



# **Evaluation of Voluntary and Community Sector Capacity-building Fund**

**July 2005**

**This report will be of interest to the full range of individuals and organisations that are interested in, or involved with, voluntary and community sector engagement with adult learning.**

# Evaluation of the Voluntary and Community Sector Capital-building Fund

## Background

1 The evaluation was carried out by ERS, specialists in research and consultancy services with offices in Leicester and Newcastle upon Tyne.

2 The *Working Together* strategy recognises that many voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations need to build their capacity to meet Learning and Skills Council (LSC) standards and work with LSC systems. This applies particularly to many organisations working with black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.

3 At its launch in May 2004 *Working Together* provided a £2 million capacity-building fund allocated to the nine English regions (£200,000 each), to the Prince's Trust (£150,000) and to the Federation for Community Development and Learning (FCDL) (£50,000).

## Purpose

4 The purpose of the evaluation was to examine:

- how the fund should be used
- the activities undertaken
- the contribution of activities in supporting *Working Together*; and
- examples of good practice.

5 The evaluation included a review of documents, interviews with LSC staff (local and national), and interviews with FCDL, the Prince's Trust and other delivery partners.

6 The purpose of the capacity-building fund was to support *Working Together* by enabling local LSCs to work with VCS organisations to develop their performance and capability, with a particular focus on BME groups.

7 This included activities such as:

- mapping and benchmarking exercises to measure current levels of engagement between local LSCs and the VCS
- building communication strategy with BME groups (for example, websites, workshops, publications)
- training and development of VCS staff; and
- the formation of local consortia to enhance partnership working.

## Distribution of the fund

8 In most cases the fund was divided equally across the region. In the north west, the fund was divided partially according to BME populations. In the eastern region, the local LSCs worked jointly in clusters. Another method was to use the fund as a regional 'pot' to which local LSCs in the region could apply. Some local

LSCs commissioned delivery partners to deliver activities. Examples of local and regional activities can be found in the annex.

### **Capacity-building fund – good practice**

9 Reactions from local LSCs and partners were largely positive. There was a firm belief that the capacity-building fund provided genuine added value and enabled local LSCs to go some way to meet the high level of demand in the VCS.

10 The fund also offered new opportunities for training and development, and promoted partnership working, as well as other collaborative activities.

11 The learning consortia formed to deliver the Prince's Trust (the PT) programme helped to enhance the VCS's role as employer and provider of learning opportunities.

12 Regional FE colleges that provided dedicated staff to work alongside VCS staff to deliver the programmes coordinated the PT consortia.

13 Feedback from FCDL learners was very positive (especially first-time learners) and over-delivery on the FCDL contract indicates the high level of demand for its type of low-key, informal training.

14 A number of local LSCs used supplementary funding or linked with existing related work where possible to aid sustainability.

### **Capacity-building fund – issues**

15 Issues arising from the capacity-building exercise were:

- the short amount of lead in and planning time available
- the limited funding which constrained further work
- concern about raised expectations among VCS organisations
- focus on BME groups in areas with low ethnic minority populations; and
- need for coherence between projects going forward.

### **Further information**

Further information can be obtained from:

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## Examples of local/regional activities

### East

- LSC Norfolk and LSC Cambridgeshire developed a training needs analysis for front line staff with the regional Citizen Advice Bureau
- LSC Essex and LSC Suffolk undertook a programme of research to identify BME groups' education and training needs; and
- LSC Hertfordshire and LSC Bedfordshire and Luton worked with smaller BME groups to improve leadership capacity and business skills.

### London

- LSC London East undertook a project to address management and governance skills gaps within VCS organisations
- LSC London North supplemented an existing ESF-funded project to build capacity in the VCS with a renewed emphasis on BME organisations
- LSC London Central developed a brokerage system specifically to assist BME groups and boost apprenticeships amongst BME groups/individuals
- LSC London West used the funding to underpin the development of VCS champions in the Greenwich area; and
- LSC London South organised one-to-one sessions with local VCS organisations the recording and recognition of non-accredited learning.

### North East

Four sub-regional consortia were established in the NE to research training and infrastructure needs. Each consortium drew up a business development plan based on local priorities.

### North West

- LSC Cheshire and Warrington worked with the local Voluntary Sector Learning Forum to develop communications with local BME groups, including a race equality council
- LSC Greater Manchester commissioned the Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Organisations to establish a consortium of local providers, which organised funding and procurement workshops
- LSC Greater Merseyside partnered NIACE and the Women's Technology Centre in organising a mapping exercise and provider workshops; and
- LSC Lancashire produced a series of communication events, promotional materials, community website and capacity-building toolkit.

## **South East**

- LSC Hampshire and Isle of Wight assisted with a mapping exercise led by Hampshire County Council. Funding was also used to support a group of local black business managers and community leaders
- LSC Kent and Medway provided funding to a recently developed BME support network to carry out mapping activity of existing organisations with exploration of resource needs
- LSC Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire funded a local coordinator to develop links with local VCS organisations and to assist the formation of local VCS umbrella groups
- LSC Sussex developed an advisory service in quality assurance and organised collaborative links between FE Sussex (consortium of local FE colleges) and the VCS; and
- LSC Berkshire undertook a BME mapping exercise, developed a BME presence on the regional VCS website and supported a team of regional learning representatives.

## **South West**

- LSC Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset commissioned Dorset Racial Equality Council to undertake a baseline survey of BME groups and their training needs
- LSC Gloucestershire funded four local VCS consortia to participate as members of the regional WAPAF consortium and to run Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) contracts
- LSC Somerset funded a development worker in the Somerset Racial Equality Council to work with local BME groups in the formation of an umbrella organisation
- LSC West of England commissioned the Black Development Agency to undertake a BME mapping exercise, organise joint workshops to highlight LSC priorities and draw up a consortium framework.

## **Yorkshire and the Humber**

- LSC North Yorkshire funded existing providers for training and development courses involving BME community networks in order to create BME champions;
- LSC Humberside funded training through Humberside Learning Consortium and began development of a consultation network
- LSC West Yorkshire worked to enhance the capacity of the five Learning Partnerships in West Yorkshire with specific reference to BME groups; and
- LSC South Yorkshire supported capacity-building among BME organisations, self-assessment and training sessions on LSC financial procedures and systems.

## **The Prince's Trust**

The Prince's Trust (the PT) Team Programme offers a holistic, community-focused programme with two main elements:

- 1 Providing the opportunity for employed and unemployed 16-25 year olds to participate in a 12-week personal development programme.
- 2 Offering employees or secondees the opportunity to develop team leader and coaching skills.

Work continues to develop a framework for the PT for accreditation within the national qualification framework.

In terms of its objectives, the project has:

- developed partnerships in most regions between the PT, delivery partners and FE colleges
- helped to build capacity within LSC regions, though investment is needed to secure resources over time
- developed the basis for a sustainable model for the targeted groups of learners, although sustainability will depend upon local priorities; and
- contributed to the development of a framework of credible qualifications fit for purpose for the voluntary and community sector.

The PT has the potential to support widening participation through:

- its ability to recruit learners from marginalised and disaffected groups;
- its use of non-traditional methods with both individual and community involvement
- building clusters/tiers of learners through programmes for young people, volunteer support and supervisory staff
- the scope local and regional PT partnerships; and
- the opportunity to imbue the PT programmes with an enhanced educational element, including basic skills support.

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

The Sheffield-based Federation for Community Development and Learning (FCDL) supports community development learning, creates training opportunities and develops relevant qualifications. Its work is overseen by a management committee including BME representatives.

FCDL's membership is mainly small, locally based, voluntary and community sector groups who want to either access or deliver community development training in order to satisfy local needs. Much of this training is informal/non-accredited.

FCDL activities included:

- 'Black perspectives in Community Development Learning' – a course developed to assist organisations working with BME groups
- 'Training the trainers – developing and enhancing skills amongst inexperienced trainers
- Edge International – delivery of non-accredited training to 12 learners;
- Black Development Agency – building a community development team for capacity building; and
- South West Foundation – two bespoke training packs: 'What is community development?' and 'The problems with organisations'.

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