

## THIRD SECTOR SKILLS – REAL HELP NOW

**This document outlines the skills help that is available to employers and learners in the third sector to help you to improve the skills of your workforce or your own skills.**

We know the range of training options can be bewildering. Often, it helps to have advice and guidance from a knowledgeable person, such as a Train to Gain broker or Careers advice staff. However, sometimes it's useful to have all the main details together in one place for quick reference, with signposts telling you where you can get more information, if you're interested. This document gives a brief summary of what skills help is available to help you make good choices about your next steps, whether you are a third sector employer or a learner.

### INTRODUCTION

The third sector plays a unique role in tackling social exclusion and disadvantage in every area of social and economic life. Government recognises and values this important role undertaken by the third sector. We have shown our strong commitment to the third sector by doubling spending since 1997 to a total of £11 billion per year.

The Office of the Third Sector (OTS) was created at the centre of Government in May 2006 in recognition of the increasingly important role the third sector plays in both society and the economy. It leads work across Government to support the environment for a thriving third sector, enabling the sector to campaign for change, deliver public services, promote social enterprise and strengthen communities

Government needs third sector organisations to be as effective and efficient as possible in delivering services to their clients – and of course organisations themselves want this too. To do this well, third sector organisations need to have the right skills.

Having the right skills is important to our well being and success in many aspects of life. As an **organisation**, this means ensuring your **staff** and **volunteers** have the right information, advice and guidance, and learning and training, to do their jobs well. Then everyone wins - the individual, the community, the organisation and the clients. This also fits with what the Government is trying to do more widely. By investing in skills, the Government aims to help everyone fulfil their potential economically and socially, help communities thrive and prosper, and keep the country competitive and creative, particularly in difficult times.

Skills development and the focus of many third sector organisations make a powerful combination - and doubly so for the numerous third sector organisations that deliver learning themselves.

We understand the importance of **volunteers** to third sector organisations and that volunteering skills are vital not just to civil society but also as a route into paid jobs. So everything we talk about in this guide applies equally to them too.

We are working to make training for skills more responsive to what **learners** and **organisations** say they want. And this includes new developments with the third sector in mind. But there is already a range of good opportunities funded by the Government, and this publication will help you make the most of them. Don't wait – start using them now.

## **WHAT'S AVAILABLE FOR THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS?**

### **Train to Gain**

Train to Gain is the main Government-funded programme for organisations looking to develop the skills of their workforce – paid and unpaid. Train to Gain can offer “tailor made training” for third sector organisations. A skills broker working with your organisation can help you identify your skills needs and match those with training opportunities, including some that are free or part-subsidised.

Train to Gain is flexible – the training is designed to suit the organisation and can be delivered on your premises. Skills Brokers are the experts who will work with you to help you get what's best for your organisation, your employees and your volunteers. And remember you can use Train to Gain to train volunteers as well as paid staff.

To find out more about how a Skills Broker or Train to Gain can help you phone: 0800 015 5545 or visit the website at:

[www.traintogain.gov.uk](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk)

### ***Case Study – A Learner***

The case study below shows how the flexible nature of Train to Gain suits both the organisations and individuals' needs. And leads to successful outcomes for all.

Through Train to Gain, a learner, Nina Fletcher from Newhaven in Sussex successfully gained an NVQ level 2 in Swimming Teaching, and now works at the Wave Leisure Organisation's Seahaven Swim and Fitness Centre. Nina trained at the Brighton Swimming Teachers Centre and as she explains, the training met her particular needs:

“I’m thrilled to have qualified as a swimming teacher through the excellent Train to Gain service. It gave me the opportunity to train at my own pace and I have now started to hold my own lessons on a weekly basis, which I am sure, will increase over the coming months.”

Neil Cameron, Centre Manager, Seahaven Swim and Fitness Centre, says: “Train to Gain is great for us as an employer. It allows the staff to work flexibly on developing new skills and qualifications without major disruption to the business by staff being out of the workplace for long periods.”

## **Apprenticeships**

The Third Sector has a vital role to play in encouraging and supporting apprenticeships through employing apprentices and offering work placements for apprentices from other employers.

The new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will deliver an expanded apprenticeship programme and will provide a single point of contact for organisations who want to offer apprenticeships and for prospective apprentices. A new matching service run by NAS will help ensure that vacancies for Apprenticeship are matched to people wanting them and who are suitably qualified.

Third Sector organisations can now submit their own apprenticeship frameworks for funding. Sector Skills Councils will hold a ‘bank’ of qualifications from which organisations can draw from to fit their own apprenticeship framework.

To find out more go to:

[www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

### ***Case Study – How a Third Sector Organisation may benefit***

The following case study, written by Voluntary Action Coventry (VCS), illustrates the benefits an organisation derives from its involvement with the apprenticeship programme.

## **Voluntary Action Coventry and Apprenticeships**

Why does Voluntary Action Coventry employ apprentices?

Firstly, we believe that we can provide an interesting and diverse opportunity for young people in Coventry in that the work of Voluntary Action Coventry is varied but also unique in the City. We also see that as an infrastructure agency we can provide an insight into the potential employment and development opportunities that the voluntary and community sector may offer.

Secondly, as a provider of services to the public the involvement of young people in helping to shape what we do and how we deliver our services ensures that we tailor our work to the needs of young people in Coventry and that we promote our services in the most effective way. As both of our current apprentices are involved in providing information to enquirers about volunteering we find it really helps to have a younger person engaging with other young people to talk about the benefits of volunteering.

In purely financial terms, an Apprenticeship is a low cost staffing solution – especially when coupled with free training provided by the placement agency. When determining the staffing of projects with limited funding the inclusion of an apprentice in the equation has enabled our organisation to deliver more outputs and we believe a better project.

Also in our experience the relationship we have developed with the apprentice placing agency has built a greater understanding with them about our work and of the voluntary and community sector as a whole.

## **Skills Pledge**

The Skills Pledge is an explicit, public undertaking by your organisation to support your employees and volunteers to improve their skills. The main benefits of making the Pledge are:

- it helps you to recruit and retain the best employees and shows that; you are an ‘employer of choice’ and;
- investing in skills brings more quality and greater efficiency to an organisation.

The core Pledge commitment is that your organisation will support all staff in gaining basic skills and a first qualification at GCSE or equivalent level (Level 2). But many organisations choose to go further than that.

Help is at hand for you to deliver your Skills Pledge commitment. Third Sector organisations may access Train to Gain and government support offered. You would be encouraged to use the Investor in People (IIP) framework to evaluate the effectiveness of your investment in skills.

For more information on the Skills Pledge visit:

[www.inourhands.lsc.gov.uk/employersskillspledge](http://www.inourhands.lsc.gov.uk/employersskillspledge)

## **National Skills Academies**

National Skills Academies (NSAs) are employer led education and training organisations that deliver and co-ordinate cutting-edge skills training. Eleven NSAs are operational. These cover:

- Manufacturing;
- Construction;
- Financial Services;
- Food and Drink;
- Nuclear Industries;
- Process;
- Hospitality;
- Creative and Cultural;
- Sports and Active Leisure;
- Retail;
- ProSkills - Materials, Production and Supply.

More are planned for the future with the intention that, eventually, all major sectors will be covered.

Third sector organisations can find out more about how NSAs can help at:

[www.nationalskillsacademy.co.uk](http://www.nationalskillsacademy.co.uk)

### **Unionlearn, the Union Learning Fund and Union Learning Representatives**

Trade unions play an important role in helping individuals fulfil their potential. The Government created the Union Learning Fund (ULF) in 1998 and introduced (in April 2003) a statutory right to time off with pay for Union Learning Reps (ULRs) to undertake training in the workplace.

With the help of the Union Learning Fund, unions and their ULRs have been really successful in helping people back into learning and in establishing learning centres and learning agreements with organisations to tackle both organisational and individual skill needs.

ULRs will deliver training for third sector organisations employees and volunteers at their premises.

For more information on Union Learning and access to the materials, go to:

[www.unionlearn.org.uk](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk)

### **Vocational Qualifications – Accrediting Your Own in House Training**

The Government is reforming the vocational qualifications system to ensure that the qualifications available are those learners and organisations really need for future success and are flexible enough to respond to changing demands. A new Qualifications and Credit framework (QCF) was launched in November 2008 giving people access to small ‘units’ of learning. These carry

‘credits’ that learners can build towards a complete qualification. This means learners can study in ‘bite-sized chunks’ at a pace to suit them and build up their achievements over time.

Employers in the third sector can have their training accredited – provided it meets the high standards of the regulated system. There are options for recognising employer and third sector training to suit organisations of every type and size. For example, some third sector organisations have become awarding organisations in their own right and some third sector employers are working with new or existing awarding organisations to have their bespoke training accredited.

Although some vocational qualifications relate to specific occupations, many others prioritise generic skills and may be of interest to Third sector organisations eg customer service, business administration and management and leadership. Information about formally-accredited vocational qualifications, including those on the QCF, is available at:

[www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/index.aspx](http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/index.aspx)

Information on accrediting your own in-house training can be found at:

[www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_14937.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_14937.aspx)

### **And beyond work-based training?**

Many third sector organisations include learning and development objectives within the job plans of staff and volunteers. The programmes outlined above can help to meet those objectives. But learning and training doesn’t happen only in the workplace. You can help your paid and unpaid staff in other ways. For example. You can encourage them to look for learning and training opportunities themselves, ensure learning and development is embedded in staff objectives and support them while they learn by:

- pointing them in the direction of learning and careers advice;
- allowing them time off for study, assessments or exams;
- helping to cover course fees, or the cost of books or equipment;
- arranging relevant work experience, in your organisation or a partner, so they can practice what they’re learning.

..... and of course, by taking an active interest in their progress and achievements, whatever they’re studying

### **WHAT’S AVAILABLE FOR LEARNERS?**

Learners - volunteers and paid staff - can access the programmes described above through their employer. Here's a bit more information from the learner perspective.

## **Skills for Life**

Skills for Life is the government programme to help individuals improve their reading, writing, language and number skills (literacy and numeracy). It offers free literacy and numeracy courses to Level 2 for adults aged 16+ in England.

For more information go to:

[www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus)

## **Case Study**

### **Quick Reads Campaign proves successful for one Firefighter**

**Bob Dewis** writes about his experience.

If anyone said to you 'I can't read' you might think they were stupid. Well, I'm not, but I have only read one book in my life and that was when I was about 10. It took about three months (*Biggles Flies West*) and since then I haven't bothered to pick up a book as there're normally hundreds of pages long and I know I would give up before the end. Even reading a newspaper or magazine, if it was a long article I would give it a miss choosing the shorter items.

I then found out through the Fire Brigade Union's (FBU) Learning project, that there was a range of books called 'Quick Reads' ideally suited for me, not too long, not too much in depth but with interesting and inspiring stories.

So with much trepidation and not wanting to ask for fear of being embarrassed, I went to Smiths searched out the 'Quick Reads' and bought *Reading My Arse* by Ricky Tomlinson, it was fantastic.

I searched out more 'Quick Reads' but couldn't find any, so in passing I mentioned it to our Regional learning Co-ordinator Paul Fletcher who sent me two more 'Quick Reads' books. *'Centre of The Earth'* by Danny Wallace and *'The Poison in Blood'* by Tom Holland.

I recommend to anyone like myself, if you haven't picked up a book for a while have a go with 'Quick Reads' take up the challenge and believe me you won't look back. I don't expect that I will ever read the works of Shakespeare but it's a lot better than watching TV.

For more information on 'Quick Reads' go to [www.quickreads.org.uk](http://www.quickreads.org.uk) or contact your Regional learning Co-ordinator or workplace Union Learning rep.

## **Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are an excellent way to learn a skill. As employees, apprentices work alongside experienced staff to gain job-specific skills. Apprentices receive training off-the-job as well, usually on a day release basis, with a local training provider such as a college.

There are no set entry requirements for Apprenticeships. You just need to be living in England and not taking part in full-time education.

There are more than 180 career choices available in approximately 80 sectors of industry and commerce, ranging from accountancy to football, engineering to veterinary nursing, business administration to construction. They generally fall into one of two categories:

Apprenticeships', equivalent to GCSE level or 'Advanced Apprenticeships', equivalent to A-levels.

The National Apprenticeship Service will introduce an Apprenticeship 'credit' available through an individual's skills account following the national roll out of Skills Accounts in 2010/11.

To find out more go to:

[www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

### **Case Study**

This case study, provided by Wakefield Nacro, is a snapshot of how an apprentice employed by a voluntary organisation has benefitted from a tailored apprenticeship programme.

### **Wakefield Nacro Positive Futures Sports Project Apprenticeship Scheme**

#### **Wakefield Positive Futures Sports Project Background**

Wakefield Positive Futures Sports Project uses sports as the vehicle to engage young people in positive activities. Once engaged, the project uses the young people's interest as a tool to divert them away from anti-social behaviour or crime. The project links qualifications and accreditation to its work so young people can gain skills to progress in their lives. Local volunteers are also trained to run the activities in the future beyond the projects work.

#### **Tony Heeley**

Tony is a local volunteer who has come from a colourful past. Tony wanted to learn about community work so he could gain a job in that field. Tony comes from a coal mining background and had no experience of community work. Since starting his Apprenticeship, Tony has gained qualifications in a variety of courses including sports leaders and football coaching. Tony is growing in

confidence as an apprentice and has started to lead his own sessions. Full time work in community work is Tony's aim and at present he is currently servicing a trial period as a youth worker for a council run youth club.

## **Adult Advancement and Careers Service**

We are creating a new Adult Advancement and Careers Service in England from August 2010, by merging the national telephone and on-line Careers Advice Service (formerly learndirect advice) and local nextstep careers advice services under a single brand.

Currently this service is available in ten prototype areas in England which can be viewed at the website below. However, until the service is fully operational in August 2010 we would encourage people to use local nextstep and current Careers Advice Service.

To find out more about current Careers Service go to:

[www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk)

When it is fully operational the Adult Advancement and Careers Service England has the potential to help every member of society get on in learning and work. It should be an early port of call for anyone looking to improve their skills or do some learning to get a job or a better job. Advisors will be able to offer a 'skills health check' which will help people:

- think and talk about their own skills and how they want to strengthen them;
- assess their current skills in the context of a possible career change and improving their job prospects;
- think about the skills they need to get into (or back into) the job market;
- find out from careers advisors about the full range of services available and get a referral to wider, specialist advice, if that's what's needed; and
- think about a 'back to work' plan, including identifying the skills they need to find a job.

This service could be particularly important for volunteers who are out of paid work and looking to find some, and for third sector employees who are wishing to improve their current skills

To find out more about Adult Advancement and Careers Service go to:

[www.jagreview.org.uk](http://www.jagreview.org.uk)

## **Skills Accounts**

Skills accounts will be a personalised service which enables individuals to take greater control of their learning and working life, through providing access to personalised information about availability of skills training, funding for courses and any additional financial support available. Skills accounts offer learners the opportunity to print out a voucher which gives an indication of the funding available for the chosen qualification and this can be taken to an accredited provider to trigger funding. Ahead of a national roll out, which is planned for 2010/11, skills accounts are initially being trialled in a number of different regions.

For more information go to:

[www.skillsaccounts.direct.gov.uk](http://www.skillsaccounts.direct.gov.uk)

## **Career Development Loans**

Career Development Loans (CDLs) were introduced in 1988 to help remove financial barriers to vocational learning. They are deferred repayment bank loans run in partnership with three banks - Barclays, The Co-operative and The Royal Bank of Scotland. Over a quarter of a million people have benefited from the loans in the last twenty years.

The aims of the programme are: to increase the amount of vocational learning and encourage more individuals to take responsibility for their own learning. The number of loans available will treble over the next two years from 15,000 to 45,000. The new rebranded Professional and Career Development Loans (PCDLs) will offer more generous terms for the learner. PCDLs will be available for courses from autumn 2009.

Anyone aged 18 or over and who is ordinarily resident in Great Britain and has an unlimited right to remain in the United Kingdom is eligible to apply.

CDLs and PCDLs are available for both employees and volunteers.

For further details on the CDL programme go to:

[www.direct.gov.uk/cdl](http://www.direct.gov.uk/cdl)

## **Unionlearn, the Union Learning Fund and Union Learning Representatives**

See information under the 'What is available to Organisation' section – but for more information as an individual on Union Learning talk to your Trade Union representative and read below how Jayne's life was changed by talking to her Union Learning Representative.

### **Case Study**

## **Changing Lives Through Learning - Jayne's Story**

In June 2006 I was diagnosed with chronic osteoarthritis. After several months off work (as a Catering Manager) I had a meeting with HR and a Unison Officer, who sign-posted me to the Union Learning Representative Co-ordinator as I did not have formal qualifications.

The co-ordinator discussed my learning needs and arranged for me to access English, Maths and ICT training leading to national qualifications at Level 2. The co-ordinator also suggested I could benefit from coming back into the work place in a supernumerary administrative post to gain new and transferable skills.

I was given the opportunity to gain some experience with the Children and Young People's Services administration team to complement my training. This proved to be really helpful and within a short time I was offered a month-long trial as a School Support Assistant and have now been offered a permanent contract.

Thanks to the learning partnership between unions and the Employee Development Section of Human Resources, I have a whole new career ahead of me and am excited about the future. I am using my new Skills for Life qualifications to help the children I work with and have recently supported a young person to return to mainstream education which was extremely satisfying

After years of absence I have now returned to learning and plan to make it for life. I will be discussing my next steps with Union Learning Reps who are literally changing lives through learning.

### **Other ways to Learn.**

Learning doesn't have to be formal. Look for ways to improve your learning through what you are doing at work or as a volunteer. Talk to your employer or volunteer co-ordinator and see what is available that can help you to improve your learning.

**URN 09/1176 - Third sector skills: real help now.**