Voluntary Sector Impact
Final Report

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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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Acknowledgements

ELWa/DELLS

NFER was commissioned by Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) to undertake research to determine the impact of the voluntary sector on learning and training in Wales. In April 2006 ELWa merged with the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and is now part of the Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS). Throughout this report DELLS will be used to refer to the former ELWa.

Executive Summary

1.   The project

In January 2006 the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned to undertake this project by ELWa, which was merged into DELLS in April 2006. The aim of the project was to determine the impact of the voluntary sector on learning and training in Wales.

2.   Methodology

The NFER research team adopted a mixed methodology in order to obtain the maximum research data within a very tight timescale. The project was conducted during the period January-April, 2006.

Project Advisory Panel

The NFER established a Project Advisory Panel consisting of four experts with extensive experience in the voluntary sector in Wales. The Panel met early in the project, and subsequent communication was conducted by e-mail.

Literature review and quantitative data

A search was conducted through the NFER Library Service and other sources for key literature, including the documentation outlined in the invitation to tender and other materials identified by NFER, DELLS and the project Advisory Panel. Further searches were carried out for relevant statistics for the voluntary sector on learner numbers and outcomes and funding information with the aim of mapping the current position.

Qualitative research

The qualitative research comprised three phases. Firstly, a series of research interviews were undertaken with agencies having a strategic overview of the voluntary sector in Wales and with individual voluntary organisations engaged in the delivery of learning activities.

Secondly, three regional focus groups were held with representatives of a wide range of voluntary sector organisations in Cardiff, Carmarthen and Betws-y-Coed.

Thirdly, five case studies of good practice were also undertaken in individual voluntary organisations.   These included interviews with managers, operational staff and groups of learners.

Following analysis of all the information gathered, the research team formed its conclusions from the research findings and drew up recommendations for future development.

3. Summary of research conclusions and recommendations

Strengths of the sector

The voluntary sector has unique strengths, especially its moral ethos and capacity to contact and work with hard-to-reach groups.

The work of the sector with particular groups and individuals often leads to considerable financial savings in later years in areas such as social services, health and crime prevention.

Funding

A funding mechanism is needed to support non-accredited learning, which is the main characteristic of the voluntary sector.

Current funding is mainly linked to project delivery; funding arrangements are also required to support the infrastructure and training of voluntary organisations.

Most funding for the sector is short-term, which makes longer-term planning and staff retention difficult; more funding should be based on longer-term development plans.

A dedicated funding stream for community learning should be established which could draw money from Welsh Assembly Government departments outside DELLS; this would recognise the immense contribution made by learning in the voluntary sector towards health, care and social order issues.

WCVA should have a coordinating role in the distribution of funding for voluntary sector learning, possibly through a new Community Learning Reference Group in place of the former DELLS Compact Group.

Future funding mechanisms should contain a weighting for producing Welsh-medium materials to help meet that need.

Operation

A strength of the sector is its flexibility and its capacity to react quickly to needs.

However, because of the ad hoc nature of much of the sector and frequent duplication of provision, a greater strategic overview and organisation, possibly through the development of voluntary sector learning fora, would be beneficial.

Partnership working is an important success factor in the sector, and should be encouraged, provided that all partners share a similar ethos and goals.

An on-line database of voluntary organisations, grouped by sector and interest, should be developed in order to facilitate partnership working.

Barriers to participation

Physical and attitudinal factors can deter potential learners. There is a need for greater dissemination of good practice in overcoming these barriers.

More use of support workers to help people into learning should be encouraged.

Delivery

Obtaining suitable venues for learning provision at affordable rates is a growing problem; the development of community learning facilities should be a priority for both Assembly and local government.

Local audits of available accommodation for learning should be undertaken.

A balance is required between the growing and welcome professionalisation of the sector and increased training needs which often deter volunteers.

The increase in monitoring and evaluation has raised standards in the sector, but the quality of provision remains a concern in some areas.

Opportunities for learning through the medium of Welsh or bilingually are underdeveloped; greater investment is required in the training of tutors and support staff to work in Welsh and the production of Welsh-medium materials.

Weaknesses in basic skills are fundamental to many people's social and economic problems; more training in basic skills awareness and teaching is required in the voluntary sector.

Insufficient training is available in the sector; all CVCs should possess a training arm and training opportunities should be expanded.

Impact

Accredited learning can be measured by learner outcomes, but this is a very small proportion of the sector's provision.

The assessment of the broader impact of learning is often problematic as the effects on individuals and communities may not become evident for some time.

Organisations need support to devise their own measures to assess impact in their particular areas.

The assessment of soft outcomes of learning such as learners' confidence and changes in attitude to learning is best conducted through qualitative interview methods; the development of objective assessment scales for the softer outcomes should be encouraged.

The impact of learning on communities can be measured by social indicators such as employment, computer ownership, etc, but also through the physical appearance of community areas.

Mapping learning and funding in the sector

Knowledge of the numbers of learners in the voluntary sector would help planning and funding decisions; however, there is no accurate current means of identifying the numbers of learners in the sector, and national and/or local mechanisms and databases should be developed to address this.

The information available on current funding for learning in the sector is fragmented and often difficult to access; mechanisms should be developed to record the amounts of money provided by all funding bodies to support learning in the sector; funding information should be transparent and easily accessible to address issues of accountability.

Value for money

Because of the difficulties of obtaining accurate national information on learner numbers and funding, it was not possible to draw up a quantitative assessment of the value for money offered by the voluntary sector. However, it was clear from the qualitative research that much of the sector achieves positive results in engaging hard-to-reach and sometimes disaffected individuals and groups in education and training and in community activities, and often achieves this on comparatively limited resources.

1. Introduction

1.1 The research project

The National Assembly for Wales has a duty to promote the interests of the voluntary sector in Wales, as stated in sections 113-115 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. In her 2005-6 Remit Letter, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in the Welsh Assembly Government declares that learning should be relevant and available to learners, meeting the needs of individuals, communities and business. It is noted that DELLS must secure the active engagement of the voluntary sector.

As part of its commitment to the sector, in January 2006 ELWa, since merged into the Department of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS), commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake a research project into the Impact of the Voluntary Sector on Learning and Training in Wales.

This report presents the findings of this project. Chapter 1 describes the aims of the research and the methodology adopted while Chapter 2 presents the results of the documentation and literature review. Chapter 3 summarises statistical evidence for the contribution of the voluntary sector to learning in Wales in terms of learner numbers and funding provided. Chapter 4 describes the findings from the project's qualitative research conducted with representatives of strategic, regional and individual voluntary organisations. Chapter 5 focuses on the specific impact of learning and training in the voluntary sector. In Chapter 6, the way ahead for the sector is outlined in terms of conclusions drawn from this research and proposals for future development. Appendix 1 comprises detailed findings of five case studies of good practice carried out with voluntary organisations in different parts of Wales. Appendix 2 provides a list of organisations who participated in the field interviews or the focus groups.

1.2 Project aims

The overarching **aim** of the project was to determine the impact of the voluntary sector on learning and training in Wales.

The **objectives** of the project were to:

- Map out learning and training provision within the voluntary sector as a whole, taking account of the size and diversity of the sector in Wales.

- Quantify learning and training (formal and non-formal) participation.

- Undertake a cost benefit analysis of the training provision delivered through and for the voluntary sector in Wales.

- Assess the impact of learning in the voluntary sector on learners, communities and voluntary organisations themselves.

- Make recommendations for the sector and key stakeholders.

- Define and identify best practice within the sector.

- Outline directions for future research.

1.3 Methodology

The NFER research team adopted a mixed methodology in order to elicit the maximum research data within a very tight timescale. The research activities described below were agreed with DELLS and conducted during the period January-April, 2006.

Project Advisory Panel

The NFER established a Project Advisory Panel consisting of four experts with extensive experience of education and training in the voluntary sector in Wales. The Advisory Panel members were:

- Alyson Jenkins, Project Coordinator, Carmarthenshire Learning Network

- Jill Harding, Assistant Director, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service

- Helen Matthews, Project Coordinator, Neath Port Talbot New Learning Network.

- Dr Bryan Collis, Research Officer, Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

The purpose of the Project Advisory Panel was to:

- provide initial advice on the conduct of the project

- comment on the research instruments, including all interview schedules

- read and advise on drafts of the project Final Report and its recommendations.

The Panel met early in the project, and subsequent communication was conducted by e-mail.

Literature Review

A search was conducted through the NFER Library Service and other sources for key literature, including the documentation outlined in the invitation to tender and other materials identified by NFER, DELLS and the project Advisory Panel.

Further searches were carried out for relevant statistics for the voluntary sector on learner numbers and outcomes and funding information with the aim of mapping the current position. A cost benefit analysis was also to be based on this data. However, as explained in Chapter 3 of this report, much of the desired information could not be obtained in ways which delineated clearly between the voluntary sector and statutory FE, community and other sectors.

Qualitative research

- A **series of research interviews** was arranged and undertaken with agencies having a **strategic overview** of the voluntary sector in Wales and with **individual voluntary organisations** engaged in the delivery of learning activities.

Three regional focus groups were also held with representatives of a wide range of voluntary sector organisations in Cardiff, Carmarthen and Betws-y-Coed. The findings from this qualitative research form the basis for Chapters 4 and 5 of this report.

Five case studies of good practice were also undertaken in individual voluntary organisations. These included interviews with managers, operational staff and groups of learners.

Following **analysis of all the information** gathered, the research team formed its **conclusions** from the research findings and drew up **recommendations for future development** in the voluntary sector. These are presented as a way ahead for the sector in Chapter 6 of this report.

2. Documentation and literature review

This chapter presents the findings of a review of key documentation, including academic studies and official publications, concerning the impact of the voluntary sector on training and learning.

2.1 Policy rationale and support

Over recent years, governments at both the UK and devolved Welsh level have shown increasing interest in promoting learning and training through the voluntary sector. This is seen as an important way of tackling social problems such as social exclusion, skill gaps, unemployment, regeneration and community development (Quinn *et al.*, 2005).

The Welsh Assembly Government's ten year education strategy, *'The Learning Country'*, pledges to develop the education agenda

> ' ... *in ways that reflect the **distinctive needs and circumstances** of Wales, taking full account of the functions and capacities of local government, the contributions of business and the vital support of the voluntary sector' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2000, p.14).*

In the document the voluntary sector is seen as a key component of the Government's plans to raise educational standards, skills levels and lifelong learning provision in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2000). Similarly, the role of partnership in driving forward the skills and training agenda is emphasised in the Assembly Government's key strategic documents, *'Wales - a Vibrant Economy 2005'* and *'People, Places and Futures: The Wales Spatial Plan 2004'*. Working in partnership across public, private and voluntary sectors is noted as being essential to developing coherent policy in this area (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004). Support from the Assembly for the role of the voluntary sector is also clearly present in the *'Communities First Initiative'*, which offers training in terms of local capacity building and community learning opportunities (Welsh Assembly Government, 2001).

In addition, the recently published *'Learning Country 2: Consultation Document'* continued to emphasise the *'important'* role for community education in developing a lifelong learning culture and in combating high economic inactivity rates in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006).

This commitment to working in partnership with the voluntary sector across all areas of the Welsh Assembly Government is cemented in the Assembly's

Voluntary Sector Scheme. This is a mandatory scheme, as written in the Government of Wales Act 1998, and requires the National Assembly to support voluntary sector work in Wales. The Voluntary Sector scheme is unique to Wales and provides voluntary sector organisations with an avenue of participation in government. Through this scheme the Assembly Government recognise the role of the sector in service provision.

> *'The sector is well placed to identify problems and solutions and provide tailored services in local areas* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005).'

An Independent Commissioner's Review of the scheme in 2004, noted that while the scheme was '*groundbreaking'* and '*highly valued'* by the Assembly Government and voluntary sector, much remained to be done to further develop the scheme (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005).

Prior to its merger with the Welsh Assembly Government, ELWa outlined strong support for partnership working with the voluntary sector in its 2001-2010 Corporate Strategy. This strategy recognised the capacity of the voluntary sector to reach hard-to-reach groups and outlined a shared vision for learning in Wales. The strategy pledged to '*complement'* and not duplicate the work of the voluntary sector as they both worked towards developing '*learning communities'* (ELWa, n.d.).

At the Westminster level, the UK government has sought to promote partnerships with the voluntary sector through its basic skills agenda. In its '*Working Together'* strategy, the Learning and Skills Council outlined the '*crucial role'* of the voluntary and community sector in meeting the training and educational needs of individuals and employers (Learning and Skills Council, 2004). The '*Working Together'* strategy outlines a clear role for the voluntary sector within the basic skills policy agenda, noting the importance of the sector to the successful delivery of several key policy documents, including

- '*Skills for Life' (*DFES, 2001)

- '*Success for All'* (DFES 2002)

- '*Skills for the 21st Century - Realising Our Potential'* (DFES, 2003).

The strategy envisages the voluntary sector providing responsive services for '*hard to reach groups',* traditionally excluded from formal learning provision *(Ibid).* The strategy aims to bring about a '*step change'* in the relationship between the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the voluntary sector in order to '*take full advantage'* of the range of learning and training

opportunities provided by the voluntary sector (*ibid*). The strategy recognises four key roles for the sector. These are,

- As providers of education and training,

- As a major group of employer,

- As a source of expertise and intelligence for planning; and

- As a channel of networking and communication. (*LSC, 2004.*)

At an EU level member states and the European Commission are committed to producing comprehensive lifelong learning strategies. Indeed in accordance with agreements set out by the Council of Ministers, 12.5% of the adult working population aged 25-64 must be involved in lifelong learning by 2010 (EARLALL, 2004).

The Welsh Assembly Government as vice-presidents of EARLALL (European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning), have pledged to work towards European aims and work with partners across Europe to develop lifelong learning that is flexible and learner-centred (EARLALL, 2004).

Research and evaluation of these policies suggest a common rationale behind the initiatives. The literature points to a recognition by governments that changing social circumstances require new approaches. NAGCELL, in its first report on *Learning in the 21st Century*, highlights changing global economic skill needs, a decline in unskilled employment, diversifying cultures and practices, demographic changes and new working practices as being key drivers in the need to focus on new ways of delivering learning and training (NAGCELL, 1997). Adult Learning Australia agrees, arguing that for many governments,

> *'In the post-industrial, post-modern society providing opportunities for learning throughout life has become an imperative for social economic, civic and cultural reasons (Adult Learning Australia, 2005).'*

They outline six key drivers to the changes in learning policy and the drive for new learning partnerships, which are:

- Globalisation

- The Knowledge Economy

- Demographic Changes

- Technology Advances

- Changes to Labour and Work Markets

- The Need to Sustain Communities (Adult Learning Australia, 2005).

Similarly, the DFEE notes that the need to tackle growing inequalities and social exclusion requires the voluntary sector as a key partner for policy makers in the field of learning and training (DFEE, 2004).

2.2   The Voluntary sector

In Wales the voluntary sector is identified as an increasing economic and social force, employing 33,000 people and delivering an increasing range of services (Collis, B., 2005). From the approximately 25,000 organisations acting within this sector, those providing training and learning form the second largest group accounting for approximately 11 per cent of the voluntary sector workforce (Collis, B., 2005). This excludes voluntary organisations whose primary function may not be education and training but who might offer such opportunities to the members and staff.

As noted by McCabe (1997), the actions of the voluntary sector in providing training and learning can therefore be seen as two-fold. They act both as providers of education offering opportunities to others and as employers offering training and learning opportunities to their staff (McCabe, A., 1997).

The nature of activities provided by the voluntary sector within the field of training and learning is recognised as being diverse. Organisations offer both formal/accredited programmes as well as a variety of informal learning opportunities (The People and Work Unit, 2004).

A recent survey of learning in the voluntary and community sector in Pembrokeshire, *Learning in the Voluntary and Community Sector,* revealed the diversity of learning opportunities provided. Organisations surveyed offered courses or opportunities in sport and recreational activities such as arts and crafts, personal skills, health and well-being, health and safety, community development, care and social care, computer skills and management skills. Within these subjects there was also great diversity in the length and type of courses with a mixture of informal and accredited opportunities (PAVS, 2006).

2.3   Research issues

Deakin *et al* (1995) describe the modern voluntary sector as being highly fragmented and hard to divide into sectors with organisations seeming '*to do everything with everybody all the time*.' This, McCabe argues, makes it difficult to define who is involved in training and education in the voluntary sector (McCabe, A., 1997). Consequently, many authors highlight the need to recognise the importance of sector diversity in any research in this area. The

DFEE, in writing its Mutual Advantage strategy, emphasised the need to be *'constantly aware'* of the diversity of the sector when seeking out partners (DFEE, 2001). Indeed, Callaghan *et al* describe voluntary organisations engaged in training and learning as *'a mass system involving millions of learners, which displays huge variety..'* (Callaghan *et al*., 2001).

Morrell *et al* also emphasise in their findings the diversity of learners engaged in learning and training (Morrell *et al.,* 2004). Learners in the review varied greatly in age, class and background (*ibid*). This is deemed to be important when measuring the impact of this provision, as something which has a small impact on one individual but may have a big impact on a different learner (Callaghan *et al.,* 2001).

While this diversity is an important characteristic of the sector, it also creates issues when conducting research in this field. McCabe (1997) argues that this means that all research conclusions must be qualified by the fact that they will be generalisations and not concrete conclusions relevant to all bodies in the sector.

Diversity and fragmentation are also noted in the literature as one reason why little large-scale research has been completed in this field. Estyn, in their review of community based learning found that the diversity and range of provision on offer created *'difficulty in collecting data'* (Estyn, 2004). Similarly, Callaghan *et al,* remark that research in this field has tended to rely upon *'anecdotal'* perceptions (Callaghan *et al*., 2001). There is yet to be a longitudinal study based on *'systematic collection of data'* measuring both economic and social impacts (Callaghan *et al.,* 2001).

A further research issue highlighted in the literature is the difficulty in defining and measuring informal learning. However, Coffield (2000) argues that often informal learning is that which people tend to engage in most. While the impact of accredited courses is easy to measure progression in informal learning is more difficult to ascertain (Callaghan *et al.,* 2001). Despite increasing recognition of the benefits of informal learning there is no proven system in place to track progress (Estyn, 2004). Estyn recommended, in their review of community based learning, that organisations should therefore seek to adopt more quality assurance schemes in their work (*ibid,* 2004).

Quinn et al also note that many people engaged in informal learning may not necessarily view themselves as learners (Quinn *et al*., 2005). Morrell *et al* in their survey of learners found that those engaged in arts or similar activities often did not see these classes as fitting with the definition of 'learning' (Morrell *et al.,* 2004).

While some in the sector are concerned that attempts to track and monitor the impacts of informal learning may over *'formalise'* flexible provision, other

organisations have sought to develop more concrete measuring systems (EARLALL, 2004). In England, NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) and the LSDA, Learning and Skills Development Agency, have developed the RARPRA (*Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-Accredited Learning*) model for measuring the impacts of informal learning (NIACE, 2005). This model was applied to all Learning Skills Council Funding in England from September 2005.

The model was designed to be '*learner centred*' and '*fit for purpose*' and applicable to a large range of non-accredited courses (NIACE, 2005). The model records progress in stages and contains five elements:

- **Course aims** that are clearly stated.

- **Initial Assessment** of learners' starting points and needs.

- Discussion and negotiation to identify appropriately **challenging objectives.**

- Formative assessment, **checking on progress,** and giving **feedback.**

- Final **recognition of progress,** recording and celebration of **achievement,** which includes both tutor assessment and learner self-assessment (NIACE, 2005).

Evaluation of the pilots carried out in 2003 and 2004 suggested that the vast majority of tutors involved were enthusiastic about the model and noted that learners using the model became more engaged and enthusiastic about their learning (NIACE, LSDA, 2004). However, some remained concerned about the additional burden such a model will have on smaller voluntary organisation with limited staff and resources. Pilots also noted that adopting this model was harder for activity based learning such as yoga or aerobics where learners found the system irrelevant to their needs (*ibid).*

NIACE and LSDA hope that the model will allow for more effective '*dissemination of good practice*' and greater '*consistency*' across providers (*ibid).*

NIACE Dysgu Cymru have also spent time reviewing the impacts of non-accredited learning arguing that more recognition should be given to the social capital and community building effects associated with such learning. Although they have not developed a concrete model for measuring impacts the organisation has argued for a name change from non-accredited learning to '*Learning for Purposes Other Than Accreditation*' (NIACE, 2003). This, NIACE Dysgu Cymru states,

> ' .. *positively emphasises the value of such learning rather than associate it with a term (non-accredited) which can convey a sense of lesser value* (NIACE, 2003).'

2.4 The voluntary sector as provider

Almost all literature on the contribution of the voluntary sector to education and training emphasises the unique benefits the sector can offer. Paramount among these is the sector's ability to reach 'non-traditional learners' and tackle social exclusion (DFEE, 2001, People and Work Unit, 2005, Quinn *et al*., 2005). The People and Work Unit, in their review of the Community University of the Valleys Partnership, described voluntary groups as 'the most cost-effective way to reach non-traditional learners (*Ibid*).

Quinn *et al* (2005) emphasise the ability of the sector to provide practical and 'learner-defined programmes' that are relevant to the people engaged in them. Community-based learning/development is also described as more practical and flexible (Callaghan *et al*., 2001). This, the authors report, helps to combat *'fear or mistrust of education'* that many participants may feel (*Ibid*).

Quinn *et al* (2005) also emphasise the role of the voluntary sector as learning brokers. That is, their role as intermediaries in the chain between excluded learners and more formal education providers such as FE colleges or universities. The authors describe learning brokerage as,

> *'A process involving a network of organisations and individuals mediating between learners, potential learners and learning providers* (Quinn *et al., 2001).'*

Voluntary organisations play a crucial role in this process by offering previously excluded learners' informal learning opportunities on their own terms and by providing links between informal settings and more formal opportunities. As learning brokers, voluntary organisations encourage progression and also negotiate with colleges and universities to ensure that they provide provision that is relevant and accessible to traditionally excluded learners (*ibid*).

At a national level the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) have also promoted the role of the voluntary sector as learning brokers. The LSDA *Understanding learning brokerage* (2005) report notes that the community and voluntary sector are an important part of the brokerage process, providing leaner support, guidance and advice, pathways for progression and making important links between learners and FE or other colleges (LSDA, 2005).

Impacts

Impacts of voluntary sector provision on learners mentioned in the literature are wide and varied. Authors generally divide impacts into two categories, hard and soft impacts, or economic and social benefits, giving equal importance to both categories (Morrell *et al.,* 2001, Quinn *et al.,* 2005, Callaghan *et al.,* 2001, The People and Work Unit, 2004).

Hard impacts are those which authors define as having direct or tangible effects on the learners. These effects include both costs and benefits. Tangible benefits documented include improvement in financial circumstances by gaining or furthering employment opportunities, the gaining of qualifications, progression from informal to accredited courses and general economic benefits (Morrell *et al*., 2004). In their review of the Community University of the Valleys Partnership, the People and Work Unit (2004) summarise the main direct costs as travel costs, course fees, money spent on books, materials etc and childcare.

Soft impacts are those which authors define as having social or indirect effects on learners. Though the literature lists a great variety of social or indirect benefits, those most commonly mentioned are the impacts on attitudes to learning, self-confidence and self-esteem, increase in communication skills, mental health benefits and increased enjoyment of life (Morrell *et al*., 2001, Callaghan *et al*., 2001). The Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning (2000) summarises these indirect benefits in eight categories: Self-esteem, Future Orientation, Ability to cope, Communication, Health, Ageing, Family and Citizenship benefits (cited in Callaghan *et al*., 2001). Lovett also notes the social benefit of increased community involvement and development associated with community learning groups (Lovett, 1997).

Estyn, in their annual review 2004-5, also noted that soft outcomes such as good personal and social skills, greater confidence and greater self esteem where a notable element of community and adult learning provision inspected throughout the year (Estyn, 2006).

Indirect costs or barriers to learning were summarised by the People and Work Unit as being costs of time not spent on other things such as with the family and the emotional costs of returning to learning (The People and Work Unit, 2004).

2.5   The voluntary sector as employer

McCabe (1997) states that the voluntary sector contributes to learning and training in two ways. Firstly as providers, and secondly as employers training

and educating their staff. In the past, the author argues, internal training in the voluntary sector has often been lacking due to time and budget constraints.

Although many voluntary organisations have shown a great commitment to training, skill gaps continue to be identified in the sector (Future Skills, 2003). The 2003 Future Skills review noted that skill gaps remain in several areas. These were in management skills, quality assurance schemes and evaluation skills and planning and organisations skills. Gaps in ICT skills were also identified in this review and are of particular importance to organisations looking to develop e-learning as part of their training and education provision (Collis, B., 2004).

Given that the voluntary sector is becoming an increasingly significant employer in Wales, the Future Skills review recommends that statutory and voluntary bodies develop more appropriate training, greater awareness of voluntary sector training needs, provide more coherent funding and generate more strategic partnerships (Future Skills, 2003).

2.6 Challenges to the voluntary sector

In addition to the skills gaps, the literature also notes a number of other challenges facing voluntary sector providers of learning and training.

Lack of long-term funding is seen a major barrier to more consistent and coherent learning. Estyn notes in its review of community learning that the lack of long-term funding means courses can only run for a short period of time (Estyn, 2004). This often results in new learners losing interest when their learning aspirations cannot be met by the organisations. Callaghan *et al* (2001) note that for many small organisations short-term funding leads to a large proportion of staff time being spent on bidding for funds rather than teaching. Hopper (2000) argues that many small voluntary sector organisations lose out as they find it hard to deal with the bidding process.

In the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) review of learning in the voluntary sector in Pembrokeshire, respondents noted that the lack of long-term funding created a major barrier to long-term planning and future course development. Organisations who participated in the survey felt that funding often directs the type of provision they are able to offer, preventing organisations from responding to changing local needs (PAVS, 2006).

NIACE Dysgu Cymru note that further funding problems are generated by the current policy emphasis on community learning and regeneration in Wales. The organisation argues that voluntary groups involved in this kind of work are engaged in community development processes that require time and

energy not recognised by the current funding structures for the sector (NIACE, 2003).

> *'The current policy thrust to build '**learning communities'** as a means of underpinning neighbourhood renewal demands that any new funding methodology recognise the nature, scope and complexity of this painstaking and time-consuming work (NIACE, 2003).'*

A further challenge noted in the literature is the lack of consistent strategic partnerships between the voluntary and statutory sector. In their Skills strategy, the DFEE notes that developing clear access points in statutory bodies for voluntary sectors will be key to developing successful collaborative partnerships (DFEE, 2001). Estyn also notes that at a local level in Wales, knowledge of and relationships with CCETs are often weak, limiting vital opportunities for productive working (Estyn, 2004).

Voluntary organisations in Pembrokeshire concluded that dissemination of good practice and the development of strategic partnerships both within the sector and externally were vital to future development and would benefit learners greatly (PAVS, 2006).

A valuable and relevant summation of the challenges facing the voluntary sector can be found in Pembroke County Council's review of informal adult learning, *'Adult and Community Learning - Informal Learning'* (Learning Pembrokeshire, n.d). The paper argues that these types of organisation face three sets of challenges. Traditional challenges such as dealing with the complexity and diversity of learners need. Current challenges such as increasing demands from the Welsh Assembly Government and Estyn for data collection and formal quality controls and future challenges such as developing provision that is sustainable and provides 'value for money' and meeting the needs of the evolving skills strategy.

3. Mapping the sector

3.1 Funding for the voluntary sector

As noted below in section 4.8 of this report, the voluntary sector in Wales is able to draw from *'300 different pots of funding.'* In a limited study of this kind, it was not possible even to identify the great majority of these sources, many of which are quite small. Measurement of the total amount of funding provided for the voluntary sector in any given financial year was consequently not possible either.

However, the research team was able to identify the main and largest sources of funding for the sector, and funding figures were obtained from four of these. Other sources were unable to provide specific figures in a usable form.

The following eight tables show the amounts of funding spent by different divisions of the Welsh Assembly Government on the voluntary sector in years 2001-2, 2002-3, 2003-4 and 2004-5. Four of these indicate the money specifically spent by the training and education division, the other four show total funding for the voluntary sector from the different divisions of the Welsh Assembly Government. While it can be assumed that some of the money spent by other divisions funded learning and training activities, more sophisticated research beyond the scope of this study would be required to unpack that information.

Table 3.1   Welsh Assembly Government training and education division funding to the voluntary sector, 2001-2

Education and Training	Total spent on voluntary sector 2001-2
Schools Management Division	£163,000
Training and Education-Youth Policy Team	£701,000
Total	£864,000

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Second Annual Report September 2002

Table 3.2   Welsh Assembly Government divisional funding to the voluntary sector, 2001-2

Assembly Division	Total spent on voluntary sector 2001-2
Agriculture	£204,000
Communities Directorate	£13,207,000
Education and Training	£864,000
Environment, Transport, Planning, Housing	£7,845,000
Health and Social Care	£20,430,000
Total	**£42,550,000**

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Second Annual Report September 2002

It should be noted that the £864,000 provided by the Education and Training division in 2001-2 and broken down in Table 3.1 is also included in Table 3.2.

Table 3.3   Welsh Assembly Government training and education funding to the voluntary sector, 2002-3

Education and Training	Total spent on voluntary sector 2002-3
Pupil Support Division	£30,000
Schools Management Division	£221,000
Training Skills and Careers Policy Division	£10,300,000
Lifelong Learning Division	£117,000
Youth Policy Division	£701,000
Teaching and Leadership Division	85,000
Total	**£11,454,000**

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Third Annual Report February 2004

Table 3.4 Welsh Assembly Government divisional funding to the voluntary sector 2002-3

Assembly Division	Total spent on voluntary sector 2002-3
Agriculture	£363,000
Communities	£24,227,000
Economic Policy	£16,037,000
Education and Training	£11,454,000
Environment, Transport, Planning	£1,518,000
Health and Social Care	£13,609,000
Strategic Policy Development	£62,000
Local Government	£8,000
Culture Welsh Language and Sport	£12,100,000
Total	**£79,378,000**

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Third Annual Report February 2004

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It should be noted that the £11,454,000 provided by the Education and Training division in 2002-3 and broken down in Table 3.3 is also included in Table 3.4.

Table 3.5   Welsh Assembly Government training and education division funding to the voluntary sector, 2003-4

Education and Training	Total spent on voluntary sector 2003-4
Pupil Support Division	£131,000
Schools Management Division	£8,569,000
Lifelong Learning Division	£177,000
Youth Policy Team	£1,611,000
Total	£10,488,000

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Fourth Annual Report June 2005

Table 3.6   Assembly Government divisional funding to the voluntary sector, 2003-4

Assembly Division	Total spent on voluntary sector 2003-4
Local Government and Culture	£713,000
Economic Development and Transport	£3,365,000
Education and Training	£10,488,000
Environment, Planning and Countryside	£2,458,000
Health and Social Care	£11,373,000
Social Justice and Regeneration	£79,409,000
CADW	£60,000
Total	£107,866,000

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Fourth Annual Report June 2005

The £10,488,000 provided by the Education and Training division in 2003-4 and broken down in Table 3.5 is also included in Table 3.6.

Table 3.7   Assembly Government training and education division funding to the voluntary sector, 2004-5.

Education and Training	Total spent on voluntary sector 2004-5
Pupil Support Division	£389,034
Schools Management Division	£2,916,166
Lifelong Learning Division	£40,285
Youth and Pupil Participation Division	£1,248,786
Higher Education	£23,352
Total	£4,617,623

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Fifth Annual Report 2006

Table 3.8   Assembly Government divisional funding to the voluntary sector, 2004-5

Assembly Division	Total spent on voluntary sector 2004-5
Local Government and Culture	£38,008
Economic Development and Transport	£3,544,779
Education and Training	£4,617,623
Environment, Planning and Countryside	£4,556,473
Health and Social Care	£13,330,845
Social Justice and Regeneration	£66,702,965
CADW	£2,607,368
WEFO	£28,786,590
Strategic Policy Unit	£1,109,398
Total	£125,294,069

Source: Voluntary Sector Scheme Fifth Annual Report 2006

The £4,617,000 provided by the Education and Training division in 2004-5 and broken down in Table 3.7 is also included in Table 3.8.

It should be noted that direct comparisons of funding levels to the voluntary sector by Welsh Assembly Government division's year on year are not feasible. This is due to the considerable changes in the departmental organisation structure that have taken place since 2001. For example, Social Justice and Regeneration provided £79,409,000 in 2003-4 but this department does not appear at all in earlier years. There are also some striking differences in the amounts of annual funding provided by individual departments for which the reasons cannot be identified. For example, the Schools Management section provided £8,569,000 in 2003-4 but only £2,916,166 in 2004-5. However, these figures do provide a useful insight into general trends and demonstrate that Welsh Assembly Government funding to the voluntary sector

appeared to increase by over £82 million over the four-year period between 2001 to 2005.

The following four tables show the amounts of funding spent by different governmental agencies on the voluntary sector in years 2001-2, 2002-3, 2003-4 and 2004-5. Figures for all ASPB's were not available for every year but are as complete as possible.

Table 3.9   Spending by government bodies on the voluntary sector in Wales 2001-2

ASPB	Total spent on voluntary sector 2002-3
Arts Council for Wales	£10,817,000
Countryside Council for Wales	£876,000
ELWa	Not available
Environmental Agency Wales	0
Sports Council for Wales	£6,888,000
Wales Tourist Board	£210,000
Welsh Development Agency	£6,986,000
Welsh Language Board	£2,873,000
Total	£28,055,000

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Second Annual Report September 2002

Table 3.10:   Spending by governmental agencies on voluntary sector in Wales, 2002-3

ASPB	Total spent on voluntary sector 2002-3
Arts Council for Wales	£13,083,000
Countryside Council for Wales	£1,057,000
ELWa	£10,316,000
Environmental Agency Wales	£24,000
Sports Council for Wales	£9,245,000
Wales Tourist Board	£519,000
Welsh Development Agency	£8,018,000
Welsh Language Board	£1,662,000
Total	£44,615,000

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Third Annual Report February 2004

Table 3.11: Spending by governmental agencies on voluntary sector in Wales, 2003-4

ASPB	Total spent on voluntary sector 2003-4
Arts Council for Wales	£2,362,000
Countryside Council for Wales	£1,540,000
ELWa	£14,214,000
Environmental Agency Wales	£241,000
Sports Council for Wales	£11,986,000
Wales Tourist Board	£1,403,000
Welsh Development Agency	£11,320,000
Welsh Language Board	£3,600,000
Total	£46,666,000

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Fourth Annual Report June 2005

Table 3.12 Spending by government bodies on the voluntary sector in Wales 2004-5

ASPB	Total spent on voluntary sector 2004-5
Arts Council for Wales	£2,949,000
Countryside Council for Wales	£2,234,000
ELWa	Not available
Environmental Agency Wales	£333,000
Sports Council for Wales	£13,908,000
Wales Tourist Board	£300,000
Welsh Development Agency	£8,620,000
Welsh Language Board	£3,799,000
Total	£32,143,000

Source: WAG Voluntary Sector Scheme Fifth Annual Report2006

It should be noted that only ELWa of the above bodies is directly charged with funding education and training. It can be assumed that some proportion of the funding allocated to the other agencies would also have supported formal or informal learning activities of some kind, but more sophisticated research beyond the scope of this study would be required to break that information down.

3.2 DELLS funding

Figures for DELLS funding of the voluntary sector for 2001-2 and 2004-5 were not available but the funding allocated by DELLS to the voluntary sector increased by £3,898,000 from 2002-3 to 2003-4. DELLS warn that a direct comparison is suspect as there is no systemised approach to identifying voluntary sector organisations.

The following tables show the funding provided by DELLS for voluntary sector organisations during 2003-4 and 2004-5. Specialist Placements refers to provision offered by providers in England and taken up by learners from Wales.

Table 3.13: DELLS Funding for Voluntary Sector Organisations 1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004

Further Education:	**£4,491,133**

- WEA South
- WEA North/ Coleg Harlech
- YMCA

Work Based Learning	**£6,574,694**

- Age Concern
- CSV Training Wales
- JT Ltd
- Mid and North Wales Training
- Nacro Cymru
- Rathbone CI

Specialist Placements	**£2,494,784**

- Arden College
- Beaumont College (Scope)
- Coleg Elidyr
- Derby College For Deaf People
- Derwen College
- Doncaster Deaf Trust
- FOXES Academy Ltd
- Hereward College
- Loppington House
- Meldreth Manor
- Mencap
- Mencap Pengwern
- National Star College
- Ncype
- Portland College
- Priory Group
- Queen Alexandra College
- RNIB Condover Hall School
- RNIB Peterborough
- Royal Nat Col For The Blind
- The Royal National Institute for Deaf People
- The Royal School Deaf Children
- Royal West Of England School
- Ruskin Mill Further Education College
- The Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy
- The West Of England School

- Treloar's Trust
- William Morris Camphill Community Centre

Other funding: **£ 654,070**

Includes: Learning Challenge Fund projects, Innovation Development projects, ESF, bilingual development, research, marketing.

- Antur Dwyryd Lyn Cyf/Gwynedd Skills Shop
- Antur Teifi
- Arts and Business Cymru Services Ltd.
- British Red Cross
- Cardiff YMCA
- Carmarthenshire Council of Voluntary Services
- Centre for Alternative Technology
- Cyd
- Cymad
- Deudraeth - Cyf
- Eisteddfod
- Engineering Education Scheme (Wales)
- Farmers Union of Wales
- Forestry Contract Association
- Include
- Mid Wales Manufacturing
- Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin
- Niace
- Oriel Davies Gallery
- Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
- Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
- The Circuit
- The Princes Trust
- Urdd Gobaith Cymru
- Wales Council for Voluntary Action
- Wales Quality Centre
- Wales Young Farmers

| **Overall Total 2003-04** | **£ 14,214,682** |

Source: DELLS paper to Voluntary Sector Compact Liaison Group, 25 October, 2005

**Table 3.14: Funding for Voluntary Sector Organisations 1 April 2004 –
31 March 2005**

Further Education:	**£ 4, 660,085**

- Coleg Harlech WEA North
- WEA South
- YMCA

Work Based Learning	**£4,209,748**

- Age Concern
- CSV Training Wales
- JT Ltd
- Mid and North Wales Training
- Nacro Cymru
- Rathbone Community Industry
- Princes Trust
- Coleg Elidyr
- Antur Teifi
- Antur Dwyryd-Llyn
- Arts & Business Services Ltd
- Mudiad Ysgol Meithrin
- WCVA

Other funding:	**£2,335,419**

Including: LCF: £898, 868;   Marketing: £170,071;   Quality: £450;   REACT £4,373;
Research & Evaluation £10,714.

- Antur Dwyryd Llyn
- Antur Teifi
- Cardiff YMCA
- CSV training Wales
- Coleg Harlech WEA-North
- Cydag
- Cymad
- Deudraeth - Cyf
- Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru
- Mid Wales Manufacturing
- Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin
- Niace
- Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
- Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
- Urdd Gobaith Cymru
- Wales Council for Voluntary Action
- Wales Quality Centre
- WCVA
- WEA South

Specialist Placements	£ 2, 954,829

- Arden College
- Beaumont College (Scope)
- Coleg Elidyr
- Coleg Harlech WEA-North
- Derby College For Deaf People
- Derwen College
- Doncaster Deaf Trust
- FOXES Academy Ltd
- Hereward College
- Loppington House
- Meldreth Manor
- Mencap Lufton Manor
- Mencap Pengwern
- National Star College
- Ncype
- Portland College
- Priory Group
- Queen Alexandra College
- RNIB Condover Hall School
- RNIB Peterborough
- Royal Nat Col For The Blind
- The Royal National Institute for Deaf People
- The Royal School for the Deaf
- Royal West Of England School
- Ruskin Mill Further Education College
- The Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy
- The West Of England School
- Treloar's Trust
- William Morris Camphill Community Centre

Overall Total 2004-05 (subject to confirmation)	£ 14,160,082

Source: DELLS paper to Voluntary Sector Compact Liaison Group, 25 October, 2005

3.3   The European Social Fund (ESF)

The ESF has been another major funder for the voluntary sector. However, although the ESF provides information on the sums allocated to individual applicants, it is sometimes difficult to identify whether or not these belong to the voluntary sector. It is also impossible to ascertain with confidence how much of the funding for an organisation is actually spent on learning or training activities. Figures for funding within given years are also not readily available.

The following figures should therefore be taken only as a best estimate of the levels of ESF funding for the sector. They are based on published statistics for voluntary and other sector organisations receiving funding through the ESF.

Table 3.15:   Estimates of ESF funding for the voluntary sector, 2000-2006

Source	Sum
'Equal' project money	£2,608,000
Objective 1 money	£35,486,000
Objective 3 money	£10,231,000
Total	£48,325,000

Source: Wales European Funding Office, ESF Approved Projects, 2006

3.4   Other funding sources

Other important funding sources referred to by respondents in the research included the Big Lottery, Communities First, and local authorities. While information on the total amount of Communities First Money given to,

- the voluntary sector as a whole, and

- training and learning specifically

were not available, approximate estimates for these two figures were provided by the Big Lottery Fund.

As a guiding principle of its work, the Big Lottery Fund aims to spend between 60-70% of money annually on voluntary sector projects. The following table illustrates the amount given to the voluntary sector in Wales by the Big Lottery Fund via the Community and Voluntary Sector grants schemes during 2004-5 and 2005-6.

Table 3.16   The Big Lottery Fund Voluntary and Community Sector Grants.

Year of Grant Programme	Total Awarded
2004-5	£9,894,841
2005-6	£24,829,271
Total	£34,724,112

Source: Big Lottery Fund Public Affairs Department

Of this money, the Big Lottery Fund estimates that approximately £3 million over the two years was spent directly on learning and training. However, it is important to note that a number of other Big Lottery Fund projects may have indirectly funded learning and training opportunities. The true sum for funds

spent on learning and training by the organisation may therefore be considerably higher. Within the scope of this research, it was not possible to identify the figure for indirect funding.

3.5 Learner numbers

Obtaining the numbers of learners engaged through the voluntary sector proved more difficult than securing financial information. No national figures at all were available for many areas of activity. Much of the information which was available from some providers was so fragmented and limited that it could only be considered as relevant to those particular arrangements and could not be interpreted as a snapshot of the whole sector. It would not be meaningful to include them in this report.

However, numbers for DELLS funded learners undertaking courses in the voluntary sector were available for years 2004-5 and 2005-6. The following three tables list numbers of learners by type of course for 2004-5 and 2005-6 and learners by subject for 2005-6.

Table 3.17 Number of learners on voluntary sector courses funded by DELLS, 2004-5

Type of Course	Learner Numbers
Bespoke Learning	0
Foundation Modern Apprenticeship	9,177
Modern Apprenticeship	83,472
Modern Skills Diploma	7,206
Preparatory Learning-Adult	1,134
Preparatory Learning Youth	31,825
Skills Learning- Adult	158
Skills Learning-Youth	32,492
Unknown	2,137
Total	167,601

(Data represents programme payments (opp) potentially payable)
Source: Information provided by DELLS, 2006

Table 3.18   Number of learners on voluntary sector courses funded by DELLS 2005-6

Type of Course	Learner Numbers
Bespoke Learning	0
Foundation Modern Apprenticeship	3,911
Modern Apprenticeship	22,432
Modern Skills Diploma	1,359
Preparatory Learning-Adult	305
Preparatory Learning Youth	9,885
Skills Learning- Adult	178
Skills Learning-Youth	8,440
Pre-implementation of field	0
Total	46,510

(Data represents programme payments (opp) potentially payable)
Source: Information provided by DELLS, 2006

Table 3.19   Number of learners per subject area on voluntary sector run courses funded by DELLS 2005-6

Subject	Learner Numbers
Agriculture	145
Construction	18,020
Engineering	1,433
Manufacturing	1
Transportation	0
Management and Professional	2,432
Business Administration	739
Retailing and Customer Service	559
Leisure Sport and Travel	0
Hospitality	41
Hair and Beauty	1
Health Care and Public Services	5,155
Media and Design	0
Unknown	0
Not Applicable	17,984

(Data represents programme payments (opp) potentially payable)
Source: Information provided by DELLS, 2006

4. Contribution of the voluntary sector

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative research conducted with representatives of strategic, regional and individual organisations, and with the three focus groups.

4.1 Strategic role and characteristics

The voluntary sector in Wales comprises a vast range of organisations involved in most areas of life and attempting to meet a wide variety of social, physical and recreational needs. WCVA, for example, reported that it had over 1,000 member organisations and that some 11,000 people were employed in the sector in Wales.

The prime, common characteristic of voluntary sector organisations was said to be that they were invariably established in response to particular social needs in a locality. One enterprise in the project sample had been started in response to the problems and needs of new immigrant groups which had arrived in the area during the nineteen seventies. Its provision had been developed from that time through regular consultation with those groups. As their needs had changed, so had the provision. Another organisation had begun in response to acute social needs on a large housing estate and had developed its learning provision gradually. Further examples were those of trade unions arranging flexible training in the workplace through voluntary organisations for migrant workers with special requirements and courses at unusual hours to accommodate shift working.

The general contribution of the voluntary sector to learning was felt by most respondents to be considerable and even *'immense',* although there was a broad consensus that the sector was under resourced. One respondent felt that *'.. the sector is incredibly undervalued'* and another that *'.. we are the poor cousins amongst the learning sectors.'* Another interviewee thought that the sector was *'.. messy and ad hoc.'*

The greatest strength of the sector was judged to be its ability to make contact with hard-to-reach and marginalised groups in society. Local voluntary organisations would often be used by broader-based or national bodies to access these groups. One comment, for example, from a person in a national organisation was: *'We find the voluntary sector is excellent in reaching ethnic minority groups, disabled people and young, disaffected people.'* This was because voluntary organisations arose from people's actual needs and

were rooted in communities. One of the focus groups felt that local authority and government departments often looked to the voluntary sector *'.. to pick up the slack'* with groups they could not reach or fund themselves. The sheer diversity of the learning opportunities offered by the sector was a strength, one respondent noting that: *'Traditional education has a much narrower focus.'* This diversity also enabled the sector to respond quickly to local needs and problems.

The sector's more informal, relaxed style of operation was also said to be an advantage as many of the groups it served would find dealing with more official bodies such as government agencies or colleges rather threatening or intimidating. The location of learning facilities in the community also helped learners who may be short on confidence to feel more comfortable about attending activities there. This location in the community and the inclusion of many local people on management committees and boards also helped ensure community ownership of much learning provision. A manager with a strategic perspective noted that: *'The sector is not seen as authoritative, so it has the scope to do more. It has more flexibility to do what the community wants instead of prescribing what they should be doing.'* Much of the learning achieved through engaging with the sector was said to be informal learning on the job, such as sitting on a management committee. *'That's unique to the sector,'* commented one respondent. *'It's not all about courses.'* The amount of outreach work done by the sector was stated to have increased considerably during the previous 15 years or so. It was noted in one focus group that FE colleges now collaborated with the voluntary sector to offer more short and flexible courses than previously.

In keeping with this role, the sector was described as having a useful innovatory capacity. One example was the WHEELS project for car crime offenders which sought to engage them more constructively in learning about motor vehicles. However, one focus group expressed the worry that education and its funding mechanisms were becoming more top-down and more centralised and that this tendency might stifle the *'dynamism and self-sufficiency'* of the voluntary sector.

Another unique strength of the sector was said to be the strong social ethos of its staff and volunteers. Because of this, organisations would often provide support for learners beyond the actual teaching provision, such as helping them complete written forms, taking them to prospective employers and arranging private transport for them to attend courses. Many respondents felt that this special cultural and value base distinguished the sector from other, more formal, provision: *'The majority of learning is done in communities, between families and in our daily interactions.'*

One focus group believed that a further strength of the sector was advocacy, whereby different groups might join together to make a case for change and possibly bid for funding.

One important aspect was summarised by a coordinator as *'the collective intelligence of the sector,'* namely an immense expertise and knowledge spread across thousands of workers and volunteers but which was probably not being harnessed or used to its full potential.

However, respondents also felt that the sector had been less successful in reaching certain groups, such as particular ethnic minorities and asylum seekers. The influx of workers from Eastern Europe in 2005/6 was also bringing new areas of need into Wales, especially need for English-language skills, and the sector had to respond to this development.

There was a consensus that the sector had become more professional during recent years in its procedures and quality assurance, although one strategic view expressed was that the quality of some provision remained a concern.

Larger bodies such as the WEA and YMCA College were felt to provide a semi-formal tier within the voluntary sector since they drew more direct core funding than smaller organisations. Their accredited learning activities also offered a more formal setting than other organisations in the sector. One manager said that: *'I think the WEA and YMCA College form a bridge between the voluntary sector and more formal FE provision. This step is important to help learner progression.'*

Views differed on the strategic position of the sector. One respondent thought that: *'The voluntary sector has a strategic rather than a provider role. Representatives of the sector sit on many regional and national committees and working groups and are therefore able to make a strategic input to developments in learning.'* The DELLS Voluntary Sector Compact developed in partnership with the sector in 2002 and launched in 2003 was an important move to bring more structure to the sector.

However, others believed that one weakness of the sector was its fragmented nature and its lack of a cohesive structure or strategic purpose. One consequence of this was said to be duplication of provision. More than one organisation in the same locality would often offer similar provision. There were also said to be cases where *'the wrong organisation'* was providing certain courses which other bodies were better qualified to do. It was suggested that regional structure and planning for the sector could be strengthened. A comment from one learning provider was: *'It could be better organised strategically as at present there are a lot of vested interests.'* One suggestion was that the required strategic thinking should emanate from the voluntary sector itself in order to retain ownership of it.

Officers of one body felt strongly that the sector did not fully understand the importance of basic skills to the groups of people they were targeting. Many of the social problems faced by individuals, they said, arose because of the poor literacy and numeracy skills of those people. An example was given of organisations aiming to help people struggling with debt: *'Many of these people are in debt because they can't handle figures and therefore can't deal with money effectively. Some people think that a company offering 15% interest is better than one providing 10% because they don't understand percentages or interest.'* There was also a need to improve the basic skills of the staff and volunteers of many organisations. For example, only five voluntary organisations in Wales were said to have been awarded the Quality Mark of the Basic Skills Agency. General awareness of basic skills issues was felt to have increased in recent years, but this remained an underdeveloped area in the sector.

Another major need for the sector was said to be training, both for paid full-time and part-time staff and for volunteers. Training was required for the specific areas of activity of the organisations and more generic skills such as office administration, improved literacy and numeracy, and committee and negotiating skills. One respondent reported that: *'Only one CVC in Wales actually has a training arm.'* One focus group thought that the contribution of the sector was now more widely recognised by local authorities and politicians, but worried that this recognition was not reflected in the funding made available for the sector in areas such as training.

Not all the sector was aware of the need to offer learning opportunities. Many organisations still existed to provide social, physical or recreational facilities for people, but without specific learning provision.

4.2 Modes of working

All respondents reported that working in partnership with other bodies was extremely important for the success of a voluntary organisation. Partnerships were vital in both recruiting learners and delivering provision. However, one organisation stressed the need for partnerships to be strategic: *'There's no point in having lots of little partnerships across the sector without it going forward somewhere.'*

One organisation visited liaised regularly with local ethnic minority associations to discover areas of need amongst those groups. Another had close links with trades union to identify the needs of union members and designed courses on that basis.

One frequent pattern was for the voluntary organisation to link with a teaching provider. The voluntary organisation would prepare the ground through

recruiting learners and arranging venues and possibly facilities, and the provider organisation such as a college would come in to provide tutors and possibly other resources. Two organisations interviewed had linked with a local FE college in this way, while two others had set up arrangements with a nearby HE institution. In this strategy, the funding for the provision is obtained by the teaching provider and the learners would be enrolled as their students. This strategy had advantages for the voluntary organisation in raising its capacity to meet local needs while also meeting the agenda for widening participation in the colleges. One project coordinator reported: *'We cooperated with XXXXX to pilot their new degree in digital media. It met the needs of our learners and was part of the institution's outreach into the community.'*

Another organisation identified a need for interpreters to work with local minority groups. They invited the local university to help design interpreter training, and *'.. there is now a Language and Communication Strategy in the city. The university have added to this with a package of training for community languages which takes people up to diploma and degree level in translation and interpreting. Without our initial work that would not have happened.'*

However, this strategy also required some caution. It was felt that tutors brought in from a college may not share the same ethos as the voluntary organisation and may not cooperate well as part of the team. Colleges were also required to maintain minimum learner numbers to justify their funding and courses would be terminated if those numbers fell.

Another function of voluntary organisations, particularly the larger and national bodies, was as a training provider for other bodies in the sector.

One important mode of delivering courses which remained under-developed was said to be distance and e-learning. This was seen as a way for people unable to access a teaching centre for whatever reason to take up courses, and also a means of retaining learners on courses if access became problematic for them. However, provision of courses only through e-learning could exclude potential learners who lacked home computers and e-mail, and these were often the groups targeted by the provision.

4.3   Recruitment of staff and learners

The first step for most organisations in the recruitment of learners was an assessment of local needs. This would be done either through existing staff knowledge of the current situation, or in a more structured way through discussion with other bodies and surveys of local people.

A variety of methods were used to attract learners to new provision. These included placing leaflets in community meeting places such as the doctor's surgery, libraries and schools, and arranging items on local radio. One large provider helped smaller organisations with their publicity. A national body sent representatives into areas to speak with more local organisations. However, it was felt that the most successful method of recruitment was word-of-mouth. One organisation manager said: *'We make a push to recruit in September with leaflets and posters, but after we begin, word-of-mouth in the community takes over. By each January we are full for the year.'* A word-of-mouth recommendation given by a friend or relative would be particularly trusted as a personal guarantee, as it were.

Some organisations emphasised that the shop-front location and presentation of the organisation was important, and that a shop-front or drop-in centre on a main street would attract more attention.

Another effective approach was said to be the creation of 'learning champions' in the community who could give credibility to the provider organisation and boost the status of learning in general.

The building of community trust in the organisation was stressed by some respondents before people would approach it to learn. One organisation reported that: *'The first step is an open door, and offering a cuppa and a chat. It takes a long time to get hard-to-reach groups to trust us and go on to the next step.'* Once that trust was established, however, *'.. we have a special role, as a go-between for the training provider and the community. There's a strong overlap between community development and training.'*

One of the focus groups agreed that recruitment of learners amongst young people was a particular problem. An organisation dealing with the homeless reported that they used young people with problems to recruit others by speaking to them: *'There are risks involved, their lives are chaotic, but we have to show trust in them.'*

Issues in the recruitment of staff and volunteers varied according to the size of the organisation. Some advertised jobs in the Press while others had used a recruitment agency and the local Jobcentre. One body reported that work in the sector was not always as respected as other sectors: *'Some people think that they are not real jobs in voluntary organisations.'* Attracting volunteer workers was not generally seen as a difficulty. One umbrella body reported: *'Our organisations will organise workshops and appeal for volunteers from the public who attend them. They usually have no problems.'* Engaging professional staff was not always as easy. One regional CVC reported that they had *'.. a huge skills shortage. We have had a training officer post vacant for a year. First there was no money for it, and now there is money we can't find someone with the right skills.'*

One growing barrier to the recruitment of volunteer staff was the increasing requirement for them to undertake training courses. *'.. especially older volunteers who did training a long time ago don't want to take on more training.'*

Retainment of staff and volunteers following initial recruitment was also difficult at times. It was said that staff in whom an organisation had invested time and money to train could often only develop themselves and get promotion through moving on to other providers or training as teachers and social workers. The voluntary sector could not offer the same benefits and remuneration packages as the private and public sectors, which also made retention a challenge.

4.4   Barriers to participation

A variety of factors were reported which acted as barriers to potential learners taking up provision through the sector.

One was attitudinal, and this aspect had several facets. A dislike of formal learning situations was one. One manager said: *'People who have previously had poor experiences in school do not want to go near a place of learning again.'* The emotional challenge of having to learn in company with others was also a deterrent to people who might not have achieved any previous learning success

Cultural factors were also said to play a role. In some ethnic minority groups, for example, women were not encouraged to go out of the home or follow independent activities. In other groups, it was difficult to recruit men where learning was not seen as an appropriate activity. As one provider manager explained: *'They see learning as something for children, real men do work.'* Other organisations had found that women across all ethnic groups were at times discouraged from taking up courses by their male partners who did not want the women to acquire greater skills than themselves. In ethnically mixed neighbourhoods it was sometimes difficult to bring men together from different groups where suspicion existed between them, although women were said to mix more easily across ethnic lines.

Other barriers to learning were physical. Travel to courses deterred many as learners, particularly those with low confidence or previous attainment, were unwilling to leave the security of familiar surroundings. Outreach provision in the community was key to reaching those groups. It was felt that some physical barriers could be overcome by good course design.

The venue for courses was considered important. College or school buildings were often perceived as intimidating by those with unfavourable past experience of them, while cold or uncomfortable premises were unattractive in themselves. All three focus groups expressed concern at the effect of recent health and safety regulations which often precluded the use of community facilities where many fragile learners could feel comfortable.

Responsibilities for younger and older family members limited the opportunities for many potential learners. Childcare facilities were crucial for mothers with children. Those organisations targeting mothers or families found that childcare arrangements were as important as the teaching provision itself.

The cost of courses could be a major factor, even for people with an income from employment. One provider used a sliding scale according to income, and most organisations did not charge for the unemployed or the elderly.

Learning in the workplace would be ideal for many people because of the convenience of timing and location, and the immediate relevance of the training provided to the learners' work. However, respondents also identified barriers here which mainly stemmed from the lack of adequate facilities for training and employers' reluctance to allocate time and resources for work-based training. This was said to be particularly true of smaller employers. Those employers sympathetic to work-based learning sometimes lacked the money to take on supply workers to cover staff during periods of training.

The length and timing of courses could also prove to be a barrier to participation. One manger explained that: *'Some people want a half-day or whole-day course while others prefer two hours once a week for, say, six weeks. A course running for five months might put off many uncertain learners who'd be willing to stick at it for just four or six weeks.'* It was deemed important for providers to be flexible in the design of courses and responsive to the needs of their target groups. *'Short, sharp, targeted courses'* were recommended by one regional manager.

Another deterrent for many learners, particularly those with little confidence in their skills, was said to be the need for accreditation and written work on courses: *'People may be happy to learn a skill, listen to a tutor and talk about it, but they would be intimidated by having to do written work or sit an assessment.'* This was a particular problem in moving learners on to more formal learning where writing would be required. Since most DELLS courses were funded by outcomes and required formal evaluations, some organisations found it difficult to sustain the provision they wished to offer at higher levels.

4.5   Delivery of provision

The facilities and venues used to deliver courses were said to vary in quality. Provision offered in a classroom or college-type environment usually enjoyed good and appropriate facilities, but some community venues used for courses were less suitable. The lack of health and safety provisions could be an issue in those environments. One manager said that: *'Many buildings in communities don't have disabled access or toilets, although it's required by law. Community centres used or owned by local authorities particularly should have these facilities.'* Even where the basic facilities were satisfactory, voluntary providers were aware that they were often in competition for learners with colleges who could offer better-equipped venues.

The three focus groups believed that the recent introduction of health and safety legislation, although necessary, was in fact causing difficulties for the voluntary sector. Where buildings could not meet regulations, the choice of possible venues for courses was being reduced and private homes and pubs were no longer possible. One respondent said: *'All rooms now have to be risk-assessed, have disabled access and be health and safety verified. There aren't a lot of these around!'* The coordinator of one organisation complained that safety legislation was impairing the effectiveness of the sector: *'We used to hold classes in a pub and take laptops in for the learners. That was the only way to meet those hard-to-reach people. You can't do that any more.'*

The cost of hiring appropriate venues was also considered a growing problem although it was recognised that community venues needed to raise their charges in order to be sustainable. One coordinator remarked that: *'To do any training outside R_____ is very difficult as hotels cost so much. To use a community hall you need two members of staff, one to take the course and one to make the tea and do the arrangements.'*

Where courses centred on ICT skills, the availability and quality of equipment was said to vary hugely. Respondents felt that although many courses were well-provisioned, it was difficult to ensure adequate hardware or set-up facilities for others, again particularly in community settings, although it was pointed out that all CVCs should have some equipment available for providers to borrow. Good ICT provision was felt to be crucial, because of the high level of demand from employers and learners for ICT skills. ICT was also said to be especially suitable as a medium of learning for disabled people, while young people had high expectations for good IT equipment because of their familiarity with digital technology. One focus group participant declared that: *'In this area the voluntary sector can't compete. What we can provide on the local basis is support for the people who the digital divide leaves behind.'* Another drawback for small organisations was said to be the speed with which expensively-purchased technology becomes obsolete.

One method for broadening learners' familiarity with IT technology was said to be locating IT equipment in community settings. However, the representative of one rural CVC described difficulties which had arisen: *'We located four PCs in community venues. It seemed like a great idea, but the practical problems were things like – who opens the hall? Is it safe? In the end we had to give the PCs away to voluntary groups.'*

The need for more e-learning and distance learning in the sector was underlined more than once. Some respondents felt that the sector would be compelled to move far more in this direction in the future. However, the other side of this coin was also remarked on*: 'You have to be aware that having no knowledge of IT can be a barrier to learning if you create more distance courses. Small community organisations haven't got the facilities anyway to develop long-distance or e-learning.'*

Participants in one focus group said that demand for provision often outstripped supply because voluntary organisations lacked the funding, facilities or personnel to offer the necessary provision. It was stressed in two focus groups that the costs for hiring community venues were rising continually, and that many voluntary providers could not match the rises. *'In the nineties there were three times more classes on offer in South Wales than now,'* was the comment of one manager.

4.6   Welsh-medium and bilingual provision

The organisations interviewed were able to report little use of Welsh as a medium for learning in the voluntary sector. Several respondents felt that the amount of Welsh-medium provision should ideally reflect the percentage of Welsh-speakers in that area, although that was not happening. There was evidence that Welsh is used and an informal oral medium for discussion in some settings, but rarely as the formal medium for delivery.

Two focus groups reported that one basic problem was the shortage of tutors able to teach through the medium of Welsh and the need for more training to develop these. Another difficulty was the viability of groups where the numbers of people wanting a course in Welsh did not match the numbers stipulated by the provider, and courses could not then take place.

One respondent described the situation regarding sporting organisations:

> *'Sports associations provide much more training for coaches and organisers than before, but although many of the learners may be Welsh-speakers, especially in certain areas, the sporting rule books and handbooks are all in English only. Examination papers for coaching qualifications are also only available in English.'*

One reason for the under-development of the Welsh-medium sector was said to be historical in that, until comparatively recently, English has traditionally been the language of education in Wales, and learners and education providers have been brought up in that mindset. Although Welsh-medium pre-16 education is now much more widespread, this has not developed to the post-16 and lifelong learning phases. One current need was felt to be a lack of market research: *'Providers need to research their target groups to establish how many people would like to learn through the medium of Welsh or bilingually.'*

Another difficulty was said to be the lack of teaching materials in Welsh. One coordinator from a mainly Welsh-language organisation said that: *'Mae diffyg adnoddau, ac mae cyfieithu adnoddau'n ddrud. (There's a shortage of resources, and translating them is expensive).'* One respondent in a Welsh-speaking area felt that more people would take up provision through Welsh if they were given confidence to use the language: *'Gofynnwch i bobl beth maen nhw eisiau a bydd 99 y cant yn dewis y Saesneg. Erbyn hyn ryn ni'n anfon ffurflenni cyrsiau dwyieithog allan a daeth 50 y cant nôl yn Gymraeg wedyn (Ask people what they want and 99 per cent will choose English. Now we send course forms out bilingually and 50 per cent came back in Welsh afterwards).'*

Most organisations seemed aware of the need to offer more provison through Welsh or bilingually, and it was noted that Estyn look for evidence of opportunities to learn through the language.

However, it was said that the voluntary sector had been very successful in teaching Welsh to adults as a second language because classes could be offered flexibly and were usually student-centred.

4.7 Monitoring and evaluation

Most provision in the voluntary sector, especially for formal learning, was now subject to regular monitoring. Evaluation of provision was of three main types:

a) internal evaluation for the organisation's own purposes. OCN courses and units were popular with some providers because they permit a more flexible approach to learning. Other organisations used their own criteria which were relevant to their particular setting, such as how many learners proceed to courses in a nearby college. In larger providers, monitoring was linked to the organisation's targets and development plans. One respondent suggested that these expectations were excessive: *'We carry out an annual self-assessment report, we have a strategic plan, and an annual performance plan. There are also operational plans.'* One body

tied its monitoring procedures into targets for individual posts and delivery of service. For example, a kitemark project run by them required accreditation of 53 companies for the year.

b) Funders required formal assessments by providers in order to claim their funding and to monitor the quality of the provision they fund. These assessments usually took place at the end of provision.

c) More organisations were now included in Estyn's inspection remit. If in partnership with a college, they would be included in the college inspection. Other voluntary provision would be visited by Estyn as part of area or community learning inspections. The demands of Estyn were felt by some to be more stringent: *'Estyn want us to record assessments at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of courses. The trouble is that most courses are quite short, about eight to 10 weeks, and it's difficult to fit the assessments in.'*

One challenge for some organisations was that they were required to conduct more than one kind of evaluation, such as those whose courses were funded from different sources when each funder demanded a different type of evaluation. One community organisation manager said: *'We have our own targets and the college's targets. We need to meet the college targets, the numbers in classes, to keep them running. But we evaluate our work by how many go on to other courses and how they feel about themselves at the end.'*

Although there was some feeling that assessment and evaluation of provision and learners' attainment had become excessive, it was generally agreed that increased evaluation had raised standards across the sector.

4.8 Funding issues

The most important issue for most respondents were the funding mechanisms which underpinned learning provision.

One acute problem was the short-term nature of most funding. Money was usually linked to particular projects, so that when the project ended, so did the funding. Where projects were no longer than two or three years, long-term planning was impossible and continuity broke down. Many programmes would be even shorter. *'Learning impact on communities is great,'* explained one manager. *'But the process is slow, and funding needs to recognise that this process is slow.'* Short-term funding also meant that the benefit of investment by an organisation in training staff could be lost completely if

operations were forced to end. Another aspect was said to be the failure of funders to recognise and provide for the soft outcomes of much provision. The lack of longer-term funding often led to considerable staff turnover with a corresponding wastage of valuable experience. *'There is no common funding infrastructure for the sector,'* stated one respondent, and this made planned development problematic.

One serious dilemma for the sector was that funding was on the whole tied to the outcomes of accredited learning, although much of the provision in the sector was non-accredited, which respondents believed was the most appropriate way of delivering opportunities to the learners they served. There was evidence that some voluntary providers had been forced to change the nature of some provision, contrary to learners' needs, and make them accredited in order to attract funding. Funders also expected providers to show learners' progression, which was difficult through informal learning activities. One manager with a regional responsibility said that: *'DELLS stepped back from taking responsibility for this as European money was used to fund non-accredited courses, and now this source of funding is coming to an end it's leaving non-accredited learning with no support whatsoever.'* The drive towards accredited learning was also felt to be increasing the cost of training for the voluntary sector so that *'.. some small groups cannot afford even the bottom-level price'* and did not therefore attend training opportunities although these small organisations were likely to benefit most from it.

Some frustration was expressed that *'.. we don't fit into the government's funding agenda'* and that funding for adult education and training was overwhelmingly directed towards universities and colleges while appropriate funding structures to support the voluntary sector had not been developed. A manager with one national organisation said that the DELLS model of a *'large, top-heavy, strategic organisation with strategic structures that did not reach people'* had not been helpful for the voluntary sector. A fear expressed for the future was that if colleges come to control more and more of the funding they would be unlikely to pass much money on to the voluntary sector as they would be competitors. One proposal was that neutral organisations should control funding so that money could be given to, for example, the Welsh Sports Council for them to allocate fairly between training providers.

The different regulations and requirements of different funders posed problems for many providers. The DELLS system was described by one manager as *' .. too rigid. Funding is tied to results. The TECs could use surplus money from work-based learning to fund voluntary organisations to work with learners, but there is now no money without outputs.'* Some respondents believed it was unfair that DELLS did not fund the voluntary sector, only accredited learning in rather traditional settings, whereas the TECs had done so to some degree. However, DELLS was now more directly involved in the sector through its Community Learning Fund programme.

ESF funding had generally proved a blessing for the voluntary sector, but European-funded projects had to be free of charge for learners, which affected the income of providers. The need to compete with other providers for learners was also stressed: *'If the local authority is running courses free of charge, we have to offer ours free in order to compete.'* Because much of the sector's provision was aimed at groups who were not economically active or on limited incomes, it was deemed difficult to raise charges for these learners. Free courses, however, were not always thought ideal as *'.. people aren't committed to coming, you can book provision for a course and they don't turn up. Some small charge could stop this.'*

Various regulations made access to funding problematic. For example, it was not possible to obtain EU funding for groups such as asylum seekers whose country of origin was not a member of the Union.

One focus group was concerned at the current over-reliance of the sector on ESF Objective 1 funding. One CVC manager there said that her county would lose 70 courses if that funding stream ended. Another participant thought that: *'European funding hasn't helped sustainability. People have got used to having free courses for years, and it will be hard to change back to charging for courses.'*

Communities First funding had proved beneficial for many areas, but some concern was raised about its nature. One coordinator said that it had created division between communities: *'One street gets funding and the next street doesn't just because of geographical boundaries although their needs are the same. This is a nonsense.'*

Organisations needed to be resourceful and knowledgeable in their pursuit of funding, and some respondents thought that the sector was, in general, extremely inventive in accessing funding. A representative of one national provider said that: *'We have been quite enterprising by trying to include the voluntary sector as part of our SME bids to try and provide some way of giving them funding.'* However, lack of knowledge was a problem for many providers. One strategic interviewee said that there were *'.. 300 different pots of funding available, but people were not aware of them.'* The time and effort required to prepare bids to various funders was said to be burdensome, especially for smaller organisations who lacked the experience to complete the forms.

Difficulties in obtaining funding were described by several respondents. One county CVC had taken accredited courses to local colleges who had then, however, been unable to fund them. A manager said that: *'We were an accredited provider for as ASDAN course, the Certificate of Community Volunteering, but we couldn't source one penny of funding even though it would be ideal for many groups.'* It was reported that only one CVC in Wales

had been drawing any core funding from DELLS, but that this had now been withdrawn because *'.. DELLS wanted to reduce the number of funded providers, so we now have to make third party arrangements with the local college.'*

There was some uncertainty over the value of Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) for the sector, although they were said to be helpful for many people. One organisational coordinator explained: *'If you have a university degree, for instance history or marine biology and want to do childcare training, you can't access an Individual Learning Account.'* A manager said that ILAs were difficult to navigate as the provider first had to get the course approved and the learners needed to sign up well in advance to obtain approval for their choice of course, which removed flexibility. The Accounts were also directed towards course fees, but not other learner expenses such as travel to the centre. A complexity for providers was the need to put a cost on the course to attract ILA money but simultaneously not put a cost on them for learners who could not obtain an Individual Learning Account.

Another aspect of funding was that it was invariably tied to projects or programmes and did not include money for core business or overheads. The end of a programme might threaten the existence of the organisation itself. It was said that greater bureaucratic demands of funders caused higher costs, but that these were not considered in the project-bound funding. One respondent said that: *'There is no funding for supporting learners, which is essential for keeping many people in learning. There should be 15-20% in the budgets of bodies like DELLS, Jobcentre Plus and Working Links for this.'* A further shortcoming of funding arrangements was its linking to outcomes and the consequent lack of resources to develop materials, buy equipment and generally build up the capacity of organisations. One respondent commented that: *'Hoffwn i ddatblygu pecyn hyfforddi technoleg gwybodaeth trwy'r Gymraeg ar y cyd â grwpiau eraill, ond does dim arian am hynny (I'd like to develop an IT training pack through the medium of Welsh jointly with other groups, but there's no money for that).'*

An important source of funding which had been accessed by some organisations was the Lottery. However, regulations were stringent, and one respondent complained that *'.. we won a bid from the Lottery, but then they would not pay us because we were partly funded by DELLS, which is a statutory body.'*

Funding arrangements could also affect partnerships. One manager said that: *'We were in partnership with a college, but when the college got into financial problems they had to withdraw their tutor from here and the provision finished.'* Some focus group participants believed that available funding could be used better in order to take advantage of the voluntary sector's expertise. Although the sector was now generally perceived to have the reach

to widen participation, '.. *we are not credited with the expertise. When colleges are given money to do community-based projects, they immediately appoint a community officer. Why not use the voluntary groups that already exist?'*

One additional source of money for many organisations came from their premises. Many of these were regularly let to other organisations and groups to generate income in an effort to make the organisations more sustainable.

Local authorities were said to be helpful in many cases although their resources were limited. One organisation interviewed was part-funding their three paid posts through a grant from the authority.

It was said that funding applications could be strengthened if more than one organisation came together to make bids. One example was of three youth organisations who had presented a joint CIF application to DELLS to develop 40 trainers for the youth sector who could work through the medium of Welsh, and this bid was currently under consideration by the Welsh Assembly Government. Another suggestion was that where numbers of learners or trainees were small, bids for funding might be made on a regional basis across organisations to boost numbers.

The question of who should be responsible for funding the voluntary sector provoked some debate in the focus groups. The Welsh Assembly Government was thought to be the most appropriate body but one respondent said that: *'The big players are the National Assembly, local authorities, health boards and social services. That's who the voluntary sector predominantly delivers services to and for, so they should fund us.'* This reflected a feeling that voluntary sector learning provision actually impacted on problems such as physical and mental health, employment and citizenship in local communities and not merely people's learning needs, and that this contribution should be acknowledged: *'If you reach economically inactive people it will save millions in the future in health care, welfare and crime, but we continue to spend on a learning elite leaving a pile of people at the bottom,'* commented one focus group participant. The idea of more 'joined-up funding' across social sectors was stressed by several respondents.

There was a perception that the voluntary sector in England received more and higher levels of funding and that more sources of money were available there. Regarding training, too, '.. *it seems to be much easier to access training funds for staff in England.'*

Community Learning Accounts and the aim to give communities buying power to fund learning were welcomed by most respondents, and the outcomes of the scheme were keenly awaited.

4.9 Training

The significant variation in the training capacity of organisations across the voluntary sector was emphasised. While all organisations needed to train their staff and volunteers in a wide range of skills, large national organisations such as Barnardos could afford extensive training programmes but many small, local groups had less capacity to purchase or access it. Management skills were deemed to be very important in small organisations although funding to develop them was restricted. Management training from private companies was said to be very expensive.

On the whole, training was said to have become more formalised. The growth in legal requirements and the compensation culture had increased training needs, which had cost implications, especially for the smaller organisations. The requirement for training was also becoming a barrier to potential volunteers. Whereas guidance councillors in schools during the nineties were able to signpost young people to voluntary organisations to gain volunteering experience, legal regulations were making this more difficult.

Another financially problematic aspect for the sector was the need for trainers to possess teaching qualifications. It could also disqualify as trainers people with many years experience of the field but who were reluctant to devote the time to obtaining formal qualifications. Respondents referred particularly to a shortage of basic skills tutors, as those who had gained qualifications were then able to teach in the FE sector for higher salaries.

The need for training people to operate through the medium of Welsh was particularly emphasised in two focus groups. Administration duties were felt to be an acute need: *'We need people to go on translators' courses, and learn how to chair meetings and take minutes in Welsh. Learners and ordinary speakers don't feel confident to use Welsh in those situations.'*

Some examples of good practice in developing training materials were noted, such as trade unions piloting a CD ROM version of a course for becoming a union learning representative, which facilitated access for workers to that course.

Key Findings

Strategic role and characteristics

The great majority of the vast range of voluntary organisations in the sector had been established as a response to specific needs in the community.

A major strength of the sector was its capacity to make contact with and engage many hard-to-reach groups; public sector bodies often used the voluntary sector as a 'way in' to these groups.

The informal learning offered by the sector was particularly appropriate for many of the people it was trying to serve.

The sector's work was underpinned by the strong social ethos and commitment of its staff and volunteers.

One possible shortcoming of the sector was its fragmented nature; a greater degree of regional structure and planning would lend it more coherence and strategic purpose.

Many parts of the sector were not sufficiently aware of the importance of basic skills deficits as a root cause of many people's social or vocational needs; there was potential for the sector to address learners' and volunteers' basic skills in a more systematic way.

Many voluntary organisations were still unaware of the opportunities for learning which they could offer people.

Modes of working

Working in partnerships was the most effective approach for most voluntary organisations, and crucial for many, as it enabled them to share resources and expertise with their bodies.

However, partnerships were most effective when strategic and well-planned, rather than ad hoc.

It was important that partners working together shared a similar ethos and objectives.

Recruitment

Most organisations were skilful at assessing local needs as a basis for learner recruitment and planning provision.

The sector was resourceful in using a variety of publicity methods to recruit beneficiaries, although word of mouth was the most effective method of all; a shop-front represented an important presence in the community.

The gaining of the trust of individuals and communities was a vital pre-requisite for recruiting beneficiaries, and the sector was particularly effective in achieving this because of their community roots.

Recruiting volunteers was not a major difficulty for most organisations although the growing requirement for training in legislative and safety issues was becoming a barrier to some potential recruits.

The recruitment of professional staff was sometimes harder, possibly because of a perception that jobs in the voluntary sector were somehow not real, permanent jobs, and because salary levels were often lower than in other sectors.

Retainment of staff could be a challenge because of the limited career paths in the voluntary sector and the better remuneration in the public and private sectors.

Barriers to participation

Attitudinal factors were frequently a barrier to potential learners; poor previous educational experiences, particularly in school, deterred many from further learning.

Another barrier involved cultural factors where it was seen as inappropriate within particular groups for males or females to take up learning; it was sometimes difficult to involve certain ethnic groups to join together in activities.

The physical barriers to participation in learning included unfamiliar and intimidating venues, such as colleges, distance from home to the provision, family responsibilities, the cost of provision, lack of childcare, and employers' reluctance to release workers for work-based training; the requirement for accredited assessment and written work on more formal courses also deterred learners lacking in confidence.

Proven means for overcoming barriers included outreach methods to locate provision in the community and flexibility in the design of provision as regards timing and length of course.

Delivery of provision

The facilities and venues used by the sector varied immensely in quality.

Some former venues had been lost to the sector because of the requirements of new health and safety legislation; the rising cost of venues was also a concern for smaller organisations.
The quality and availability of IT equipment also varied widely across the sector; although the demand for IT and the use of e-learning was a growing trend, this could also mean excluding people who did not have access to these facilities.

Across the sector, the demand for provision was often greater than the supply because shortages of trained staff or volunteers or of adequate venues.

Welsh-medium and bilingual provision

On the whole, the use of Welsh as a teaching or learning medium was underdeveloped, although informal oral use of Welsh during activities was more frequent.

The reasons for this very limited use of Welsh included shortage of volunteers or tutors trained or confident in the use of Welsh to teach, a shortage of Welsh-medium learning materials and national standards, and learners lacking in confidence to choose Welsh as a learning medium.

More market research was required by providers to identify Welsh-language needs and groups able and willing to learn through the language.

Monitoring and evaluation

The recent increase in evaluation of learning provision in the sector had generally produced higher standards of delivery and learning.

Evaluation and monitoring was conducted by organisations for internal quality reasons and to meet funders' requirements for accountability; external evaluations were increasingly carried out by Estyn as part of inspections of sector or community learning.

The conflicting demands and frequency of different evaluations sometimes caused difficulties, particularly for smaller organisations.

Funding issues

The shortage of funding sources for non-accredited learning, which was seen as the main strength of the sector, was a major concern.

The short-term nature of much funding made longer-term planning and development very difficult; much expertise, experience and staff themselves could be lost when short-term funding ended.

Most of the available funding was tied to project delivery, so that the necessary money to help providers sustain an organisational infrastructure for administration and staff training was hard to obtain.

ESF funding had been hugely important in supporting many projects, but the over-dependence of the sector on this source was seen as a potential danger.

Several other funding sources had proved valuable, such as the Big Lottery, Communities First and Individual Learning Accounts, but the administrative regulations for these often caused frustration and inconsistencies.

Voluntary organisations were on the whole inventive and resourceful in seeking sources of money, but the necessary time and effort devoted to obtaining funding placed a strain on many, especially smaller, organisations.

There were some examples of partner organisations coming together to make joint funding bids, which could often provide greater funding and resources.

Training

The consensus was that far more training is needed across the sector for staff and volunteers, both in project-specific skills and more generic administrative and personal competencies.

There were significant variations in the amount and quality of training currently provided across the sector; the cost of training, especially from private companies, was a deterrent for many smaller organisations.

Training had generally become more formalised and better in quality, but the greater requirements for training were also proving a barrier to recruiting volunteers.

There was a particular need for more training in Welsh-language skills, both to lead activities and for the administration of organisations.

5. Impact on learners and organisations

Respondents said that the impact of their provision could be measured in a number of ways.

Formal learning was generally accredited, and enrolment, attainment and progression data offered hard evidence for learner progress. However, most respondents felt that such criteria were not appropriate for much of the more informal learning they offered.   The manager of one county CVC said: *'Accreditation can be a huge barrier in the voluntary sector. Of our 786 learners, only five may achieve accreditation. Under Estyn it looks as if you are failing even though we've brought in more than 700 learners.'* OCN units were suitable for some provision, but organisations often measured their impact through other criteria.

One criterion could be the level of attendance. An example from one focus group was a sports leader course provided for a group of pupils who had been excluded from school. Because of the relevance of the course content to them, the group members attended every session and then did five times the required amount of volunteering with other young people.

One involved in environmental programmes stated that: *'You can see the impact of our work in the environment of communities.   There is less vandalism, less rubbish around, there are more trees planted, and so on.'* A manager whose organisation provided training for offenders through the probation service said that: *'We provide accreditation for our programme. We can show statistics that people who get accreditation through us are less likely to re-offend.'*   Another voluntary body collected internal data on achievement, but took the health of the community as an important criterion: *'The community has started an active tenants' group, and there are more residents moving into employment and on to courses.'* More organisations in the sector were now trying to record learner progression as a mark of impact because of the emphasis that Estyn placed on this aspect, although it was not easy to track all learners, especially in some communities: *'You can't harass people all the time.'*

It was also felt strongly that an important impact of the sector were the soft outcomes such as learner confidence, self-esteem and willingness to try new experiences.   These were not difficult to observe, but extremely tricky to quantify. Attitudes towards learning were an important element in this kind of personal development. One manager said: *'We create a feeling in people that they can access learning, that they can make progress. Many of these may*

have been completely excluded from any kind of learning or social life previously, but we give them the confidence to start again.' It was thought wrong always to try to measure provision through some kind of cost benefit. One respondent described outreach provision for disabled people which *'.. couldn't be financially value for money, but whether or not it's value for money it's those people's right!'*

Many interesting initiatives were reported in ways of measuring the softer outcomes of learning provision, although most were in a stage of piloting or development. One such was RARPA which is described in detail in Chapter 2 of this report. A county CVC also spoke of a CIF-funded programme they were using to measure outcomes in terms of personal achievements such as I got a job, I solved a problem in my life.

One cautionary comment regarded the difficulty of assessing the impact of particular learning programmes in isolation from other factors. For example, an improvement in the appearance of gardens in a locality could not be wholly attributable to a gardening course in the community because factors such as gardening programmes on television could also impact on people's behaviour.

One important point made by some respondents was that the impact of learning on individuals, especially informal learning activities, was not immediate and might not become apparent for a year or two, or longer, after the completion of the programme. One such effect could be the influence of parents on their children to persevere with school learning after the parents had attended learning provision some time earlier. This was also true for communities where new learners might take some time to come together to form associations or societies, although the impact of these associations would then appear in the community. People having accessed learning might influence their friends and relatives to follow their lead through a ripple effect. The director at one organisation described the need for a new evaluation approach which he termed the 'Balanced Score Card.' This would consider social aspects together with the statistics for learning provision, such as reduced costs for policing and levels of street crime, vandalism, etc.

Some respondents had anecdotal evidence of how attending learning provision had *'.. changed people's lives, and in some cases, saved lives.'* This was said to apply particularly to groups such as drug-users, the homeless, and young offenders. One description was that: *'We set them on the first rung of the ladder.'*

Another important aspect of the impact of the sector was economic. The value of the voluntary sector to the wider economy was felt to be immeasurable but highly significant. One organisation's coordinator said that: *'If you take GDP our contribution is massive. The nation would be in a state of collapse otherwise. We are not complementary, we are fundamental.'* It was said that

the work of the sector empowered people to become more independent and active. It saved substantial costs which might follow these people in later life in terms of health care, benefit payments, police time and custodial sentences.

In one focus group, a manager described an approximate cost benefit analysis made by his organisation of their impact: *'When we started in the area the children in care cost two million to the authority over three years. However, once the organisation started working the number of children in care was reduced, saving money.'* Another participant spoke of the government spending money on targeting graffiti and other examples of vandalism but *'.. they don't support the organisations who could offer support locally to prevent these problems happening in the first place.'*

The aging population was referred to as one problem where the voluntary sector could have a particular impact: *'The aging population will create big pressures on services, but a small investment in learning for older people can save millions by reducing dementia and reducing loneliness, but this doesn't seem to be valued.'* The health benefits of learning were said to be well-documented by research, but rarely followed up by action and investment.

One measurable impact on economically inactive people was said to be the numbers who opt to become volunteers themselves as a result of attending some provision and gaining confidence and skills there. They could then obtain NVQs and other qualifications through their volunteering as a step to re-entering the workforce.

Key findings

The impact of accredited learning provided by the voluntary sector could be measured in individual organisations through assessment outcomes and qualifications gained.

However, accredited learning was only relevant to a minority of the opportunities offered by the sector. Much informal learning required different approaches to measuring the impact on learners in terms of soft outcomes such as confidence, improvements in health, acquiring a conscious identity as a learner, and willingness to seek employment or further learning opportunities.

A number of measures of soft outcomes on learners were under development in local situations, but there was no general, standard measure available.

Organisations were often able to develop their own criteria for measuring impact, closely linked to the nature of the particular activities which they provided, such as attendance, or numbers proceeding to become volunteers themselves or entering more formal learning.

The impact on communities was often visible, although improvements in the environment might be more qualitative; however, relevant quantitative indicators could often be devised for particular programmes, such as numbers of people obtaining work and decrease in crime levels.

A major impact was that of the savings achieved for other sectors of the economy through reducing the later need for social benefits, health spending and policing; however, although these savings were potentially immense, this was one of the most difficult impacts to measure on a national scale.

It was often hard to isolate the impact of particular initiatives or courses in the voluntary sector as other factors would also be at work on people and communities.

The impact of provision on people's lives and on communities was not always immediate, and might not become apparent for some time, possibly many years; the ripple effect within families could extend over generations.

6.   The way ahead

This chapter presents the findings and conclusions of the research as regards future development in the voluntary sector, and identifies areas where further research is needed.

A brief summary of these conclusions is presented on page 63.

6.1   Development of the sector

Strengths

6.1.1   The voluntary sector should continue to build on its existing and often unique characteristics, notably its moral and social ethos, its great diversity and its roots in communities.   Another strength is its capacity to reach those groups not usually catered for by mainstream provision in the public HE and FE sectors, identify their learning needs, and offer appropriate learning provision to meet those needs.

Funding issues

6.1.2   However, the impressive performance of the voluntary sector, on comparatively limited resources, would be much greater if certain shortcomings in the current funding structures could be addressed. The overriding challenge for the sector is the need to secure a stable funding infrastructure based on longer-term arrangements.   The current arrangements contain three main drawbacks:

a)   Although most of the voluntary sector provision is non-accredited and informal, in order to best suit the nature of the groups it provides for, mainstream FE funding has become increasingly tied to accredited learning.   The great need is to establish a funding mechanism to support non-accredited learning.

b)   Most current funding is based on learning outcomes or linked to particular courses and projects. This does not ensure the necessary funding to maintain and develop the capacity of voluntary organisations in regard to staff retention, training, teaching materials and equipment.   A funding arrangement is required which would cover these capacity issues.

c)   The short-term nature of much current funding creates difficulties in staff retention, makes long-term strategic planning problematic and affects the continuity of initiatives.

6.1.3   To address the above shortcomings, funding procedures based on development plans and projections over two or three years would provide a much sounder foundation for the sector to develop. Actual development could be monitored by Estyn and the funders and organisations not fulfilling their plans could be required to repay a proportion of the funding received.

6.1.4   A dedicated funding stream for community learning which could be accessed by voluntary organisations in all parts of Wales is required. The principal source should be located within DELLS in the Welsh Assembly Government, but could draw money from departments outside DELLS since learning in the voluntary sector also brings benefits in areas such as health, care and social order.

6.1.5   Within the new funding stream described in 6.4 above, a funding formula to support non-accredited learning should be developed and money distributed through the sources described in 6.4. WCVA should have a coordinating role in the quantifying and broad allocation of funding, possibly through a new Community Learning Reference Group, which could replace the present DELLS Compact Group.

A formula or curriculum for the sector is also needed, similar to that developed by the WEA, which would permit organisations to access money to develop their infrastructure and capacity. Funding mechanisms should include a weighting for Welsh-language provision to acknowledge the need for Welsh-medium materials.

Mode of operation

6.1.6   The flexibility of the sector as manifested in the capacity of individual organisations to emerge and react quickly to needs in the community is a strength to be encouraged. However, there is evidence of some duplication of provision and provision by inappropriate groups, and the sector could benefit from a greater strategic overview and organisation. This could take the form of voluntary sector learning fora, which already exist in some areas.

6.1.7   Partnership working is an effective modus operandi for organisations in the sector as it enables groups to be more cost-effective, plan more broadly, pool resources and share expertise. Organisations should be encouraged to seek more partnership working, including joint bids for funding. A precondition for effective partnerships is that all partners share a similar ethos and commitment to their target groups. The issue of leadership or lead partners within partnerships can also be a cause of tension.

6.1.8   An on-line database of voluntary organisations, grouped by sector and interest, should be developed to facilitate networking and partnerships.

Barriers to participation

6.1.9   Physical barriers to participation by potential learners include the need to travel, the quality of the venue and facilities, cost of provision, and family responsibilities, especially childcare needs.

Attitudinal barriers include suspicion of learning settings because of previous poor educational experiences, cultural behaviour patterns, and lack of confidence and desire to undertake more formal and accredited courses.

There needs to be more dissemination of good practice in overcoming the physical barriers through careful course planning and addressing attitudinal barriers through sensitive approach methods in order to win the confidence of fragile groups and provide non-threatening and relevant learning paths. The use of support workers to introduce people to learning has been pioneered, but requires funding, such as through Community Learning Accounts.

Issues of delivery

6.1.10   It is important that venues and centres for learning provision are located in familiar or non-threatening surroundings for the groups of learners targeted so that the venue itself does not become a barrier to participation. However, an increasing problem for the sector, especially for smaller organisations, is the cost of appropriate venues. Another difficulty is the growth in health and safety legislation which has made certain kinds of community venue unsuitable. Such accommodation issues could be tackled by making the development of community learning facilities an agenda priority for devolved and local government in Wales, as has already happened in some areas. Dedicated learning centres of this kind should have the capacity to support improved ICT facilities for the voluntary sector. Voluntary organisations should have dispensation to access reduced rents or hire costs at such centres, even if this required a public subsidy.

6.1.11   There should be regular audits of accommodation in each local authority area, covering facilities and cost, and the outcomes made readily available for voluntary organisations.

6.1.12　　The staffing and management of voluntary organisations has on the whole become more professionally organised in recent times. This has created some tensions in that while it has often improved the quality of provision, potential volunteers can be deterred by requirements to undertake training. Care is needed to maintain a balance between continuing to enhance quality and allowing motivated volunteers the freedom and flexibility to offer the enthusiasm and innovation which has been a hallmark of the sector.

6.1.13　　The amount of monitoring and evaluation in the sector to meet the requirements of funders has increased, while more community learning in the sector is now subject to Estyn inspections. These increased demands have contributed to improve the quality of provision.

6.1.14　　Opportunities for learning through the medium of Welsh or bilingually remain underdeveloped. A rule of thumb should be that Welsh-medium learning reflects the percentage of Welsh-speakers in the area. Rather than merely making provision reactively according to demand, providers should become more proactive in planning and advertising opportunities in order to stimulate levels of demand. More effective market research is required.

There is a great need for more Welsh-medium teaching and learning materials. The extra costs of developing these through the medium of Welsh or of translation could be alleviated by including a weighting for Welsh-medium provision in any new funding mechanism. The need for Welsh-language versions of basic materials such as national standards in certain areas, sports rule books, etc, could be addressed by encouragement from the Welsh Language Board for relevant vocational, professional or sports governing bodies. The current shortage of tutors and instructors able to teach or coach through the medium of Welsh should be addressed by improved training opportunities.

6.1.15　　The problems of many individuals and groups in areas such as social isolation, economic inactivity, health, housing, debt and anti-social behaviour often derive from or are linked to weaknesses in their basic skills. More work is needed to raise the awareness of voluntary organisations of the importance of basic skills. Increased partnership work at a local level with the Basic Skills Agency would benefit organisations and learners. More training is required to equip organisations to deal with those skills deficits in both their target groups and their own staff and volunteers.

6.1.16   The delivery of provision is underpinned by the capacity of organisations to carry it out. Training is crucial in order to support and enhance the necessary skills of staff and volunteers. Although training opportunities for the voluntary sector have improved somewhat over recent years, such provision need to be increased. All CVCs should possess an adequately funded training arm.

Training

6.1.17   Each CVC should possess its own, adequately-funded training arm. National organisations should also be funded to respond to training needs within their own area of interest. The training opportunities for staff and volunteers in the sector need to be considerably expanded.

6.18   Specific Welsh-language training should be expanded to increase the confidence of staff and volunteers in using the language for delivery and administration.

Impact

6.1.18   Assessment of the impact of learning and training provision through the voluntary sector is not straightforward as the effect of particular courses or activities cannot always be isolated from the impact of other influences on the learner. Actual impact of learning may also only become apparent over a period of time, possibly many years. However, it is clear that individuals and groups which participate in learning in the sector do benefit from that provision in many ways.

6.1.19   The impact of accredited learning in the sector can be measured through assessment outcomes and qualifications gained by the learners.

6.1.20   However, most learning which takes place through the voluntary sector is non-accredited. Assessment outcomes may be more difficult to identify for this category of learning, and the best criteria for measuring its impact are often dependent on the nature of the particular provision in question. Harder measures which have proved useful include learners' destinations following the provision, learners' progression to more formal learning, numbers entering employment and numbers of learners proceeding to become volunteers or paid staff with the organisation. Maintaining contact with learners to track their progress after the provision is, however, a challenge for many organisations.

6.1.21   The most important impact of much provision in the sector, especially non-accredited and informal activities, involves the soft outcomes which are notoriously difficult to quantify. These include the impact on participants' confidence, self-esteem, their conscious identity as learners, willingness to seek employment and take up further learning, personal independence and ability to manage personal challenges. Improvements in these aspects can be life-changing for many individuals and families, and even life-saving. It is difficult to devise standard or objective scales of impact in these different areas because the circumstances of each learner are unique. Progress is not always linear and is often best assessed through qualitative interviews with each individual. However, attempts have been made to construct objective measures for the softer outcomes of learning. The development of reliable assessment methods would be very useful as they could then be used in relation to obtaining funding for informal and non-accredited learning.

6.1.22   Another aspect of the impact of learning is its effect on communities. Again, no standard criteria for measurement exist, but elements which can contribute to overall assessments include the physical appearance of housing areas or town centres, numbers of residents' or other local associations, numbers of community activities with a learning focus, local crime rates, degree of economic inactivity, numbers receiving social benefits and health care. Some local areas have shown considerable improvements across the above criteria following the provision of learning opportunities there through the voluntary sector. A 'Balanced Score Card' approach to evaluating impact would consider social and cultural consequences, as well as more direct effect on the learners themselves.

6.1.23   The measurement of the amount of learning which takes place through the voluntary sector is extremely problematic. Welsh Assembly Government statistics for different types of learning do not identify the voluntary sector as a separate category. Some learning in the sector is included in the categories of FE and community learning but it is at present impossible to extrapolate figures for the voluntary sector from those. Statistics for informal and non-accredited learning are at present not collected on a comprehensive, national scale. The development of a mechanism for collating reliable statistics on voluntary sector learning and training, possibly on a local authority basis, should be pursued. Information thereby obtained would inform the future development of funding policies for the sector, and also overall planning for education and training throughout Wales.

6.1.24   Calculation of the amount of funding which currently supports voluntary sector learning is equally problematic, since only partial information is available. As explained in Chapter 3, amounts of funding are obtainable from some funders, but it is not always possible to identify what sums were specifically given to organisations in the voluntary sector and what proportion was used for learning and training. These gaps in the available information make it impossible to undertake a valid analysis of

A national database should be developed to collate and record the funding provided for voluntary sector learning from all bodies which allocate more than a minimum amount per annum. This would make funding processes for the sector more transparent and funding data more accessible.

6.2   Further research

Further research is required into aspects of the work of the voluntary sector which this study was unable to address fully because of the constraints of the project or the non-availability of data. The objectives of such research could be:

- to ascertain the exact annual amounts of funding allocated to learning in the voluntary sector in Wales by different funders;

- to devise and set up a census mechanism for administration by DELLS with local Councils for Voluntary Action to collate annually the numbers of people learning through voluntary organisations;

- to develop reliable scales for the measurement of outcomes of informal and/or non-accredited learning.

Summary of conclusions

Strengths of the sector

The voluntary sector has unique strengths, especially its moral ethos and capacity to contact and work with hard-to-reach groups.

The work of the sector with particular groups and individuals often leads to considerable financial savings in later years in areas such as social services, health and crime prevention.

Funding

A funding mechanism is needed to support non-accredited learning, which is the main characteristic of the voluntary sector.

Current funding is mainly linked to project delivery; funding arrangements are also required to support the infrastructure and training of voluntary organisations.

Most funding for the sector is short-term, which makes longer-term planning and staff retention difficult; more funding should be based on longer-term development plans.

A dedicated funding stream for community learning should be established which could draw money from Welsh Assembly Government departments outside DELLS; this would recognise the immense contribution made by learning in the voluntary sector towards health, care and social order issues.

WCVA should have a coordinating role in the distribution of funding for voluntary sector learning, possibly through a new Community Learning Reference Group in place of the former DELLS Compact Group.

Future funding mechanisms should contain a weighting for producing Welsh-medium materials to help meet that need.

Operation

A strength of the sector is its flexibility and its capacity to react quickly to needs.

Because of the ad hoc nature of much of the sector and frequent duplication of provision, a greater strategic overview and organisation, possibly through the development of voluntary sector learning fora, would be beneficial.

Partnership working is an important success factor in the sector, and should be encouraged, provided that all partners share a similar ethos and goals.

An on-line database of voluntary organisations, grouped by sector and interest, should be developed in order to facilitate partnership working.

Barriers to participation

Physical and attitudinal factors can deter potential learners. There is a need for greater dissemination of good practice in overcoming these barriers.

More use of support workers to help people into learning should be encouraged.

Delivery

Obtaining suitable venues for learning provision at affordable rates is a growing problem; the development of community learning facilities should be a priority for both Assembly and local government.

Local audits of available accommodation for learning should be undertaken.

A balance is required between the growing and welcome professionalisation of the sector and increased training needs which often deter volunteers.

The increase in monitoring and evaluation has raised standards in the sector, but the quality of provision remains a concern in some areas.

Opportunities for learning through the medium of Welsh or bilingually are underdeveloped; greater investment is required in the training of tutors and support staff to work in Welsh and the production of Welsh-medium materials.

Weaknesses in basic skills are fundamental to many people's social and economic problems; more training in basic skills awareness and teaching is required in the voluntary sector.

Insufficient training is available in the sector; all CVCs should possess a training arm and training opportunities should be expanded.

Impact

Accredited learning can be measured by learner outcomes, but this is a very small proportion of the sector's provision.

The assessment of the broader impact of learning is often problematic as the effects on individuals and communities may not become evident for some time.

Organisations need support to devise their own measures to assess impact in their particular areas.

The assessment of soft outcomes of learning such as learners' confidence and changes in attitude to learning is best conducted through qualitative interview methods; the development of objective assessment scales for the softer outcomes should be encouraged.

The impact of learning on communities can be measured by social indicators such as employment, computer ownership, etc, but also through the physical appearance of community areas.

Mapping learning and funding in the sector

Knowledge of the numbers of learners in the voluntary sector would help planning and funding decisions; however, there is no accurate current means of identifying the numbers of learners in the sector, and national and/or local mechanisms and databases should be developed to address this.

The information available on current funding for learning in the sector is fragmented and difficult to access; mechanisms should be developed to record the amounts of money provided by all funding bodies to support learning in the sector; funding information should be transparent and easily accessible to address issues of accountability.

Value for money

Because of the difficulties of obtaining accurate national information on learner numbers and funding, it was not possible to draw up a quantitative assessment of the value for money offered by the voluntary sector. However, it was clear from the qualitative research that much of the sector achieves positive results in engaging hard-to-reach and sometimes disaffected individuals and groups in education and training and in community activities, and often achieves this on comparatively limited resources.

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Appendix 1: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Valleys Kids

Genesis

Valleys Kids began life in 1977 as a charitable, voluntary organisation working with teenagers in a whitewashed coal cellar. Officially it was called the Penygraig Community Project, but is still known locally as the 'Bike Club' because it used scrambling bikes as a way of engaging disaffected youngsters. In the years that followed, the project developed and grew in scope and size. In April 1999 the Penygraig Community Project became 'Valleys Kids', a new charity encompassing all its diverse activities and reflecting more accurately the nature of the regeneration work it now undertook and the wider area within which it operated.

Venues and resources

In 2006 Valleys Kids operated in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area. The facilities at Penygraig included the Cross Street Centre, Capel Soar Ffrwdamos, the Penygraig and District Communities First Base and the Garages. The Cross Street Centre housed the administrative centre of the organisation as well as accommodation for community learning, family activities and IT courses. The chapel, refurbished at a cost of £2,000,000 in 2006, provided state-of-the-art theatre facilities together with other rooms for community activities. The Dinas Community Project was housed in the Pen Dinas block of flats. The Dinas Centre comprised a flat taken over by Valleys Kids in 2002. It offered facilities for children, young people, families and community learning and included the services of a community advocate who was available to give advice on legal matters. The centre had a computer room, an activities room and a kitchen which doubled as an office, although plans were in hand to convert an outhouse for use as office space. A sensory garden had also been created outside the flat.

The Penyrenglyn Centre situated on the Mount Libanus housing estate was re-furbished in 2003. The building was originally a row of four houses which were converted into a modern centre for a range of community activities.

Other premises not visited for the purpose of this case study include the Ilan Centre and Elm Street in Rhydyfelin, Little Bryn Gwyn, a residential centre located in a cottage on the Gower and the Communities First Base located in shop-front premises in Treherbert. In addition to these facilities, Valleys Kids also possessed two converted double-decker buses, named Lliwgar and Enfys,

which provided a mobile venue for play activities and computer training in isolated communities.

Current Activities

A central element of the Valleys Kids programme was the concept of Time Banking. This was conceived as a way of formalising the concept of individuals exchanging skills or services e.g. childminding, gardening, etc. Under the scheme, volunteers received credits for time spent volunteering at Valleys Kids. These time credits were recorded and could be exchanged for learning or services, e.g. driving lessons, computer courses. The scheme was a way of recognising individual contributions and also encouraging volunteers to engage in learning while giving something back to their community. Staff felt that they had proved very successful and were popular with volunteers.

No fees were charged for any of the activities organised at Valleys Kids centres. A range of activities were on offer which could broadly be divided into the following categories:

- IT courses with an emphasis on community learning. These were run on a roll-on-roll-off basis which allowed learners to access a course whenever a place became available rather than registration on a termly or half-termly basis.

- community learning programmes which included Parent and Baby, Healthy Living and Feeling Good groups, local history, art and digital photography classes. It was felt that such courses were important as a stepping stone to encourage learners to engage with more formal learning or become volunteers.

- activities for young people including youth, after-school and homework clubs, summer play schemes, theatre, film, digital photography and 're-cycle a cycle' courses. An annual cycle ride and residential experiences were also arranged. Youngsters were able to use time-banking credits, gained by attending recognised courses/sessions at the centres to access day trips.

Funding

Valleys Kids was run by a board of trustees, although local management groups were encouraged to develop centres to best serve their community needs. Day-to-day management was left to the individual centre co-ordinators. Funding for the activities offered by Valleys Kids came from a range of sources. At its inception the Penygraig Project had been developed mainly through local authority funding. A senior manager remarked that there was *'a danger in becoming too dependent on one source of funding'* and that diversification was valuable. Following a consultation exercise, the organisation employed a full-time development officer with responsibility for fund and profile raising and *'as a result we have become better at asking!'*.

By 2006 only 25 per cent of the funding for Valleys Kids came from LA sources. Half of the funding was from Europe and came via the WAG Communities First programme. The final quarter was raised through individual and company donations. The same senior manager also noted that attitudes towards funding from the local authority had altered. *'In the late nineties we were deficit-funded and it was not possible to operate with a surplus. However, the voluntary/community sector has adopted a more professional attitude and there is now an understanding on the part of the LA that it is essential for organisations to have reserves.'*

Information about the organisation's activities and events was circulated to sponsors via a quarterly newsletter and some events had been held in Cardiff to showcase the work of Valleys Kids to corporate sponsors. A DVD containing films made by the youth theatre groups had also been produced to promote the work of the centres. However, managers stressed that Valleys Kids had not traditionally seen the need to advertise their work widely. The recruitment of volunteers was largely on a word-of- mouth basis.

Staffing

Posts with the organisation were advertised in the Western Mail, the Guardian and the Big Issue as well as in the local paper and the Jobcentre. A recruitment agency had been successfully used to secure the services of a finance officer. Valleys Kids currently employed 49 paid members of staff, 35 of those on full-time contracts. It also relied on the help of well over 100 adult and 50 teenage volunteers. A significant emphasis was placed on staff development. The baseline training for every member of staff would be first aid, food hygiene, child protection and health and safety and volunteers were also encouraged to take up those courses. Each member of full-time staff was entitled to £500 of training per annum, which did not have to be work-related. Many employees were also studying for a degree or other professional qualification.

Valleys Kids also worked alongside other organisations and agencies such as health visitors and social services and the importance of joined-up thinking about community regeneration was stressed. For example, at the Dinas Project a Community Advocate worked from the centre to enable local people, *'often those without a voice',* to access advice and assistance with problems and also ensure that the full-time centre co-ordinator was not a lone worker.

Target Beneficiaries

Communities and individuals within those communities were the main beneficiaries of Valleys Kids. Although the project initially focussed on teenagers, over the years the target audience had widened to address issues of lifelong learning and community empowerment. Several members of staff

spoke of the importance of involving local people in the planning and execution of projects: *'Education and information equals power. It is about empowering people to take responsibility for what happens within their community.'* Encouraging people to get involved and not to be passive recipients of learning was also stressed. It was felt that time banking had been instrumental in increasing participation and skill-sharing.

Impact

Staff and volunteers alike all referred to the positive benefits of Valleys Kids on individuals and their communities. A great emphasis was placed on enabling local people to change their communities for the better. A staff member involved with the Penyrenglyn Project spoke of the change that had been wrought: *'This was a very deprived estate, known locally as 'The Ranch'. People felt written off. What we did was listen to service users. Parents were afraid to have aspirations for their children and we showed them that there was hope.'*

Following a tragic bereavement, one woman felt unable to leave the house and had been suffering from depression. She was referred to the Penygraig Centre and subsequently attended the Feeling Good Group on a weekly basis and described her experience thus: *'It's brilliant. As a group of ladies we meet for lunch and then have complimentary therapies like Reiki, aromatherapy and massage. I found it really helpful. Now I go to the computer class once a week too. My brain doesn't work very well, but I'm learning and I can help my grandchildren with things on the computer.'* She had also volunteered to put her gardening skills to good use and provided pot-plant arrangements at the centre: *'My son, who is now 38, used to come here. I knew it as the Bike Club then. He went to the youth club and even made a film once, but I never knew that they did things for older people too. They should advertise it more. Lots of other people could benefit.'*

The centre co-ordinator also praised the Feeling Good sessions as an excellent way of connecting with hard-to-reach groups and building confidence amongst vulnerable people, e.g. those who may have mental health problems: *'It is not the sort of programme that DELLS would fund and I was cynical at first about the benefits, but the results are tangible. You can see the change in the women who attend – the way they carry themselves, talk, interact. It is about building a support network. Because of the nature of their experiences they are coming from a common place. Many of them are alone and to be able to come to the centre is a lifeline, to mix with others, enjoy healthy food and the therapies, even to be touched, is a very powerful thing.'*

Another volunteer became involved with the Dinas Centre when her children attended play sessions there. She began to help out on a regular basis and through the time banking scheme was able to use credits earned to buy driving lessons. As her confidence grew she undertook administrative work at the

centre. She then began a word processing course at college. Her involvement with the Dinas Centre and the support she received had given her confidence, a belief in her own abilities and a desire to ultimately qualify as a youth worker with older children. She also noted that her relationship with her own children had improved and that learning to drive had given her a new independence and the ability to apply for jobs further afield: *'I realised that I'm more intelligent than I thought. I'm more than just a mam. There is a whole world out there and I can be a part of it.'*

A group of young people at the Penyrenglyn Project described how their involvement at the centre from a very early age had helped them to develop confidence and improved their life chances. They had been involved with performing and writing drama productions, helping to run music classes and after-school clubs, volunteering overseas e.g. Camp America and EVS schemes. They had also received training and gained qualifications in such areas as health and hygiene, play, first aid and child protection. Some had used their time credits to organise a trip to New York which involved making all the travel arrangements themselves: *' This place offers you a new life, not just working in a shop or something like that. We would have been stuck in a typical valleys rut, but now we've seen what's possible and we know that can be for us too, not just for other people.'*

Case Study 2: DOVE

Genesis

DOVE emerged from groups set up in the local community during the Miners' Strike of 1984-85. Its aims were to address the socio-economic challenges confronting the area by developing facilities, education and training, and other support structures in the community. Since its establishment, a strong focus has been placed on delivering formal and informal learning opportunities. The range of courses run at the centre varied from Entry Level to Level 4.

The organisation was a charity and a company limited by guarantee. It had a membership of around 150, all of whom were over 18 years old. The Trustees and Management Committee were elected by the membership annually. A representative said that the organisation sought to '*work in the community and with the community*' and to be '*the focal point of the community*'.

Venues and resources

The organisation secured former NCB premises which were converted for community use. It included a day nursery, teaching rooms, community areas, library and ICT facilities, and office accommodation. More recent developments have included a cafe and a garden project. Some organisations shared the facilities; for example, a local history group stored materials on the premises. The organisation also used other facilities to offer learning opportunities such as IT classes. The venues were described as excellent by learners; in particular, it was felt that the small size and atmosphere was more appealing than larger venues, such as the local college, which was described by one learner as '*too impersonal*'.

Current Activities

The nursery opened from 7.30am to 6.30pm and provided '*childcare for learners, working parents/guardians and respite care*'. It catered for 20 children from 0-5. The majority attended the nursery on a part-time basis. Six members of staff were employed. All bar one were funded through the income generated.

The organisation employed a Sure Start worker funded through Cymorth to deliver a project aimed at improving parenting skills and provide advice on related issues. This was done in partnership with '*a variety of health and education agencies*'. Two parenting groups and a number of day schools were held annually. The organisation noted that: '*Many of the parents participating in this project go on to enrol in formal education classes and four parents have formed an independent parent support group.*'

A healthy eating cafe was established in January 2004 in response to learner evaluation feedback which identified the need for such facilities. Funding was secured to meet the set-up costs.

A community garden was also being developed. This was intended to be a way of using a piece of land adjacent to the centre and, ultimately, of providing the cafe and the local community with locally-produced fresh produce. As a first step, a learning garden would be used for horticulture classes and environmental awareness work involving local schools and adult learners. A second step would be to revive disused allotments.

The centre was used by a range of providers, including the local FE college, the LA Lifelong Learning service, HE institutions, the WEA, and voluntary organisations, to deliver courses. The organisation saw its role as being '*to work with the community to identify local learning needs and feed back to the relevant provider. The curriculum offered at the centre is planned by the centre staff in negotiation with providers and community development workers and takes into account those identified needs and current strategies and statistics.*' Moreover, '*.. when identified learning needs cannot be met by the providers,*' the organisation '*will seek funding to develop and accredit the relevant course.*'

One of the learners who was interviewed was pursuing a basic skills course at the centre. He said that his main motivation had been to be able to help his children with their school work and the fact that he could no longer undertake any physical work due to injury. Another learner had taken part in a large number of learning activities out of interest. At present he was studying digital photography and how to make PowerPoint presentations.

Funding

The organisation received some core funding from the local authority. This was to support its work promoting economic development and it received no core funding for its educational activities. This meant that a great deal of staff time was spent seeking funding for individual projects. The sources of funding accessed by the organisation included Sure Start, Communities First, and Lloyds TSB. Some funding was also drawn down from a local learning network with which the organisation was involved. Staff referred to issues concerning funding including:

- the difficulty they had experienced obtaining funding for community-based learning that did not lead to a formal qualification
- the need to ensure that learning at all levels was delivered in communities as some learners could not go outside their communities for higher-level courses, or were reluctant to do so

- the difficulty of obtaining funding for learning because some funders mistakenly believed NC-DELLS were funding voluntary organisations to deliver learning opportunities.

The organisation's representatives believed that there was a need to promote the notion of learning for its own sake rather than necessarily as a means towards a qualification and that the existing funding system did not address that aim. It was noted that the voluntary sector had an important role to play in reaching new learners and delivering in communities.

Staffing

The organisation had 13 full-time permanent members of staff and four part-time staff. In addition, some staff used the facilities to deliver learning programmes for providers who used the centre. The organisation was also supported by its voluntary members. In some cases, volunteers had worked at the centre in order to gain the experience to enable them to proceed to other work.

Target Beneficiaries

The community as a whole was seen as the organisation's target beneficiary. It sought to promote engagement in its activities through such means as:

- a community newsletter
- its annual brochure
- its own website and links in other organisations' websites
- activity days
- word of mouth.

Of these, word of mouth was seen as the most effective means of raising awareness of the organisation and its activities.

The organisation also worked with a range of other voluntary bodies such as:

- WISE (Wales Initiative for Supported Employment)
- the Flexible Youth Curriculum Group
- the Young Offenders' Group.

One of the key aims was to reach individuals who lacked confidence and encourage them to engage more fully in a range of different ways. These included going on to learn at a higher level, obtaining employment or developing the confidence to look for work (including forms of work which they had not undertaken in the past) or community involvement. The

organisation was committed to developing programmes which enabled participants to develop a sense of achievement and of '*building people's confidence to take part*'. This was done by responding to learning needs identified through dialogue with the community, alongside a continual emphasis on encouraging progression and nurturing an awareness of the available opportunities for further study. According to one learner, the fact that the organisation '*was flexible enough to adapt to the needs of the community*' was one of its great strengths.

It was noted that women had played a leading role in establishing the organisation and that they continued to play a major role in it. Several representatives said that this had made an important contribution to their lives in an area '*where institutions had always been led by men'*. Notwithstanding this, the organisation recognised the need to work with men and women and was developing initiatives such as the Community Garden which was seen as a means of engaging a greater number of men.

Learners who were interviewed at the centre said that they knew about it and the organisation because it was '*an established part of the community*.' One said that he had been involved in its activities virtually since the beginning. Another had worked close by and '*had seen it grow over the years although only recently did I take part'*.

Impact

Over 2000 individuals engaged in some way with activities at the centre during any year, of whom nearly 400 took part in some form of learning. Qualitative interviews with learners examined '*how learners have grown.*' These revealed positive results which included progression to further learning and the confidence to look for work after a prolonged period of unemployment. This was reflected in the experiences of one learner who said that taking part in the activities had helped his recuperation, self-esteem and confidence. He hoped that this would eventually equip him to obtain another job and that he intended progressing to more advanced courses.

Case Study 3: Swansea Multi-cultural Women's Resource & Training Centre Ltd.

Genesis

The Swansea Multicultural Women's Resource and Training Centre has been in existence for some 30 years. Its founding aim was to provide resources and information to women in its locality, and its orientation was largely feminist. One of its initial functions was offering confidential pregnancy tests to women. Since then, the organisation has developed an extensive training and learning programme that has striven to develop women's self-confidence and self-belief.

The initial training programmes sought to offer women opportunities to study non-traditional subjects such as plumbing and woodwork. However, more recent training programmes had focused on developing self-confidence and providing support to vulnerable women from a diversity of cultures and backgrounds.

The centres long-established aim was to,

> *'Empower all women to develop their own potential and enable them to make choices about their own lives' (Swansea Multi-Cultural Women's Centre 2005)*

In line with this, the Centre had six targets,

- To work in a women-centred and accessible way
- To provide information on issues relevant to women
- To provide informal, needs-led training on a variety of topics
- To offer volunteering opportunities at the centre for a range of interests
- To actively encourage women from under-represented groups to take part.
- To work closely with a wide range of agencies in Swansea and the surrounding area.

Venues and resources

The centre was situated in the centre of Swansea and housed office space, training rooms, a small crèche and kitchen facilities large enough to hold training classes. Over the last few years the organisation had installed ramps to the ground floor to make the building more accessible. The centre itself was a women-only space which helped vulnerable users to feel secure and safe.

The organisation also did outreach work in the twelve Objective One areas of Swansea where it used a variety of community and healthy living centres to deliver training events and courses.

Two of the centre's rooms were taken by two small voluntary organisations, Womenszone, a lesbian newsletter, and I.S.A.H, the Incest and Sexual Abuse Helpline.

Current Activities

Current training opportunities at the centre were very diverse and included both external user training and internal volunteer training and staff development.

The External Training Programme

The centre ran three or four sessions of training programmes a year with each individual session comprising six or seven courses. Some courses were aimed at specific groups, for example, survivors of domestic abuse, and had a specific content aimed at increasing self-confidence or social skills. The centre also offered more general courses such as Arts and Crafts, Healthy Eating and Photography where goals such as increasing self-confidence were a more indirect benefit of the course. Some learners who undertook non-accredited courses at the centre had gone on to complete accredited courses elsewhere.

> *Continuation: One Learner had been coming to the centre for less than a year but had undertaken a number of informal courses which helped to increase her self-confidence. Having completed a pottery course at the centre she had joined an accredited pottery course with another local voluntary organisation. When she completes this pottery course she will be able to get 27 credits equivalent to one GCSE.*

Recently, the centre had held a multi-cultural cooking course. Women from a variety of countries were invited to attend a basic food hygiene course. Having completed this certificate, these women then offered other learners a course where they could learn to cook dishes from all over the world. The opportunity to meet women for a variety of cultural backgrounds was noted by learners as one the centres best characteristics.

> *"You get to meet a lot of different people of all different nationalities which is fantastic."*

The centre has also offered some accredited learning, for example, a course on digital photography, in partnership with the Department for Adult and Community Education at Swansea University and Swansea College.

In addition to its in-centre training programme, the centre has also developed an outreach programme working with the twelve Objective One areas of Swansea. The project aimed to offer programmes in community settings, support women who wish to set up their own groups and increase awareness about services the organisation can offer women. The programme had been very successful and ran a number of sessions from self-defence to mother and child crafts courses. In the Plasmarl area of Swansea the organisation was able to support women to formally establish a mother and child group by helping with fundraising ideas, putting together a constitution and helping here with the financial elements.

In all its training the Centre strove to ensure a needs-led programme so that the contents of training programmes met the most acute needs of the learners. Learners would often be asked at the beginning of the course what they most needed so that tutors could tailor the course to their needs. For example, the Centre brought together a group of women who had suffered from mental health problems and responded to their desire to find more out about the Mental Health service. The Centre also ran a "Spring Clean Your Life" course where women who participated identified to the tutor what they needed most help with and the course was shaped to fit these needs. This allowed the Centre to fulfil its central aim of empowering women to develop their own potential and make their own choices about their own lives. Learners at the centre appreciated the opportunity to put forward suggestions and tell tutors what they wanted to learn. This opportunity to contribute helped them to feel a valid part of the centre and its work and not just learners attending a '*one-off*' course.

On occasion, the Centre had also on request provided training for staff or volunteers of other agencies or organisations on topics such as Mental Health Awareness and Sexual Abuse Awareness.

Internal Programme

The Centre had a large number of dedicated long-term and new volunteers who were predominantly responsible for the day-to-day running of the Centre and conducted much of the administrative work. The Centre had a strong ethos of staff development and had provided volunteers with informal training on areas such as office and computer skills. A number of the volunteers had used these skills to return to or enter the labour market. The Centre was currently looking to formalise this training by working with partners to offer an optional OCN/ NVQ course for volunteers to help accredit their contribution if they wished.

Other Activities

The Centre's activities also included taster sessions and open days. In 2006 the Centre was running five day-sessions during Adult Learners Week. These

sessions offered a variety of learning opportunities such as an Older Women's Day and an Open Day. Learning providers were invited to provide information on available learning opportunities.

In addition to its training programme, the Centre acted as a resource and information centre for women. It offered drop-in sessions once a week where women could access advice or short-term support. It also housed Womenzone, a Lesbian newsletter with a readership of over 600 in Wales and South West England who met for breakfast in the Centre once a month, and I.S.A.H , the Incest and Sexual Abuse Helpline who offered support and advice to adult survivors. Other groups who met regularly at the centre include the Older Feminist Network, a social group and a book group.

Partnerships

The Centre has worked with a variety of partners in the delivery of its training programme and was seeking to develop and cement formal partnership working agreements with a number of organisations. Among its most prominent partners was MEWN, the Minority and Ethnic Women's Network which was located next door to the Centre and shared resources such as rooms and a crèche with Swansea Women's Centre. The Centre also worked closely with Women's Aid, Swansea College, Gorseinon College, the DACE department of Swansea University, Swansea County Voluntary Service and I.S.H.A

Funding

Funding for the organisation came from a variety of sources, but mainly project grants. Both the Centre manager post and that of the outreach worker were funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The post of the Health and Well Being officer was supported by money from the City and County of Swansea Compact Fund. The local authority also paid a contribution towards the Centre's rent costs. Additional sources of grant funding have also included the European Social Fund, a mental health grant and money for outreach work from Awards for All.

Other sources of funding included room hire, membership fees and informal fundraising activities.

The main financial concern for the Centre was securing its long-term sustainability by accessing more permanent core funding. Addressing this need would be a key task for the Centre manager and treasurer over the coming year. While keen to access more core funding, the Centre was also conscious of the need to retain its informal working practices. Long and complicated funding forms presented a barrier for the learners attending the centre and could put some off from returning. The Centre therefore hoped to be able to attract funding that did not restrict their established working culture.

Staffing

The Centre currently had one full-time Centre manager who was appointed in November 2005 and three part-time staff. The part-time staff included a finance officer, an outreach worker and a health and well-being worker. Much of the day-to- day running of the office and administrative work was done by a dedicated team of ten volunteers, some of whom had been at the Centre for over five years.

The Centre also had a Board of Trustees/ Management Committee who oversaw and guided developments at the Centre. This committee currently met once a month and was very much involved in the Centre's work.

The Centre also previously had a part-time volunteer co-ordinator but lack of funding had meant that this post was discontinued. However, the Centre was hoping to employ a part-time training officer in the near future who would be responsible for both internal training of volunteers and external user training.

The friendly and supportive nature of centre staff was noted by learners as one of the centres best attributes. Learners noted that staff were genuine and had helped them become more confident. The relationships the staff had developed with learners was crucial in gaining their trust, evident in the frequency with which learners returned to the centre to take part in courses and activities or volunteer.

> *"There is wonderful staff here and at Women's Aid, I can't praise them enough!"*

Target Beneficiaries

The Centre aimed to provide a safe and supportive environment for women of all ages. Approximately 180 women attended training courses at the Centre over the course of a year and a further 100 went to courses run by the Centre in the community through its outreach work. The Centre also provided training for its volunteers and attracted additional women through its information and drop-in services as well as through its open days and taster sessions.

In accordance with its core targets, the Centre had also done a considerable amount of work with under-represented groups. These included mental health patients, domestic abuse survivors, women from minority and ethnic communities, single parents, lesbian women, older women and women with mobility problems.

The Centre's target beneficiaries naturally varied over time according to the project or session of courses being run. For example the Centre received a mental health grant which was targeted at vulnerable women who had been

diagnosed with a mental health illness and offered them self-confidence classes and courses on how to understand the mental health service and their diagnosis.

Participants/ learners were recruited to the Centre via a variety of avenues. The Centre worked closely with other voluntary organisations to inform them of their training programme. These organisations signposted learners to the Centre. The Centre also advertised its programme in community newsletters and increased awareness of what was on offer through its outreach work. The Centre also worked with agencies to provide courses for specific target groups.

The Centre regularly advertised its programme in the local paper, which had proved effective in reaching a wide range of women.

Impacts

Impacts on the Learners

Impacts of the training programmes on learners were, as noted by the Centre manager, 'varied and wide ranging,' depending upon their personal experiences and the courses they attended.

The key impact the Centre strove to achieve was to increase the self-confidence of the women taking part in training activities. While in some courses this was the sole target, in others this was achieved implicitly through participants learning new skills. An example of this was the outreach programme which the centre ran on healthy eating in the Mayhill area of Swansea. Young mothers learnt how to cook a healthy low budget meal for their family. Through this course they also developed visible self-confidence in both their personal and parenting skills.

Improving social skills and developing support networks have also been an important element of the Centre's work. By providing women with a safe and informal environment to learn. the clients felt better able to talk about issues affecting their lives and had occasionally developed their own informal support networks. Learners highly valued the friends and informal support networks they had developed through attending the centre and appreciated the opportunity to meet women with similar experiences.

While formal evaluation of courses was conducted, most of the learning that took place at the Centre is informal and impacts were therefore often less tangible and less easy to record. In general, quantitative indicators such as the number of women returning to follow other courses or become volunteers were taken as positive signs of the programmes' impact. Learners also completed feedback forms at the end of each courses about the course itself, the tutors and on what other courses they would like to complete in future.

Currently, the Centre did little formal tracking of students after completion of their course at the centre. This was something which the organisation was seeking to change. By working in partnership with the Adult and Community Learning sub-group of the Swansea Learning Partnership, the organisation was helping to develop a common tracking system so that organisations in Swansea might offer more solid progression routes for learners. This would help the Centre to track the long-term impacts of their training programme.

Impacts on staff/ volunteers

Many of the Centre's volunteers initially became involved in the centre through its training programme. Having attended a course at the Centre, many of the volunteers returned to offer their time and contribute to the administration of the Centre. While training of volunteers was currently informal, the Centre hoped to introduce some accreditation for this work that could help these women take up employment if they wished.

Nonetheless, a number of the volunteers had already continued on to employment having had the opportunity to develop their self-confidence and skills. These volunteers had gone on to work for a range of organisations including other voluntary organisations, a mental health agency and the prison service. Other volunteers had set up their own support groups such as the Swansea Rape Forum that brings together relevant agencies and partners in Swansea to discuss and tackle issues surrounding rape. The Centre manager believed that, overall, its volunteer programme 'has made an important contribution to the labour market in Swansea.'

Other volunteers had contributed to the organisation's work for over five years and offered administrative, volunteer and user support at the centre.

The external training programme therefore also impacted on the organisation itself by bringing in people to the centre and increasing awareness of its work.

Other impacts

The Centre's training programme had also impacted upon the wider community. Through its outreach work the Centre had extended its constituency and widened its area of impact. Centre staff also noted that women with increased self-confidence often became more active in their own communities and had often go on to set up their own support groups for other women.

In general, Centre staff believed that beyond the immediate impacts of the training programme the centre had been successful in creating a space where women could feel safe and comfortable. The organisation as a whole had impacted on the local context by raising awareness of many of the problems and issues that women continue to face. Through its training programme,

support for other groups, resource and information activities the Centre hoped to bring together and provide services for many different communities of women.

Case Study 4: CYD, Aberystwyth branch

Genesis

CYD was launched as a means of supporting people who were learning Welsh to develop and consolidate their skills by providing opportunities to use the language in informal surroundings. The organisation particularly sought to enable learners to mix with fluent Welsh speakers in order to '*assist learners to cross the bridge to becoming fluent Welsh speakers*'. It was a national organisation which worked through 80 local branches. The level of activity which branches were able to sustain was said to differ and the example visited was seen as one of the stronger ones. Work was undertaken at a Wales-wide level.

CYD was a registered charity which invited membership from individuals, institutions, and organisations who could enjoy the full rights of membership (supporter status) for a set annual fee. A second tier of membership (ordinary member) existed for those who wished to support or take part in activities on an occasional basis. Its national governing body included national and functional officers and representatives of the membership as a whole. The number of representatives from each branch at the organisation's annual meeting was dependent of the size of the branch. It had a detailed constitution outlining the duties of its officers.

The branch visited had an executive of eight members. According to the Chair, a deliberate effort was made to encourage learners to take the lead in the branch in order to provide positive role models for those starting to learn the language.

Venues and resources

Nationally, CYD branches met in different types of venues across Wales. The Aberystwyth branch used a cafe in the centre of town. The room was used exclusively by the organisation for its meetings and loaned by the cafe proprietors free of charge; participants were expected to purchase their refreshments on the premises. Members felt that the ambience was extremely conducive to their activities. According to one learner: '*People can come in and its a welcoming environment ... there's always someone at the door to help you get over that initial hump*.' However, it was noted that the venues used by the organisation differed in each locality and that there was no 'typical venue'.

The branch visited had no specific teaching or learning resources. Because of its location, it was able to use administrative facilities in the office of the national movement which was also situated in Aberystwyth.

Current Activities

The main activities organised by the branch were a weekly coffee morning and an evening group. Participants gathered informally in groups at four or five tables and spent approximately an hour in conversation. Each group included at least one fluent Welsh speaker and groups of learners; these could be those who were relative beginners alongside those who were almost fluent. Many learners noted that the group was a valuable opportunity to use the language. For example, one said that she lived in a '*very anglicised part of Wales where there were very few opportunities to speak Welsh.*' Another referred to the reluctance of some Welsh speakers outside the group's environs to speak in Welsh to people who were learning the language. Another more recent learner said '*I come here and people don't mind if I make a mistake ... that's the joy of it, they're here to support and encourage us.*' Most of the learners present said that they had been encouraged to attend by their Welsh tutor and saw the group as a continuation of their studies.

In addition, they organised lectures or talks on issues ranging from recollections of holidays, recreations, or more formal topics which were delivered by supporters or the learners themselves. The branch also organised outings to places of interest; according to the Chair, they made an effort to go to places that were of interest to learners although it was sometimes '*not easy to make sure we go where all members want to go.*'

Activities organised by other branches or by the organisation at a national level included a Welsh scrabble competition, links with the Welsh language media, weekend schools and competitions.

A bridging project had also been developed since 2004. This was initially piloted in one area and then rolled-out across Wales. It involved a small number of fluent Welsh speakers, usually three or four people, attending Welsh for Adults classes for a half hour session at the end of the class to converse with learners. This was felt to be of particular benefit for learners who did not have the time to attend the organisation's other activities.

The national organisation maintained its own journal which was published twice each year. Around 15,000 copies were produced which were distributed free of charge to each member.

Funding

CYD received a small amount of core funding from the Welsh Language Board. Additional funding was secured from bodies such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Communities First, the Welsh Assembly Government, Lloyds-TSB, and some local authorities.

The amount of grant funding had been reduced in the late 1990s and the organisation said that the amounts it currently received were not enough to enable it to fulfil its mission. An officer of the branch stated: '*We rely on goodwill far too much. At the end of the day there's a limit to what you can expect people to do, especially when so many of them have to go to their own pockets to fund what they do*.' It was also considered impossible to maintain an adequate number of paid field workers. The annual grant and revenue generated by the organisation itself meant that it felt restricted in terms of the work it could do and also the profile which it could generate for itself; this meant that its role in achieving the policy aim of increasing the number of Welsh speakers was restricted.

According to another officer the organisation existed to work with adults in order to '*bring about a revival in the Welsh language*.' This, it was maintained, could only be achieved by a determined effort at grassroots level. However, while it was noted that considerable funding was devoted to encouraging Welsh in schools and promoting Welsh-medium opportunities for children, it was felt that '*much more needs to be done with adults and we need the resources to do so effectively*.'

The local branch visited received no funding through the national organisation nor from other sources. It raised its own money through membership payments and charging for particular activities, such as bus trips.

Staffing

Nationally, CYD had six full-time members of staff who acted as field officers across Wales. Their roles included developing national programmes in the individual localities. However, a key function of theirs was to help establish and sustain branches. According to a representative of the branch visited, such work was crucial because '*there is a big difference in the extent to which different localities have volunteers who will commit to the work*.' CYD worked hard to overcome the notion, prevalent at one time, that it existed as a forum for those learning Welsh; organisers insisted that they had to put as much, if not more, effort into encouraging fluent Welsh speakers to become part of the organisation as to encourage learners to take part.

The branch visited was more fortunate than others in that a number of their volunteer Welsh-speakers were former teachers or academics with a good understanding of the needs of the learners. No real training was provided for volunteers.

Target Beneficiaries

All of those learning Welsh were identified as the organisation's target beneficiaries. In the branch visited, learners included a postgraduate student who had chosen to learn Welsh after studying it at a foreign university, a taxi

driver who wanted to learn Welsh for business and cultural reasons, and a number of people who had decided to learn Welsh after retiring.

Although the organisation marketed its activities through local networks, the various providers of Welsh for Adults courses were seen as the main avenue for encouraging learners to attend. A representative of the branch said: '*We organise this session and an evening session which tends to draw a younger age group because they are working during the day'*. Another officer referred to the need to develop more outreach work which could include linking with other organisations in particular the *Mentrau Iaith*. However, this could only be undertaken through considerable development work on the ground.

Impact

The branch did not use any formal means to measure its impact and felt that doing so would be contrary to its informal ethos. Its aims were to encourage people to converse in Welsh and both learners and fluent Welsh speakers highlighted qualitative evidence that this aim was being achieved. For example, one learner noted: 'I've been coming here for some time and over the years I've definitely gained confidence to hold a conversation in Welsh. When I started I had a fairly limited range of topics I was happy to talk about but now I feel much more confident'. Another said that he felt more confident about using Welsh in his daily business as a result of going to the activities; this included being willing to instigate conversations in Welsh.

Case Study 5: Flintshire U3A

Genesis

Flintshire U3A or University of the Third Age was first established in December 2001 as an autonomous unit of the national U3A organisation, *The Third Age Trust*. While the University of the Third Age is a worldwide movement it began in the UK in 1982 to,

> *'.. encourage and enable older people ...to help each to share their knowledge, skills and experience..'*

and to

> *'.. celebrate the capabilities and potential of older people and their value to society.' (www.u3a.co.uk/information 16/5/06)*

The national organisation is made up of a number of autonomous learner groups across the different regions and countries of the UK. At present there are 574 groups across the UK with a total membership of 153,443.

Flintshire U3A was established to offer further learning and social opportunities to older retired people within the county. The organisation aims to keep *'minds and bodies occupied'* and to provide members with *'friendship and support'*. The founding belief of Flintshire U3A was that *"Learning should be a lifelong experience!"*. In April 2006 the organisation had approximately 120 members that made up the 27 learner groups.

Venues and Resources

As such Flintshire U3A, like many other U3A groups, did not have a permanent local base. Classes were often run from members' homes or in small community settings. Some larger groups, such as the Arts groups, paid to use suitable accommodation and the organisation used the offices of another charity for committee meetings.

The organisation had recently won a grant to purchase new equipment for the classes which was stored and maintained by volunteers. One of the organisations greatest concerns was the lack of funding for a permanent base or the availability of suitable low-cost or free accommodation. In general the organisation felt that its further development was limited by the lack of a permanent office as communication between members was difficult and group activities therefore became ad hoc.

While members paid a small fee, costs were kept as low as possible to ensure accessibility for all and to enable members to attend as many courses as they wanted.

Current Activities

The organisation ran a number of learner groups on a variety of topics. These included French Conversation, Art Groups, Reading Groups, Walking Groups, Philosophy groups, Welsh classes, poetry groups and a number of others. The groups were tutored/led by the organisation's own members. Groups formed "*subject networks*" of individual members who assisted each other in a particular field of study by using their own personal expertise. For example, a member who was a retired language teacher ran a French conversation group for other members. Some groups were also learner-led with group members taking turn to research a subject and present this information to other members. Individual groups were run democratically with each group deciding what it wanted to learn.

In essence, as the national organisation states, U3A groups are a '*unique educational self-help co-operative*". (www.u3a.co.uk/information 16/05/06)

Educational resources, materials and a large range of media resources on different subjects were provided to local organisations via the Third Age Trust who support the work of individual groups.

In addition to learning groups, Flintshire U3A also organised social events for members and sent representatives to national study days and conferences. The organisation also aimed to work with other regional U3A groups to generate new opportunities.

While many members were attracted to the organisation via 'word of mouth' the organisation had an on-going recruitment drive to attract new members through the group's website, newsletters and advertising in the local press. The organisation also disseminated posters and information via local libraries and small exhibition stands when appropriate. In the past the organisation had given presentations on its work to relevant groups and had also recently received a small grant from the local authorities Older People Strategy towards a new marketing campaign.

Funding

The organisation was predominantly self-supporting. New members paid a £10 membership fee to join and £8 per annum thereafter towards the running of the organisation. Members then paid 25p per meeting to cover that particular group's running costs which were typically things like postage and tea and biscuits.

The organisation had been successful in obtaining a few small grants in recent years to pay for new equipment including books, cards and presentation equipment. In the long-term the organisation wanted to find funding to create

a permanent office base and to pay for the renting of more suitable accommodation.

Staffing

Flintshire U3A was run solely by volunteers with no permanent or part-time staff. The organisation was run by a voluntary committee made up of eight members and a chair who was responsible for the daily running of the organisation, up-dating the website and allocating responsibilities to appropriate people. The organisation also had sixteen co-ordinators who were responsible for running one or more of the individual groups. The co-ordinators were responsible for communicating with the learners, organising the groups' activities and were the avenue of communication between the general members and the committee.

As part of the national U3A organisation, Flintshire U3A was supported by staff working for the Third Age Trust. The trust staff offered administrative and resource support to the local groups. The Trust was run by a National Executive Committee elected by the individual U3A groups.

Target beneficiaries

The organisation predominantly targeted older people over the age of fifty or who had retired but wanted to continue learning. The aim of the organisation was to promote the value of active older citizens in society and provide its members with a friendly and informal environment where members could continue to learn.

The organisation was particularly successful in supporting and drawing in previously isolated older people who lived alone and had no family locally. Through attending the organisation these people were able to develop local support networks.

Impact

Although the organisation did not engage in any formal assessment or qualifications, members were able to develop new skills and improve their knowledge of various subject areas. These skills included artistic skills, language skills and communication skills. Learners appreciated the opportunities to develop new skills and expertise. One learner remarked,

> *"The organisation has helped me explore aspects of myself that I didn't know were there."*

The main impact of the organisation, however, were the social and soft gains it brought for its members. They valued highly the social opportunities that arose from the learning groups and the opportunities to meet new people and make new friends. Learners noted that attending the groups had improved their

social interaction and communication skills and helped them to develop valuable support networks.

> *"The best thing about being a member of Flintshire U3A is meeting people and socialising."*

Learners also noted that attending the groups had increased their self-confidence and helped them not to "fear" learning.

Members who were tutors or group co-ordinators also noted development in their teaching and inter-personal skills. Co-ordinators valued the opportunity to put their expertise to good use and to help other members develop.

Overall, the organisations biggest impact was its creation of a group of older, active, self-supporting, citizens who were able to contribute to their own communities.

Although the organisation did not engage in any formal evaluation of its work, the committee regularly sought feedback from the members. One measure of the organisation's success was its continued growth over recent years and the continued demand for new and different learning groups. Following the continued increase in membership, the organisation also hoped to be able to extend its impact more broadly into the local community by raising awareness of its work.

Appendix 2

Organisations contributing to the field interviews and the focus groups:

National Council-ELWa
Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)
Estyn
Basic Skills Agency
South Riverside Community Development Centre, Cardiff
YMCA College
Workers Education Association
Groundwork
Women's E-village
Caia Park
Arts Connection
Voluntary Action Cardiff
Welsh Cricket Association
Swansea College
Wales TUC
Tairgwaith Centre for LLL and Childcare
Shelter Cymru
Pembrokeshire CVC
Ceredigion CVC
Urdd Gobaith Cymru
Swansea Learning Council
University of Wales Swansea
Careers Wales
Denbighshire CVS
GISDA, Gwynedd
WDAH – Welsh Women's Aid
Mantell Gwynedd
Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs
WEA Coleg Harlech
Community Development Foundation
Sports Leaders UK
Football Association of Wales Trust
BTCV Cymru
Play Wales
SCOPE Sully Training Centre
Valleys Kids