that there are opportunities for voluntary organisations to duplicate or overlap activities and perhaps not achieve the best possible outcomes. At the same time, with co-operation, there is potential to make much better use of available funds, including matching funds where this is a requirement (eg, using NLCB monies to lever ESF). LLSCs can play a role with sector representatives in ensuring that resources are well targeted and initiatives reinforce each other<sup>1</sup>. There is also a need, as such initiatives burgeon, to share experience of what works and what doesn't, depending on local circumstances and the needs of participants.

Capacity building needs also relate to individuals who have ideas and the potential to develop new projects and organisations, and to small community groups who may not be part of existing networks within the voluntary sector (eg, convened around Councils for Voluntary Service). The Community Champions Fund (DfEE-funded) provides small grants for individuals who have shown leadership in stimulating community activity, or who have ideas for encouraging greater community activity. It is aimed especially at areas where community activity or direct involvement in developing plans for regeneration are still very weak. (In London it is run by the London Regeneration Network - see the Pan London Community Regeneration Consortium case study in Part 2). Individuals concerned

may well develop as "social entrepreneurs" - people who have the imagination to identify new opportunities and the determination and skills to bring them to fruition for the public good.

Support is also available under the Community Champions Fund for small-scale community-inspired projects. This is one example of how the use of seedcorn funding to support small groups is spreading. In other areas, such support may be referred to as Community Chests or Key Funds, where small grants enable projects and capacity building which would not otherwise happen and require a minimum of administration. Provision for so-called 'Global Grants' under the ESF is a new funding source, which will spread this approach further.

#### IN PRACTICE

### South Yorkshire Key Fund

The South Yorkshire Key Fund provides small grants to small, new community groups, which define their own project objectives. Proposals are considered by a panel of voluntary assessors drawn from the South Yorkshire Community Foundation and local communities. Outreach workers help groups refine their ideas and make applications. The initial budget of £1.2m was taken up quickly. It was part-funded by the ERDF, with contributions, amongst other sources, from the South Yorkshire TECs.

Administrative requirements are kept to the minimum. Assessors visit projects after 20 weeks, which proves useful not only for monitoring progress but importantly for the groups themselves, building skills and knowledge and gaining help in seeking further sources of funding. The second phase of the Fund is increasing support available to groups, through mentor groups and access to support workers drawn from the network of community activists in the sub-region.

<sup>1</sup> The CITINET case study illustrates a comparable process in Sheffield, relating to ICT learning centres.



# 8 DEVELOP INTERNAL CAPACITY FOR WORKING WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Several implications were identified in our project for how LLSCs approach their relationships with the voluntary and community sector, in keeping with the role they will be expected to play as partners. These relate to:

- 1) understanding community development
- 2) good practice in partnerships and relationships with the voluntary and community sector
- 3) performance management and staff development

LLSCs are expected to take a conscious approach to managing relationships with partner interests and operate in a collaborative fashion.

### Local Learning and Skills Councils: Functions relating to Partnerships and Partners

Amongst their functions, under the theme of "Partnerships and Partners", each LLSC is expected to:

- produce an external relations strategy outlining how it will interact with other agencies, organisations and partnerships to increase the effectiveness and quality of its operations
- identify and develop partnerships for the continued improvement of delivery of its plans and targets
- contribute to local and sub-regional/regional partnerships, to promote coherence between economic development, learning and skills agendas
- develop consultation mechanisms for other key partners (eg, voluntary sector, local authorities, trades unions)
- help ensure education, skills, training and economic development partnerships add value and work to promote key LSC objectives

*DfEE (2000) Learning and Skills Council Functions - Interim Specification*

There is not an assumption that partnership is always the best way to achieve a particular objective. LLSCs have limited resources and many tasks, and have hard decisions to make on where partnership working will bear most fruit.

### 1) understanding community development

One of the key requirements, raised in particular in Wigan, is understanding the processes and practices of community development, associated with values of working with local people, to their needs, at their pace. This is linked to a recognition that real progress in widening participation in learning needs to go hand-in-hand with community development more generally, helping local people develop the confidence that they can bring about change. Community development activities can help overcome barriers to learning (such as providing venues for outreach activities and improving access to affordable childcare).

The Wigan experience highlighted how much some practices in partner organisations have had to change, essentially from "on" or "for" to working "with" voluntary and community organisations.

*"The way we are approaching regeneration activities is giving local communities more of a voice, more of a say ... It's a challenge for us in how we respond."*

The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR)<sup>2</sup> illustrates the policy backdrop, where critical imperatives include:

*"revive and empower the community: unless the community is fully engaged in shaping and delivering regeneration, even the best plans on paper will fail to deliver in practice"*

*"leadership and joint working... This means ways to put deprived communities in the driving seat. It also means ensuring all local authorities and other local service providers play their part, with each aspiring to reach the standards of the best in tackling the problems of deprived areas."*

This has been translated into guidance on strategic priorities issued to the Learning and Skills Council. In his formal letter to the LSC in November 2000, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment set out his expectation that LLSCs should "play an active role in building the capacity of people living in deprived neighbourhoods, and to promote equality and social inclusion."

<sup>2</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (2000) "National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: A Framework for Consultation"

## Local Strategic Partnerships

LLSCs are expected to be important players in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), convened by local authorities. The purpose of an LSP is to form an umbrella for local partnership working - a single, overarching framework to guide and co-ordinate the work of partners in pursuit of common goals in improving local quality of life. Partnerships falling under this umbrella would include Learning Partnerships and more localised area and neighbourhood renewal partnerships. (Sandwell and Wigan both illustrate such structures already in place.)

Draft guidance from the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) stresses needs to draw on the expertise of voluntary and community sector partners in making local public services more responsive and effective, and to ensure that “community and voluntary organisations are in a position to play a full and equal part in multi-agency partnerships on the same basis with statutory authorities and better resourced partners”.

The guidance also recommends that “attention should be given at an early stage to ensuring that all sections of the community have the opportunity to participate - not just the ‘usual suspects’”, noting that there can be particular difficulties in encouraging the involvement of communities of interest who may otherwise be marginalised. The document mentions women, disabled people, older people, faith and youth groups and black and ethnic minority communities.

Working through these expectations will raise further questions about styles and ways of working practised by public agencies, including LLSCs, and the balance between bottom-up and top-down planning and priority setting. There is also a need to accommodate the longer timescales which can be involved and to recognise that there is more to ‘capacity building’ than skills and knowledge - as pointed out in Wigan:

*“Capacity building is about knowledge and skill, resources and assets, power and influence.”*

Fundamental questions about decision making (who is involved, when decisions are taken, what say others have,

etc) may be raised which address matters of power and influence directly, in ways which may not be comfortable for staff in public sector organisations who have been accustomed largely to top-down approaches.

### ***2) good practice in partnerships and relationships with the voluntary and community sector***

Workshops in the project generated some pointers - see Table 7 - from a voluntary and community perspective which LLSCs may take on board in putting such a collaborative culture into practice.

**Table 7 - Partnership Practices: Do's & Don'ts**

DO	DON'T
<b>a) Behaviours and working practices</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use plain language - avoid jargon and overuse of acronyms and abbreviations</li> <li>• trust the voluntary sector to know what it needs and what it's doing</li> <li>• accept and respect differences of view and approach</li> <li>• have more of a “yes” mentality – look for solutions not drawbacks</li> <li>• acknowledge the sector's independence and its role to challenge institutions</li> <li>• use venues for meetings that are accessible to all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• send voluntary organisations from pillar to post (as a consequence of how the organisation is structured - TEC problem: product/service driven nature of the organisation)</li> <li>• play organisations off against each other</li> <li>• be insensitive to the particular needs and cultures of different groups (eg, in marketing services, providing catering for meetings, etc)</li> <li>• expect too much too soon where individual voluntary organisations are new to the world of learning and skills</li> <li>• don't treat the voluntary sector as an afterthought or poor relation</li> </ul>
<b>b) Resources</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help organisations/representatives to cover the costs of taking part in strategic and project partnerships and of the publicity, information and networking required to raise awareness and interest more widely</li> <li>• consider funding for, or allocating staff to a liaison function with the voluntary and community sector - to widen involvement, ensure good communications, encourage needs and project ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expect the voluntary and community sector to do things for nothing</li> <li>• arrange partnership meetings in inappropriate venues and at times which preclude participation of sector representatives (eg. single parents with childcare responsibilities are likely to have difficulty in attending breakfast meetings)</li> </ul>

Readers may find Resource 4, Partnerships and Trust (in Part 2) useful in considering critical aspects of partnership relationships between the public and voluntary sector (and partnership relationships more generally). It sets out essential requirements of partnership working, and encourages users to reflect on whether they have the necessary factors in place to make a success of collaboration over time.

### **3) performance management, staffing and staff development**

The collaborative culture will be supported by how the Learning and Skills Council nationally sets the framework

for performance management and staff development within the organisation and how the LLSCs as local arms implement these.

A recurring issue in the project workshops was how current performance management systems in TECs (and other public sector partners) can work against effective partnership, by placing middle managers in a difficult position where their - and their team's - performance is judged on targets which may not reflect the need for partnership working. Similarly, the need for staff to work in partnership may not always be recognised in job descriptions and in staff appraisals.

#### **IN PRACTICE**

### **Implementing change in Wigan CCTE**

Local research for Wigan CCTE found that work with the voluntary and community sector was perceived to be on the margins of CCTE activity, and that a significant proportion of groups and organisations approached in the survey had had no contact with the CCTE - which incorporates the TEC. At the same time, the CCTE has become more concerned with the community development agenda in the borough, and activities for promote social inclusion have assumed higher priority. They recognise that they need to work more in partnership with voluntary and community sector, to complement what they themselves can offer.

The CCTE board endorsed recommendations in support of a capacity building programme for the sector in the borough, linked to change within the CCTE itself. Actions include encouraging champions of work with the sector - "We need to get it into the forefront of people's minds"; providing training to increase awareness of the issues, needs and best ways of working together and pursuing community development; and ensuring that performance management practices support not hinder collaboration with the sector.

The consultants, CEDA, also recommended that the CCTE have staff with "a wide understanding of community issues and needs... to be able to diagnose and deliver appropriate assistance". Their role would be to provide advice and support to the voluntary and community sector - "individuals, groups and businesses". Means of raising awareness amongst staff could include joint working and placements or assignments with local voluntary organisations - a practice of Calderdale and Kirklees TEC.

LLSCs may themselves want to promote volunteering by their own staff, as a means of promoting active citizenship, developing wider skills and experience and understanding better different parts of the voluntary and

community sector. In this they would be supporting the Government's Active Communities Challenge which encourages employers to give time off to employees to volunteer.

# Key Messages for Collaboration

**What do local Learning and Skills Councils and voluntary and community organisations need to do together to make more of a difference to learning and skills?**

## Key Messages for Collaboration

- 9. Implement Compact principles
- 10. Pursue joint capacity building

### 9 IMPLEMENT COMPACT PRINCIPLES

Throughout these Key Messages, we have highlighted issues and concerns about relationships and partnership between public agencies and the voluntary and community sector, and pointed to ways forward. Such problems have been recognised at a national level, and a **Compact** has been agreed between government (including local government) and the sector to govern future relationships. Codes of Practice have been developed on Funding, Consultation and Policy, Volunteering, Community Groups and with the black and minority ethnic voluntary sector.

#### National Compact: Government and Voluntary Sector Commitments

The national Compact is an agreement between the voluntary and community sector and government to improve their relationship for mutual advantage. Local Compacts aim to do this locally between the sector, councils and other local public bodies, including health authorities and local Learning and Skills Councils.

As part of the national Compact, the government and the voluntary sector have made a set of commitments to each other.

##### **on the part of Government, to:**

- ensure proportionality, consistency & transparency in dealings with voluntary organisations
- recognise the need for “strategic funding” (longer term core funding)

- carry out ‘policy proofing’ (addressing the impact of policies on the sector) and effective consultation
- take account positively of specific needs, interests and contributions (eg, women, minority groups, socially excluded people)

##### **on the part of the voluntary sector, to:**

- set and maintain high standards of governance and conduct
- achieve and maintain appropriate quality standards
- inform and consult users, volunteers, members, supporters
- promote good practice (in relations with government and others; user involvement; equality of opportunity)

Local Compacts are being promoted by the voluntary sector and local authorities with support from Government Offices for the Regions. Guidance explains that Local Compacts will:

*“deliver a clear and consistent framework and structure for clarifying and developing a quality relationship and for taking partnership working forward... [and] offer the means of supporting the development of the sector’s capacity so that independent but accountable voluntary and community organisations can do more to meet both their own aims and those of their statutory partners thereby enhancing their contribution to the community.”*

Guidelines for Local Compacts suggest a number of key principles for partnership working, which echo comments made elsewhere in this report.

### Local Compact Principles: checklist for partnership working

- Partnership agendas are set by all involved
- Partner agencies carry equal weight in joint decision-making
- Recognition that different partners may have different contributions to make
- The capacity and capability of all partner agencies are accepted
- Best value regimes enable the sector to bid on equal terms
- Purchasing and tendering regimes are sector-friendly
- Joint training on inter-sector working which fosters continuous improvement
- A clear process for jointly evaluating partnerships
- An over-arching body (eg, a partnership board or joint standing conference) which meets regularly

*Working Group on Government Relations Secretariat/Local Government Association (2000) "Local Compact Guidelines: Getting Local Relationships Right Together"*

Putting these principles into practice may pose significant questions for all the parties. Much may concern improving understanding of what each other is about and what they bring to the table, and exploring how all the parties can help each other achieve common goals:

*"We have to seek to establish 'what can we do for each other?', rather than we as voluntary organisations saying, 'what can you do for us?'"*

Local Compacts are likely to cover the themes of the national codes of practice, along with, eg, a vision for how partners want relationships to develop, equality issues, communications, and voluntary sector infrastructure and capacity building.

The experience so far in developing Compacts in the participating TEC areas has been mixed, in part reflecting the time it can take to build or change relationships and establish more of the common ground that is required to ensure that real, practical outcomes are achieved through the Compact process. In many parts of the country the

focus has been on local government/voluntary sector relations (not least because of the extent to which the two interests have funding and contractual relationships). In Sandwell, the vehicle for the Compact has been the Regeneration Partnership, with the focus primarily on relations with the council (and much less to do with the TEC or Health Authority). Wigan provides a contrast, where the Compact is being used to create the climate for more effective partnership across the board:

#### IN PRACTICE

### Local Compact in Wigan

Work started in 2000 on preparing a Local Compact, with the underlying aim of raising the profile and involvement of the community/voluntary sector in all partnership working. Wigan CCTE are active participants. A central tenet is that, *"for the partnership framework to be successful, all partners and all sectors must be effectively engaged and their contributions recognised and valued by others"*.

Progress has been gradual, reflecting the local starting point: the lack of previous borough-wide focus on strategic relationships, an under-resourced Council for Voluntary Service, and relationships affected by negative experiences around funding and contracting. Time has been needed - and will be needed further - to explore shared agendas, develop more of a common language, bring more people from partner organisations on board, and so on. There are tensions around wishes and priorities, with contested issues where community representatives bring forth immediate wants - which may or may not fit with agency/partnership priorities and the "bigger picture".

Participants are working through a set of principles ("information", "accountability" and "learning from action") - what do they mean in practice? what actions need to be taken? This is being done for each of the themes where national Compact codes of practice are being introduced. They are developing an action plan, with the intent of *"giving people the responsibility to go away and make the changes"*.

Particular issues can arise in relation to partnership working with the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary sector, highlighted by the Home Office and representatives of the sector in developing the consultation draft of the Code to govern relations between government and the sector.

*“The relationship between the BME voluntary sector and local government, TECs and the NHS locally has often been marked with friction. For the BME voluntary sector has had to play the joint roles of providing services for local BME communities while challenging statutory institutions and their indifferent race equality records...Local statutory agencies need to combine their new statutory duty to promote equality with a personal commitment at all levels of the organisation so that the challenges of race equality and tackling social exclusion amongst BME communities are met within reasonable timescales.”*

The Consultation and Policy Code of Practice highlights Five Key Points for an Effective Consultation Process, primarily aimed at public agencies and geared to the aim of achieving better policy and outcomes:

1. Guaranteed minimum period for consultation (12 weeks the norm)
2. Clear and simple consultation documents which explain what can and can't be changed
3. Comprehensive rolling out of consultation by the sector (smaller organisations tend to be at the end of the line and have less time to respond by the time information reaches them)
4. Production of impact statements to check how proposals will influence the sector
5. Feedback to respondents on consultation results and next steps

Such principles raise expectations amongst voluntary and community organisations that these will be consistently applied.

The Codes of Practice on Funding covers the single biggest area of concern for voluntary organisations. This Code provides much good advice which can help address some of the historic areas of friction between the sector and public funders - and is something that needs to be considered by funders *together* not in isolation. Many recent government reports, including those of the Social Exclusion Unit, have raised the need for more coherence in funding regimes. Experiences in the participating TEC areas and the case studies (eg, CITINET on learning centres) underline this.

## Compact Funding Code of Practice

The Compact Funding Code of Practice sets out key points for fair funding of the voluntary sector.

These include:

- promoting fair access to project, strategic and contract funding
- improving sustainability through using multi-year roll-forward funding
- clarifying funding conditions
- offering reasonable timescales for funding applications
- establishing a robust joint approach to evaluation
- ensuring that black and minority ethnic organisations get a fair share

The Code also calls for “consistency between funders on grant conditions and audit requirements, quality systems and evaluation processes”.

It also recommends that small community groups should have good access to funding opportunities, by:

- assessing the impact of policies and programmes on them (before and after)
- active engagement and targeted publicity
- the use of small grants programmes with proportionate and streamlined procedures and fast track approvals, (like the Key Funds mentioned in the Key Message 7 above)

On match funding arrangements - often a source of difficulty for voluntary organisations - the Code states that:

- government will ensure a consistent approach to match funding
- funding arrangements need to be flexible to reflect both the size of the organisation and its capacity to attract other funders
- organisations must be given sufficient time to attract other funders
- funders accepting each other's approvals rather than demanding fresh evidence of viability assists access to funding
- a flexible approach will be helpful when government departments assess the value of volunteer time or help in kind, or of the expertise that the sector may bring to a partnership





# 10 PURSUE JOINT CAPACITY BUILDING

Ultimately real progress on improving partnership depends on the extent to which partners work together in pursuit of common goals. But much can also be achieved through joint capacity building. Examples of possibilities have been already highlighted in referring to capacity building for voluntary and community organisations, and there are others which can be pursued.

## Possibilities for Joint Capacity Building

- joint training
- study and exchange visits ('organisational raids')
- joint task groups (with a remit to reflect and report on what has been learnt)
- action-based learning (structured approaches to learning from experience)
- secondments, placements, and volunteering cross-sector
- coaching and mentoring cross-sector

Common Purpose programmes are pursued in each of the participating TEC areas and many other parts of the country. These provide one vehicle to bring together leaders and potential leaders from different sectors to understand better what makes their locality tick and key issues that need to be faced. The programmes help participants gain a better understanding of each others' perspectives and help form relationships that can be cemented later. They are less about developing skills for partnership working and resolving partnership issues. Some local programmes, however, as in North Hampshire, run partnership games to simulate some of the requirements and challenges.

In all the participating TEC areas, it was felt that there was a need for joint capacity building though little has been undertaken to date. One example of new, major initiative which will have lessons to offer is "Working Together: Learning Together" (Community Participation Skills Development Programme) funded by the Scottish Executive to improve the effectiveness of Social Inclusion Partnerships (equivalent to SRB and New Deal for Communities partnerships in England).

## IN PRACTICE

### 'Working Together: Learning Together' Community Participation Skills Development Programme (Scotland)

'Working Together: Learning Together' is a major training programme to support all partners involved in Social Inclusion Partnerships and Working for Communities Pathfinders in Scotland. It is part of the Scottish Executive 'Listening to Communities' programme that aims to *"encourage community capacity building and a shift of culture in public sector bodies towards working with, listening to and empowering communities"*. The programme is aimed at board members and potentially others including community and voluntary sector representatives, elected members and staff of partnerships and of partner agencies and organisations.

There is a target of 900 participants (15 participants from each of the 60 partnerships), who are to undertake 8 days of training between September 2000 and June 2002. It is available free of charge to participants, with travel and child care costs for community representatives also met. The training is being delivered on a regional basis, and provides opportunities for networking with other partnerships and work on individual partnership-specific issues.

The programme comprises three core modules: Concepts and policies in social inclusion (2 days); Principles of partnership planning and evaluation (2 days); and Engaging community participation (3 days). Options for the remaining day are identified in consultation with participants.

Related developments have been developed or are under way in England, such as the Effective Partnership Working on Merseyside and Community Development and Training Partnership in the South East.

## “Effective Partnership Working” on Merseyside

In 1997/98, Merseyside TEC led a DfEE project to investigate the use of occupational standards to help develop skills and competencies amongst people working in community economic development. (Such standards express what is required for effective performance in particular types of job roles, along with statements of the skills and knowledge people need.) The project demonstrated that the approach was valued, in helping both individuals and organisations develop their capabilities. It also highlighted the need for people working in this field to have learning opportunities relating to economic regeneration as well as in community work.

As part of the project Merseyside TEC developed an accredited learning programme in “Effective Partnership Working” with voluntary and community organisations and local regeneration partnerships”. This drew participants from both the voluntary/community and public sectors and made use of to identify learning needs and the ground to be covered by the programme.

The content covered, eg:

- personal effectiveness (facilitating groups; meeting skills; assertiveness and time management)
- managing partnerships (developing a shared vision; effective structures and decision making; action planning)
- managing people (including team building and managing conflict)
- managing finance and managing information

Some 50 people took part, with 10 regular participants. The latter collected evidence of what they had learned, as a step towards a relevant qualification.

The TEC has supported further capacity building initiatives for regeneration on Merseyside. Examples include:

- project management training for voluntary, community and public sector managers
- ‘Responding to Regeneration’ training for the private sector, in partnership with Common Purpose and Pro Help (a local partnership with Business in the Community and professional firms)
- mapping the skills of regeneration staff in public agencies, to help strengthen capacity for partnership working in the context of the setting up of the LLSC and the Small Business Service (This was another project with DfEE.)

## Community Development and Training Partnership

The Community Development and Training Partnership (South East) seeks to improve training and learning opportunities for people involved in neighbourhood renewal and community capacity building (residents, activists, members of voluntary organisations, front line workers in voluntary and public agencies; managers at all levels, and policy makers). It is funded under SRB 6, with earlier development work supported by the NHS South East Regional Executive, East Sussex Brighton and Hove Health Authority, Brighton and Hove Council and the New Deal for Communities partnership in Brighton.

The programme will:

- map community capacity building, regeneration and community development training in the region
- put in place ‘first rung’ training programmes in community involvement for residents in targeted areas
- deliver “Better Communities” programmes in key regeneration areas to promote joined up working
- establish a network and database of trainers
- create a best practice exchange forum and website

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### Projects Featured

#### Birmingham Voluntary Sector Quality Development Programme

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#### Calderdale and Kirklees TEC

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#### CITINET

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#### Community Development and Training Partnership

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#### LADDER

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**CEMVO - Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations**

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Compact:

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/main/gateway/compact.html](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/main/gateway/compact.html)

Quality Standards Task Group:

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/main/about/does/qs.html](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/main/about/does/qs.html)

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*Resource 5 in Part 2 provides a fuller listing of regional and national organisations relevant to the theme of the voluntary sector, learning and skills.*

## Glossary

ACLF	Adult and Community Learning Fund (DfEE)
ACU	Active Communities Unit (Home Office)
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CAB(x)	Citizens Advice Bureau(x)
CAF	Charities Aid Foundation
CALL	Community Access to Lifelong Learning (NOF)
CCTE	Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise
CDLF	Community Development Learning fund (Home Office)
CEMVO	Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations
CPD	Continuing professional development
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
DCMS	Department for Culture, Museums and Sport
DETR	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETDA	Education and Training Development Agenda
FE	Further Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
liP	Investors in People
ILA	Individual Learning Account
LLSC	Local Learning and Skills Council
LP	Learning Partnership
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NIACE	National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education
NLCB	National Lottery Charities Board
NOF	New Opportunities Fund
NSNR	National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal
PACE	Practical Award for Community Excellence
PLCRC	Pan London Community Regeneration Consortium
PQASSO	Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations
RCC	Rural Community Council
RDA	Regional Development Agency
REC	Racial Equality Council
SBS	Small Business Service
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
Ufi	University for Industry
VB(x)	Volunteer Bureau(x)
VSNT0	Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation

*Resource 6 in Part 2 provides a fuller glossary and definitions of key terms.*

**Part 2** (available on the Internet at [www.dfee.gov.uk/led](http://www.dfee.gov.uk/led), and from DfEE Publications, see below) provides:

### 1. Profiles of work in the three TEC areas:

- 1 Hampshire
- 2 Sandwell
- 3 Wigan

### 2. Case studies:

- 1 Birmingham Voluntary Sector Quality Development Programme
- 2 Calderdale & Kirklees TEC
- 3 CITINET (learning centre network in Sheffield)
- 4 North London TEC
- 5 Pan-London Community Regeneration Consortium
- 6 Voluntary and Community Alliance Across Norfolk (VOLCAAN)

### 3. Resources:

- 1 Developing Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement in LLSC Activities
- 2 Voluntary and Community Sector Roles in Learning and Skills
- 3 Funding for Organisational Capacity Building
- 4 Partnerships and Trust
- 5 Networks and Contacts
- 6 Glossary

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