

Shropshire Voluntary Sector Training Providers Consortium

Analysis of Research Phase –October 2006

1. Background

- 1.1 The Community Council of Shropshire (CCS) has been awarded funding by the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) to look into setting up a consortium of voluntary sector training providers. This approach has been adopted elsewhere in the UK and is also being explored in Herefordshire & Worcestershire and Telford & Wrekin. Such a structure would enable individual training providers to work together to access funds from the LSC & other funders and deliver training programmes across the county. Further benefits could include sharing best practice, providing support for meeting quality standards, central contract management / monitoring and links with regional partners.
- 1.2 CCS has commissioned an independent consultant to carry out this work and it is being managed through 3 phases:
- Research amongst voluntary sector training providers
 - Detailed consultation with key organisations
 - Development of proposals

2. Purpose of research phase

- 2.1 The project brief stated that the research phase should update CCS's information on local voluntary sector providers of learning and training opportunities and specifically to gather information on training delivered, numbers of candidates, accreditation and funding. In addition, the views of training providers should be sought on how a consortium might be established and how it should act. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1.

3. Selection of participating organisations

- 3.1 The organisations included in the research phase are those that provide significant services within Shropshire from the following categories:
- Voluntary sector training providers
 - Voluntary sector providers of learning related activities such as referrals and signposting, pre-training confidence building
 - Training providers delivering to the voluntary sector
- 3.2 In practice, the list of consultees is made up members of the Shropshire CVS Partnership, members of CCS's Voluntary Sector Learning Network, CCS contacts and branches of national organisations.

4. Summary of responses

- 4.1 65 questionnaires were distributed by post / email in early October. Follow-up telephone calls & emails were made after the deadline to increase the response. By 17/11/06, a total of 28 had been returned. Appendix 2 shows the organisations which were originally contacted and those that responded.
- 4.2 A response rate of almost 1 in 2 is satisfactory for a written questionnaire and provides a representative sample in statistical terms. Furthermore, if it is identified that important training providers have failed to respond, additional follow-up can be undertaken.

The 2 main reasons given for non-response were:

- I already have too many other questionnaires to complete
 - This issue is not relevant for our organisation
- 4.3 Of the 28 completed questionnaires, 10 organisations indicated that they were not training providers although some of these did in fact provide in-house training to staff and/or volunteers.

5. Detailed responses – training & learning opportunities provided by respondents (see also Appendix 3)

5.1

Total number of questionnaires completed, of which:	28
Training providers	18
Organisations receiving LSC funding	5
Organisations providing accredited learning (NVQ or OCN)	8
Local branches of national organisations	5
Registered assessment centres	5
Organisations employing assessors / verifiers	5
Matrix accredited (or pending)	7
Organisations referring learners on to other training providers	15
Organisations with a role in widening participation	9
Organisations that provide training for staff / volunteers	19
Organisations with own training venue	8

6. Detailed responses – views on the establishment of a consortium

6.1 Involvement

Organisations wishing to be kept informed	20
Organisations wishing to be part of a consortium	14
Organisations / individuals prepared to be part of a reference group: (see overleaf)	7

- Elaine Griffiths	Home Start North Shropshire & Oswestry	
- Pat Bell	Pre-school Learning Alliance	
- Mike Purslow	Voluntary Action Shrewsbury	
- Julian Price	Homeless in Oswestry Action Partnership	
- Debbie Booth	British Red Cross	
- Louise Stokes	North Shropshire Voluntary Action	
- Jean Garner	Community Council of Shropshire	

6.2 Services requested – advocacy & communication about training

Sharing good practice	17
Organising networking & events	12
Consulting with funding & planning bodies	18
Disseminating information on local / national developments	15
Representing the interests of the sector	19

6.3 Services requested – funding for training & sustainability

Bidding for, managing & distributing funds	15
Providing funding advice focusing on training/learning	13
Supporting the preparation of funding bids	16

6.4 Services requested - Learning & training delivery

Signposting & joint publicity	14
Exploring ways of joint delivery to share expertise	15
Delivering training	13
Delivery of information advice and guidance about learning and work	9
Enabling access to NVQ/OCN accreditation through approved centres	15
Running an assessment centre to deliver NVQ/OCN qualifications	7

6.5 Services requested - quality implementation in learning delivery

Supporting training organisations to meet the Common Inspection Framework (required for all learning delivery funded by ESF/govt	9
Facilitating the sharing of expertise on a consultancy basis	7

6.6 Services requested - research & information

Researching sector skills & training needs	13
Creating & maintaining a web site	8
Maintaining a database of training & training providers	10

6.7 Options for establishing a consortium

Setting up a new independent entity	6
Setting up a new partnership	3
Using an existing partnership (eg. Shropshire CVS Partnership)	12
Appointing a lead organisation	4

7. Detailed responses - issues and concerns

- Too much consulting & not enough front line action
- Insufficient proactive support for training for visually impaired (& other disability groups) by public & voluntary sectors
- Cannot attend too many meetings
- Important to achieve the necessary consensus/scale to approach funders
- The consortium should be independent
- Need to take advantage of the LSC's willingness to work with the voluntary sector
- The consortium should not just be another talking shop
- Larger member groups possibly swaying policy
- Concern over previous withdrawal of funding for training by the LSC
- Concern over working on a 3-county basis

8. Summary of findings

- 8.1 Of the training providers that have responded so far, there are only 5 that stated that they are in direct receipt of LSC funding: the Pre-school Learning Alliance, Home-start North Shropshire & Oswestry, South Shropshire Furniture Scheme, the Community Council of Shropshire and NACRO. It could be argued that these have the most to gain (and lose) from establishment of a consortium – indeed all 5 have indicated that they would like to be involved in a consortium.
- 8.2 14 organisations in total stated that they wished to be part of future consortium arrangements. This provides a reasonable basis for continuing the project to the next (consultation) stage.
- 8.3 7 people volunteering to be part of a reference group does create a reasonable “sounding board” for developing further proposals, although it probably should also include representatives from other bodies (eg. the LSC).
- 8.4 Responses on the services which a consortium could deliver indicate widespread support for most of the areas proposed in the questionnaire. In practice, the nature & scale of support which a consortium could provide for its members rather depends on how, and to what level, it is funded.
- 8.5 The most popular option for forming a consortium is to use an existing partnership (eg. Shropshire CVS Partnership). Nevertheless, there is also support for the other options. This should not be disregarded.
- 8.6 The additional comments expressed by some respondents can be summarised as:
- Support for the principle of acting together to access funds

- Support for better communication & partnership
- Concern over yet another meeting to attend

9. Recommended actions

- 9.1 CCS to agree this summary report and submit to the LSC.
- 9.2 CCS to check that the list of respondents does not exclude important training providers. If this is found to be the case, action to be agreed to encourage a response – especially where there are further organisations in receipt of LSC funding **(done)**.
- 9.3 RS to update this report with any further responses **(done)**.
- 9.4 RS to contact all organisations that completed questionnaires to provide feedback on the results and indicating likely future action.
- 9.5 RS to initiate the reference group **(done)**.
- 9.6 CCS to use the information gained to update VSLIP website.

Richard Sowden
17 November 2006

Appendix 1: Establishing a Shropshire Voluntary Sector Training Providers Consortium - Training Providers Questionnaire

This questionnaire is intended to gather some initial feedback from organisations likely to be involved in establishing a Shropshire Voluntary Sector Training Providers Consortium. It is not intended as a comprehensive research study, but as means of identifying key issues and concerns. Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this questionnaire

Organisation
Contact
E-mail
Phone
Is your organisation a voluntary sector training provider?
<input type="checkbox"/> Please tick to allow the information you provide in <u>Section A only</u> of this form to be replicated in print and on CCS's website

Section A – the training provided by your organisation

1. Is your organisation a training provider?		
2. If so, how many learners per year and to what level? (please give details)		
3. Where do you work?	Within Shropshire only	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Shropshire + Telford & Wrekin	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Shropshire + Herefordshire & Worcestershire	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does your organisation receive LSC funding for training delivery? (please give details)		
5. Is your organisation a registered assessment centre? (please give details)		
6. Does your organisation employ NVQ assessors / verifiers? (please give details)		
7. Is your organisation Matrix accredited?		

8. Does your organisation refer learners to training providers?

9. If so, is it a formal arrangement? (please give details)

10. Does your organisation play a role in providing access to learning for excluded people and widening participation to education? Your role may be to signpost to other services, such as the college, to provide volunteer support or to provide basic skills training.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

INTERESTS – please specify if you would need further resources, or are seeking to make links with other organisations

11. As an employer do you provide training to your paid staff & volunteers?

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

INTERESTS – please specify if you would need further resources, or are seeking to make links with other organisations

12. Would you describe your organisation as a training provider – ie. providing training to service users, members of the public & external people/groups?

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

INTERESTS – please specify if you would need further resources, or are seeking to make links with other organisations

13. Does your organisation run a community building which may be suitable as a training venue?

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

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INTERESTS – please specify if you would need further resources, or are seeking to make links with other organisations

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14. Does your organisation have specialist expertise & knowledge on issues that can affect learners – eg. access, disability, medical conditions, etc?

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

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INTERESTS – please specify if you would need further resources, or are seeking to make links with other organisations

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Section B – your views on a voluntary sector training providers consortium

15. Please tick one or more of the following to show your organisation's interest in establishing a voluntary sector training providers consortium:

- Please keep me informed about the development of the consortium
- My organisation would like to be involved in a consortium
- I would like to be part of the reference group (see covering letter)

16. The following services are provided by some existing consortia. Although it is unlikely that a new Shropshire consortium could provide this range in the short-term, please tick those which would be useful to your organisation:

- Advocacy & communication about training
- Sharing good practice
- Organising networking & events
- Consulting with funding & planning bodies
- Disseminating information on local / national developments
- Representing the interests of the sector
- Funding for training & sustainability

- Bidding for, managing & distributing funds
- Providing funding advice focusing on training/learning
- Supporting the preparation of funding bids

Learning & training delivery

- Signposting & joint publicity
- Exploring ways of joint delivery to share expertise
- Delivering training
- Delivery of information advice and guidance about learning and work
- Enabling access to NVQ/OCN accreditation through approved centres
- Running an assessment centre to deliver NVQ/OCN qualifications

Quality implementation – learning delivery

- Supporting training organisations to meet the Common Inspection Framework (required for all learning delivery funded by ESF/govt.
- Facilitating the sharing of expertise on a consultancy basis

Research & information

- Researching sector skills & training needs
- Creating & maintaining a web site
- Maintaining a database of training & training providers

17. Which of the following options would you favour for establishing a consortium?

- Setting up a new independent entity
- Setting up a new partnership
- Using an existing partnership (eg. Shropshire CVS Partnership)
- Appointing a lead organisation

Can you identify an appropriate organisation to act as lead organisation?

18. Do you have any issues or concerns?

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire