

Sector Skills

A skills foresight research report
on the paid workforce of the
voluntary and community sector
in Northern Ireland

A NICVA Research Unit report for the
Task Force on Resourcing the Voluntary and
Community Sector

April 2004

Opinions expressed in the report are not necessarily in accordance
with the views of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action

Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	4
1 Introduction	9
1.1 Skills deficiencies - a note on terms used	10
1.2 The voluntary and community sector paid workforce	11
1.3 Remuneration levels in the voluntary and community sector	12
2 Challenges facing the voluntary and community sector	13
3 Recruitment strategies and potential skills shortages	16
3.1 Recruitment	16
3.2 Recruitment difficulties - reasons	18
3.2.1 Few or no applicants	20
3.2.2 Poor quality applicants	20
3.2.3 Poorly skilled applicants	21
3.3 Recruitment difficulties - responses	22
3.4 Recruitment difficulties - impacts	23
3.5 Recruitment difficulties - areas of concern for the future	24
3.6 How attractive is the sector as an employer	27
4 Skills gaps	31
4.1 Why skills gaps occur	32
4.2 Types of skills gaps	33
4.3 Addressing skills gaps	33
5 Training and staff development	36
5.1 Quality standards	38
6 Future skills needs	40
6.1 Policy recommendations	43
7 Sample characteristics	46
7.1 Sample methodology	46
7.2 Sample characteristics	46
8 References	48
 List of tables and figures	
Tables	
1.1: Breakdown of the paid workforce	11
1.2: Average remuneration levels in the voluntary and community sector	12
2.1: Key challenges facing organisations (% of respondents)	13
3.1: Recruitment methods used by voluntary and community organisations (% of respondents)	18
3.2: Why are there too few candidates? % of organisations reporting a reason	20
3.3: Why are candidates poor quality? % of organisations reporting a reason	21
3.4: Why are candidates insufficiently skilled? % of organisations reporting a reason	22
3.5: Organisations' response to hard to fill vacancies (% of organisations)	22
3.6: The impact of hard to fill jobs on voluntary organisations	23
4.1: Reasons why staff lack proficiency	32
4.2: Skills gaps in voluntary organisations (% of respondents answering yes)	33
4.3: Responses to skills gaps	34
4.4: Lack of proficiency in paid staff - the reasons for changing skills needs	34
5.1: Training undertaken by voluntary and community organisations in the last	37

12 months	37
5.2: The perceived organisational benefits of training (%)	38
5.3: Reasons for not undertaking training in the last 12 months (%)	38
5.4: Awareness and uptake of quality standards	46
7.1: Sample strata - Northern Ireland	47
7.2: Respondent organisations by area of operation	47
7.3: Urban and rural organisations	47

Figures

3.1: Organisations with difficulties recruiting new staff (%)	17
3.2: Specific job roles which were difficult to recruit (%)	19
3.3: Why are vacancies hard to fill? % of organisations reporting a reason	24
3.4: Organisations anticipating recruitment difficulties (%)	27
3.5: Is the voluntary and community sector relatively attractive to new entrants?	31
4.1: Level of proficiency - employee based measure	36
5.1: Organisations that have arranged or funded training in the last 12 months (%)	40
6.1: The relative importance of future skills needs - summary analysis	46
7.1: Respondent organisations by income	46

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Over 130 organisations in Northern Ireland took part in this survey. Respondents gave up to three quarters of an hour of their time, for which we are especially grateful. Thanks also to all those who took the trouble to respond to our initial letter regarding participation in the research.

Executive Summary

Increasingly the external environment for voluntary and community organisations is characterised by both uncertainty and complexity. The implications for the sector's primary resource — its workforce — are unclear.

This research attempts to shed some light on the complexities, challenges and opportunities the paid workforce of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland is facing and provides some commentary on potential policy recommendations emanating from this research.

The data presented in this report is based upon a UK wide study (*Future Skills 2003, VSNTO*) which examined key workforce issues facing voluntary organisations in 2003. It builds upon a similar survey, *Skills Matter*, carried out for the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation in 2000. Based on the responses of a stratified, randomly selected telephone survey of 1,000 UK voluntary organisations, this report identifies a number of key trends and issues for discussion in relation to skills gaps and proficiencies in the voluntary and community sector. A total of 138 voluntary and community organisations in Northern Ireland were included in this sample and it is the responses from these organisations which form the basis of this report.

Some of the key findings to emerge from this research are as follows:

- Future priority skills needs identified by respondents relate to management skills such as strategic/business planning, planning and organising and project development and management.
- Many anticipated that future skills needs relate to organisations' recognition that the operating environment for organisations is increasingly uncertain and complex. Respondents therefore argue that skills which enable their organisation to deal with complexity and uncertainty, such as planning and organising, will become more important.
- Respondents identified the lack of core funding and the predominance of funding related to projects as major challenges to their organisation. This is likely to have a significant impact on recruitment issues, skills needs and training and development.

- Just over one out of every four organisations (28%) reported that they had experienced difficulties recruiting new employees over the past twelve months.
- Of the organisations which reported a difficulty with recruiting new employees, just over 80% of organisations cited an insufficient number of applicants as the reason why they were having difficulties.
- The impact of hard to fill vacancies on the day to day operation of many organisations is clear - for almost three quarters of respondents, an inability to meet certain objectives is the most tangible impact of having difficulties recruiting new staff.
- Despite the difficulties that some organisations have claimed they face when recruiting new staff, 59.4% of respondents believe the voluntary and community sector is relatively attractive to new entrants.

Recruitment strategies and potential skills shortages

- Newspaper advertising, particularly local newspapers, is the most widely used approach by organisations when attempting to recruit staff.
- Organisations which have experienced difficulties recruiting new staff found the job roles of professional/technical officer level (35%) and supervisor/care staff (25%) the most problematic to fill.
- Almost half of those organisations with hard to fill jobs cite the poor quality of the candidates as a major reason for recruitment difficulties.
- The analysis shows that strategic/business planning skills (52.6%), planning and organisational skills and managing volunteers (both 42.9%) are the areas where organisations felt that applicants displayed skills deficiencies.

Skills gaps

- Almost nine out of every ten organisations (89.8%) report that 'all' their staff are fully proficient in their roles.
- Where employees do lack the skills they need to undertake their job proficiently, insufficient training and development by the employer is identified by almost four out of ten organisations (39.1%).
- When looking at where the deficiencies arise, planning and organisational skills are cited most widely; 61.4% of organisations related a lack of proficiency to a skills gap in this area.
- Organisations quite clearly view the provision of training as a method by which skills gaps can be addressed. Just over three quarters of all organisations which identified the existence of skills gaps in their organisation have provided additional training.

Training and staff development

- 92% of all voluntary and community organisations taking part in this survey have funded some sort of training over the last twelve months.
- Of the specific types of organisation-wide training undertaken, health and safety (73.2%) and job specific training (68.8%) were the most widespread.
- The benefit to most (86.6%) organisations is the increased proficiency of staff resulting from training.
- Lack of funds is cited most frequently (45.5%), with almost one out of every two organisations using this as a reason why training has not been provided over the past twelve months.

Policy Recommendations

The issues raised by this research have a number of policy implications. These are as follows:

Management

Addressing management skills from project management through to strategic management is a key priority.

Innovative initiatives such as NICVA's Management Development Programme should form the model for future mainstreamed government intervention in relation to providing the skills necessary to produce effective and competent managers. Current bursary schemes operated by the Department for Employment and Learning should be reviewed and assessed in relation to their accessibility and relevance for voluntary and community sector organisations seeking specific management development training.

If contracting and the procurement of public services in the voluntary and community sector are set to increase, government and in particular the Central Procurement Directorate should help develop training and awareness raising programmes which will help augment the skills of managers in the sector in relation to the negotiation and delivery of contracts. Conversely, in order to take advantage of the increased opportunities available (eg, *Futurebuilders* funding) the voluntary and community sector needs to review its position and ensure that future training and development opportunities focus clearly on the service delivery option as a key area for growth and sustainability.

Salary levels

Wage differentials, with respect to voluntary and community sector salaries, are a barrier to recruiting new staff, particularly in the senior management positions. Therefore salary levels need to accurately reflect the level of multi-skills required in order to meet the high demands associated with the delivery of public services. This will need to be acknowledged by funders.

Funding skills development

In an ever increasingly competitive labour market it is clear that voluntary and community sector organisations cannot rely on recruiting staff who are fully proficient in all the skills required to deliver project work. It is therefore important to work with funders to press for allowances for staff development and training to be included in funding awards.

Regulatory burden

Compliance with regulatory requirements is a particular problem for some parts of the sector. The impact in terms of demand for new skills within an organisation has not been fully addressed. Therefore it is suggested that an assessment of the direct and indirect impact of new regulations, specifically in relation to skills deficiencies, would prove to be very useful. A number of organisations point to the burden that changing legislation is having on their organisation and the impact on skills needs that such change produces. Government and its agencies should recognise the compliance costs this is having in terms of skills needs on the sector.

Co-ordination

Northern Ireland does not have a co-ordinating training organisation for the voluntary and community sector such as the VSNTTO (Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation). The voluntary and community sector should work in partnership with government to lobby for an extension in the remit of the VSNTTO or alternatively develop a mechanism by which strategic action and co-ordination of training and skills development can be achieved.

1. Introduction

The current political and economic environment means that it is essential that the voluntary and community sector is able to undertake a sustained and comprehensive look at the current skills base of the sector and analyse and predict the changes and gaps that these external factors will have on the voluntary and community sector workforce. For example, the skills required for partnership working, contract management and managing continuous improvement through the use of quality systems will become of increasing importance. Voluntary and community organisations will also seek to increase their skills in developing other income streams, including earned income, and to address concerns about threats to their independence often associated with increased government funding.

This research aims to provide skills foresight information on the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland to inform the deliberations of the Task Force on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The data presented in this report is based upon a UK wide study (*Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation, Future Skills 2003, VSNT0, 2003*) which examined key workforce issues facing voluntary organisations in 2003. It builds upon a similar survey - *Skills Matter* - carried out for the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation in 2000. Based on the responses of a stratified, randomly selected telephone survey of 1,000 UK voluntary organisations, this report identifies a number of key trends and issues for discussion in relation to skills gaps and proficiencies in the voluntary and community sector.

The analysis of Northern Ireland data from a UK wide survey of 1,000 voluntary and community organisations will focus on the following areas:

- Recruitment strategies and potential skills shortages.
- Skills gaps and voluntary and community organisations' paid staff.
- Training and quality standards.
- Future skills needs.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the analysis of skills related to governance, policy and project development. It is hoped that the analysis of the research will impact on policy and the setting of objectives for enhancing the skills levels within

the voluntary and community sector workforce in Northern Ireland over the next few years.

The analysis will also examine voluntary and community organisations' priority skills needs for the future relating in particular to management skills such as planning and organising, project management and strategic planning. Other skills that will be assessed include team working and partnership working skills, leadership and fundraising skills.

In looking at future skills needs, the changing demands placed upon the voluntary sector are likely to combine with a range of external drivers to influence the skills necessary for the effective management and operation of voluntary organisations. It is therefore the intention of this research to place the Northern Ireland voluntary and community sector into this context and assess what are the external drivers influencing the sector.

1.1 Skills deficiencies - a note on the terms used in this report

This report illustrates the nature, scope and impact of skills deficiencies in the voluntary sector. It uses definitions established by the Department for Education and Skills in successive *Employers' Skills Surveys* in 1999, 2001 and 2002.

So what are skills deficiencies? These can be thought of in two different ways. If an organisation is finding it difficult to recruit new staff, it might be due to demand for applicants with the right skills outstripping the number of people with those skills. These are commonly referred to as *skills shortage* vacancies. In recent years, fundraising has commonly been identified as a skills shortage faced by charities.

The second type of skills deficiency which might occur within an organisation is in the case of a *skills gap*, where some (or all!) of the workforce is deemed to lack a sufficient level of proficiency in an area to achieve the charity's objectives. When *Skills Foresight* was carried out in 2000, a strategic understanding of how IT might drive the business was identified by many charities as a skills gap.

The *Employers' Skills Survey* splits skills gaps into two levels of importance: a narrow skills gap, where all staff are deemed to be less than fully proficient, and a broad skills gap, where not all employees are fully proficient.

1.2 The voluntary and community sector paid workforce

This section briefly summarises existing data on the size and scope of the Northern Ireland voluntary and community sector paid workforce. Estimates of the size and characteristics of the workforce are derived from *State of the Sector III* (NICVA, 2002) and the *NICVA Salary Survey 2001* (NICVA, 2001).

The latest estimates are that 29,168 people were employed in the voluntary and community sector (4.5% of the Northern Ireland workforce) in 2000/01.

When compared to other industries, it is evident from these figures that the voluntary and community sector remains a significant employer in Northern Ireland. The hospitality sector employs 38,489 and construction 34,440. The voluntary and community sector however employs more than agriculture (14,620), transport (26,800), the financial sector (15,910) and local government (10,351) (DETI, 2002).

Table 1.1: Breakdown of the paid workforce

Paid	Full-time	%	Part-time	%
Males	5,180	17.7	2,908	9.9
Females	10,912	37.6	10,168	34.8
Overall	29,168			

These figures represent a 13.6% increase in the size of the paid workforce since 1996/97. However this increase can mostly be attributed to the increase in part-time jobs for both males and females, which have increased by 25.5% since 1996/97, whereas the overall figure for paid full-time staff compared to 1996/97 has only increased by 3.9%.

In terms of overall gender composition, the sector is dominated by females, making up 72.4% of the sector's workforce, but, as was shown in the *NICVA Salary Survey 2001*, only one in three of the top level jobs in the sector is held by a female (NICVA, 2001). 44.8% of the sector's workforce is made up of part-time posts, defined as less than 16 hours a week. The part-time workforce is, in fact, dominated by females who account for 77.7% (this figure was 82% in 1996/97) of all part-time workers in the voluntary and community sector. This is consistent with patterns in the overall Northern Ireland workforce where females account for 74.2% of all part-time workers (DETI, 2002).

1.3 Remuneration levels in the voluntary and community sector

Data taken from the *NICVA Salary Survey 2001* (NICVA, 2001) provides an overview of basic remuneration levels within the sector based on job levels. It must be noted that this data is presented to give a basic view of the economic contribution the sector makes in terms of wages and salaries.

Table 1.2: Average remuneration levels in the voluntary and community sector

Voluntary sector		Private sector	
Job level	Mean	Job Level	Mean
Director	£28,860	Top Management	£59,418
Deputy Director	£23,272	General Management	£46,269
Functional Manager	£19,684	Head of Function	£32,574
Technical/Specialist	£16,096	Middle Management	£18,895
Clerical/Supervisor	£13,394	Junior Management	£14,832
PA/Secretarial	£12,671	Senior Office Staff	£12,061
Clerical/Catering	£9,264	Junior Office Staff	£9,896

Source: NICVA Salary Survey 2001

The table above gives some insight into the average salaries of workers in the voluntary and community sector. From the voluntary and community sector perspective one of the most notable aspects of these findings is the relatively small range that exists between the average salaries of different job levels.

However, when the findings for the voluntary and community sector are compared with private sector remuneration levels in Northern Ireland, there are some very stark differences.

Differentials are particularly apparent at more senior levels, where Chief Executives/Directors in the voluntary and community sector in 2001 earned 48% of the private sector equivalent. Clearly at the higher level within the sector relatively uncompetitive remuneration structures are going to have an effect on an organisation's ability to attract the best candidate.

The following sections will examine the primary data from this research in order to ascertain the source of recruitment difficulties, where the skills shortages are and what the future skills needs for the sector are likely to be.

2. Challenges facing the voluntary and community sector

In order to provide an overall context to this research and the secondary data analysis presented above, respondents were asked to state what they felt the major challenges facing their organisation were going to be over the coming twelve months (the survey was conducted between December 2002 and January 2003).

This was deemed to be an important question as the external environment for voluntary and community organisations in Northern Ireland can be characterised by a sense of uncertainty, increasing complexity and increased competition for funding. The implications for the sector's primary resource — its workforce — are unclear but a number of issues are starting to emerge.

Table 2.1 illustrates where organisations in Northern Ireland believe such challenges are going to emanate from and also provides a direct comparison with the findings from the overall UK study.

Table 2.1: Key challenges facing organisations (% of respondents)

Issue	NI %	UK %
No core funding	38	1
Other	36	42
Funding increasingly tied to projects	25	27
Performance Measurement/Outcomes/Evaluation	5	2
Collaboration with others (Local Authorities/Housing Authorities)	4	6
Client needs more complex	2	3
Higher client expectation	2	3
Working with government to deliver public services	1	2
Collaboration with other voluntary and community organisations	1	2
Delivering European funded projects	1	1
Competition (other voluntary and community organisations)	1	1
Exploiting new information and communication technologies (ICT)	1	0
Involvement in partnerships committees	0	2

NI Base: 138 (all responses)

UK Base: 1,000 (all responses)

When the results for Northern Ireland are compared to those of the wider UK study, a number of differences in the challenges organisations believe to be of importance are apparent. For instance, in the UK study *'funding increasingly tied to projects'* came out on top with 27% of respondents claiming this to be the major challenge facing their organisation. However, taking the Northern Ireland

results, *'no core funding'* with 38% tops the poll compared to the rest of the UK where only 1% saw this as a major challenge.

Despite this difference in the actual reasons expressed by organisations in Northern Ireland compared to the UK, there is undeniably a strong theme running through both studies, i.e. the uncertainty and constraints placed on organisations by the various types and methods of funding.

As can be seen from Table 2.1 *'other'* challenges represent a significant proportion of organisations' responses. What follows are just some of the more frequently cited challenges by respondents when they were asked to elaborate on what they felt the other pertinent challenges their organisations were going to face.

Community relations/development - some organisations cited the challenges they faced in this area emanating from a lack of *"involvement with community"*, *"trying to get the local people involved"* and *"bad community relationships"*.

Funding/salaries - comments included *"The Peace II funding may have been lost so this is a major problem. The expiry of salaries is also a very critical consideration"* and *"Mainly trying to work out what direction the organisation should go in. A lot that has changed in the sort of courses that we provide on behalf of the government to the public. It is a problem of trying to identify sources of funding from the government."*

An expansion of the remit or size of the organisation - comments included the impact of *"increased membership"* and *"trying to upgrade and offer other services"*.

From the above analysis it is apparent that supply and demand for skills is a product of both internal and external drivers. A key issue for the voluntary and community sector is whether or not skills shortages will be a drag on organisations' ability to operate effectively. The sustainability of resource inputs, particularly given the restrictions associated with core and project based funding, is a key challenge both at organisational and sector levels. Respondents have identified core funding and project based activities as key issues and this is likely

to have a significant impact on recruitment issues, skills needs and training and development.

3. Recruitment strategies and potential skills shortages

Summary

- Just over one out of every four organisations (28%) reported that they have experienced difficulties recruiting over the past twelve months.
- Newspaper advertising, particularly using local newspapers, is the most widely used approach by organisations when attempting to recruit individuals.
- Organisations which have experienced difficulties recruiting new staff found the job roles of professional/technical officer level (35%) and supervisor/care staff (25%) the most problematic to fill.
- Recruitment difficulties arise for organisations because demand outstrips supply.
- The most widely cited reason for hard to fill roles is an insufficient number of applicants, with just over 80% of organisations.
- Almost half of those organisations with hard to fill jobs cite the poor quality of the candidates as a major reason for recruitment difficulties.
- The analysis shows that strategic/business planning skills (52.6%), planning and organisational skills and managing volunteers (both 42.9%) are the areas where organisations felt that applicants displayed skills deficiencies.
- The impact of hard to fill vacancies on the day to day operations of many organisations is clear. For almost three quarters of respondents, an inability to meet certain objectives is the most tangible impact of having difficulties recruiting new staff.
- 59.4% of organisations believe the voluntary and community sector is relatively attractive to new entrants.

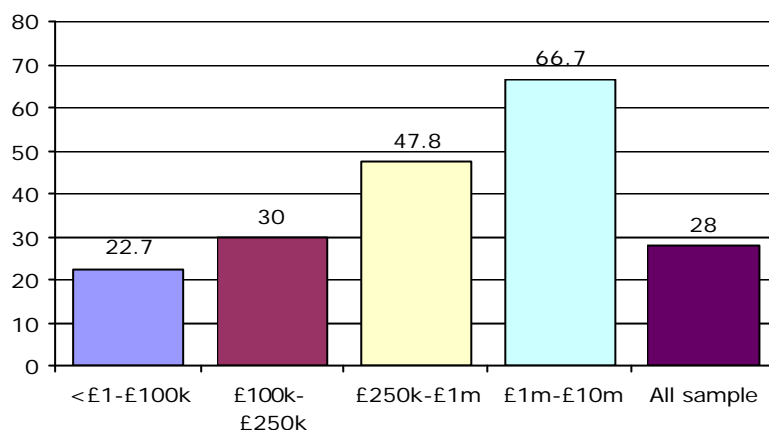
In this section the research aims to examine the challenges the voluntary and community sector faces when attempting to recruit new personnel. While difficulties recruiting paid staff undoubtedly reflect the buoyancy or otherwise of the labour market, they are also indicative of the market for skills. Just under two thirds (63%) of the respondents in Northern Ireland have recruited during the last year. This is considerably lower than the 96% of organisations in the UK wide study which had recruited over the past twelve months.

3.1 Recruitment

Figure 3.1 shows that just over one out of every four organisations in the Northern Ireland sample (28%, compared to 47% in the UK wide study) reported that they have experienced difficulties recruiting over the past twelve months.

Further analysis of the data presented in Figure 3.1 shows that the difficulties associated with recruitment increase with the size of the organisation. Smaller organisations with fewer staff appear to have found the operating in the labour market less problematic.

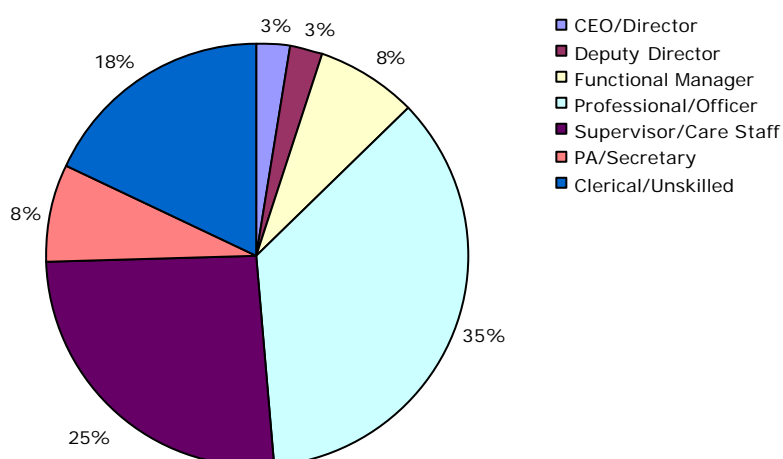
Figure 3.1: Organisations with difficulties recruiting new staff (%)



Base: 105 organisations (33 missing)

Organisations were then asked to identify whether or not they had hard to fill vacancies and which job roles had particular recruitment difficulties. Of those organisations which stated they had difficulties recruiting new staff only 37% gave an indication of the most difficult to fill vacancies.

Figure 3.2: Specific job roles which were difficult to recruit (%)



Base: 39 organisations (those with hard to fill vacancies)

Despite the low response rate to this question, the findings nevertheless give an overview of the types of vacancies which are difficult to fill. Organisations which have experienced difficulties recruiting new staff found the job roles of professional/technical officer level (35%) and supervisor/care staff (25%) the

most problematic to fill. The same is true for organisations in the UK wide study where the recruitment of specialist technical or professional officer level roles is cited most frequently (43% of those experienced recruitment difficulties).

The next set of statistics looks at recruitment methods used by organisations to recruit new staff members (Table 3.1). Newspaper advertising, particularly using local newspapers, is the most widely used approach.

Table 3.1: Recruitment methods used by voluntary and community organisations (% of respondents)

Recruitment method	NI %	UK %
Local newspapers	76.9	71.7
Regional newspapers	54.5	33.4
Private recruitment agencies	28.2	21.1
Internet	23.1	30.5
Other	20.5	24.3
Internal promotion	12.8	10.3
UK national newspapers	10.3	41.8
Trade/specialist journals	10.3	26.0
Word of mouth	10.3	11.8
Ads in shop windows	5.1	2.0

NI Base: 39 organisations (those with hard to fill vacancies)

UK Base: 407 (those with hard to fill vacancies)

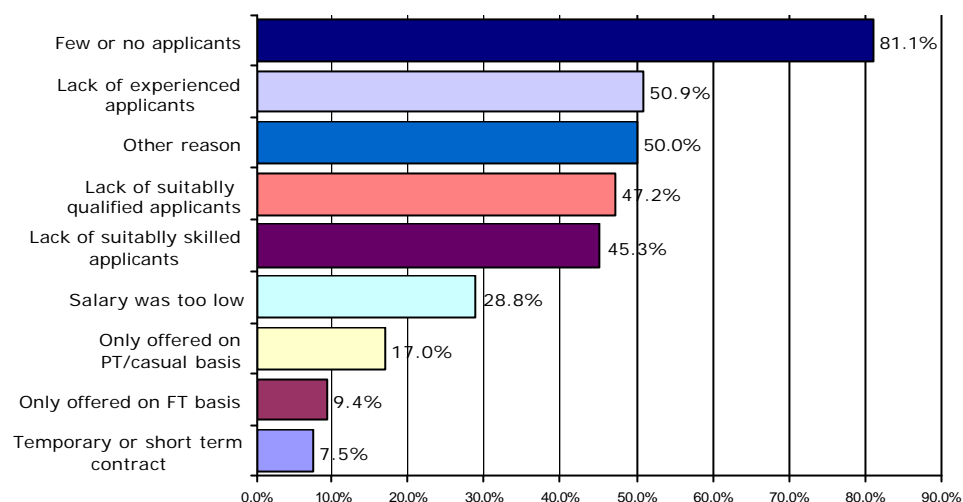
The results shown in Table 3.1, although based on a small Northern Ireland sample, show a similar pattern to the results found in the UK wide survey in so far as *local newspapers* are the most frequently used method to advertise vacancies.

One of the interesting anomalies to emerge between the UK and Northern Ireland statistics is the use of *UK national newspapers*. In the UK study, 41% of respondents used UK national newspapers whilst only 10% of respondent organisations in Northern Ireland used this particular medium to advertise hard to fill vacancies. Although not investigated in the survey this particular difference could act as an indication of how the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland is somewhat insular when attempting to test the labour market.

3.2 Recruitment difficulties - reasons

Organisations were then asked to give reasons why they felt some vacancies were proving problematic to fill.

Figure 3.3: Why are vacancies hard to fill? % of organisations reporting a reason



Base: 39 organisations (those with hard to fill vacancies)

Again, these results are based on a small sample but as an overall view of the types of reasons why organisations feel some vacancies are hard to fill, Figure 3.3 shows, quite dramatically, that recruitment difficulties arise because demand outstrips supply.

Looking at the UK study again there is a great deal of comparability between the two studies where *few or no applicants* (69.3% UK, 81.1% NI) and *lack of experienced applicants* (68.1% UK, 50.9% NI) top the poll in both UK and Northern Ireland studies. In fact, in Northern Ireland eight out of every ten organisations that had experienced hard to fill vacancies cited too few or no applicants as the major reasons for these difficulties.

In the literature skills shortages are said to occur where there is a:

- low number of applicants with required skills
- low number of applicants with required experience
- low number of applicants with required qualifications.

Therefore out of the top five reasons cited by organisations as causing recruitment difficulties, three relate specifically to skills shortages, with each of the three reasons affecting one out of every two organisations.

Other reasons cited for experiencing recruitment difficulties include:

- location
- nature of the job
- lack of skills/experience
- organisational factors
- competition within the sector and with the public sector

While external factors are obviously an important reason for recruitment difficulties, just over one in four organisations cited an important internal reason - the remuneration package on offer is not deemed to be sufficiently competitive.

The following sections explore three of these reasons for recruitment difficulty in more detail.

3.2.1 Few or no applicants

Just over 80% of organisations cited the reason for hard to fill roles is an insufficient number of applicants. The range of reasons is broad and this has produced a large 'other' category. As a result, there is no consensus on the reason for insufficient applicants.

Table 3.2: Why are there too few candidates? % of organisations reporting a reason

Reason	NI %	UK %
Other	54.4	36.8
Geographic location of the organisation	27.1	15.7
People not interested in type of job	25.0	28.0
Unattractive terms and conditions	23.4	13.4
Low number of job seekers generally	21.7	17.2
Low wages compared to other sectors	19.6	25.3
Long/unsociable hours	19.6	5.0
Competition from other employers/sectors	7.0	1.5
Impact of the benefits trap	7.0	0.8
Lack of career progression/poor prospects	0	3.1
Lack of public transport provision	0	1.5
Competition from employers outside nation	0	1.5

NI Base: 33 organisations (those reporting insufficient candidates)

UK Base: 261 organisations (those reporting insufficient candidates)

3.2.2 Poor quality applicants

Almost half of those organisations with hard to fill jobs cite the poor quality of the candidates. This particular issue is further explored in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Why are candidates poor quality? % of organisations reporting a reason

Reason	NI %	UK %
Lack skills	90.5	87.7
Lack qualifications	82.1	64.4
Lack work experience	64.0	86.2
Other	31.0	22.2
Poor attitudes/motivation/personality	25.9	19.5

NI Base: 21 organisations (those reporting poorly qualified candidates)

UK Base: 261 organisations (those reporting poorly qualified candidates)

A lack of skills is highlighted by almost nine out of every ten organisations, while qualification levels are cited by just over three quarters of respondents.

3.2.3 Poorly skilled applicants

Where organisations identified a lack of suitably skilled applicants as a reason for hard to fill vacancies, they were asked to specify the nature of those skills deficiencies. These are illustrated in Table 3.4. They have been split into two categories - a lack of skills that are related to organisational management and leadership and a lack of skills that are required more generally.

As in previous sections the response rate for the Northern Ireland sample is small and any inferences that are made based on these results must be done so in the knowledge they are not statistically robust but do however give a flavour of the situation in Northern Ireland.

Table 3.4: Why are candidates insufficiently skilled? % of organisations reporting a reason

Skill type - organisation-wide	%	Skill type - management	%
Problem solving skills	44.8	Planning and organising	42.9
Customer handling skills	61.3	Project development	30.8
Team working skills	42.9	Strategic/business planning skills	52.6
Written communication skills	55.2	Leadership skills	40.0
Oral communication skills	33.3	Strategic use of ICT	39.1
Other technical and practical skills	27.8	Partnership skills	15.4
Basic computer literacy/using ICT	19.0	Managing volunteers	42.9
Campaigning/lobbying skills	36.4	Skills to deliver/negotiate contracts	18.2
Literacy skills	25.0	Developing social enterprises	33.3
Using numbers	10.5		
Language skills (non-English speakers)	14.3		
Other	46.7		

Base: 19 organisations (those reporting poorly skilled candidates)

The analysis clearly shows that strategic/business planning skills (52.6%), planning and organisational skills and managing volunteers (both 42.9%) are the areas where respondents felt that applicants displayed skills deficiencies.

3.3 Recruitment difficulties - responses

Table 3.5: Organisations' response to hard to fill vacancies (% of organisations)

Response	NI %	UK %
None	34.4	18.9
Changed recruitment practices	29.3	25.8
Changed job specification	28.8	17.2
Increased financial incentives	16.1	15.0
Used more recruitment channels	11.1	13.3
Enhanced terms and conditions	11.1	5.4
Considered a wider range of applicants	11.1	4.4
Changed job specification (reduced tasks)	7.5	5.4
Hired part-time or contract staff	5.8	3.2
Training activity	3.8	10.1
Greater expenditure on recruitment methods	3.8	5.2
Built links with schools/further and higher education colleges	3.8	2.5
Trained up less well qualified recruits	0	3.4
Retrain existing staff	0	1.2
Used volunteers instead	0	0.7
Other	47.7	26.3

NI Base: 39 organisations (those with hard to fill vacancies)
 UK Base: 407 organisations (those with hard to fill vacancies)

The previous sections have highlighted the various recruitment difficulties organisations have faced. Table 3.5 highlights the wide range of responses to what can be both a difficult and expensive issue.

Worryingly the most common response to hard-to-fill vacancies is to do nothing (34% of organisations, compared to only 18.9% in the UK wide survey). This is followed by organisations attempting to address the problem by changing recruitment practices. This solution adopted by just over one in four organisations (29%) reflects the impact of externally driven factors which affect recruitment in the sector. Other strategies designed to tackle external factors such as changing the job specification (28.8%), increasing financial incentives (16.1%) and enhanced terms and conditions (11.1%) are also prevalent. Although these strategies are designed to make vacancies more attractive, it is fair to say that such methods are not always an option for most voluntary and community

organisations. Other methods which organisations cited they employed to address hard to fill vacancies included:

Wider publication through local business and expanding pool of potential applicants: *“Tried to create more awareness of position through local businesses”, “Attended career fairs”.*

Changed working hours: *“Altered from full time to part time and flexible hours”.*

Secondment and training up existing staff: *“Opened up to secondment”, “This vacancy is still ongoing but we will now train people to fit the position”.*

3.4 Recruitment difficulties - impact

The next set of statistics aim to demonstrate the impact on the day-to-day operations of organisations which have experienced recruitment difficulties.

Table 3.6: The impact of hard to fill jobs on voluntary organisations

Impact	NI %	UK %
Difficulties meeting certain objectives	73.8	65.1
Delays in developing new services or projects	67.5	61.7
Increased operating/running costs	64.4	39.8
Difficulties meeting quality standards	54.2	37.8
Other	37.1	21.9
Difficulties raising funds or generating new income sources	33.3	32.2
Difficulties working in partnership	33.3	26.8
Difficulties introducing new working practices	32.3	27.5
Difficulties introducing technological change	24.1	14.5
Difficulties recruiting volunteers	22.4	15.5
To withdraw from offering certain products or services altogether	17.0	17.4

NI Base: 39 organisations (those with hard to fill vacancies)
 UK Base: 407 organisations (those with hard to fill vacancies)

The impact of hard to fill vacancies on the day to day operation of many organisations is clear - for almost three quarters of respondents, an inability to *meet certain objectives* is the most tangible impact of having difficulties recruiting new staff. This particular effect is felt more strongly in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK and may be attributable to the fact that just over a third of

organisations in Northern Ireland respond to hard to fill vacancies by doing nothing.

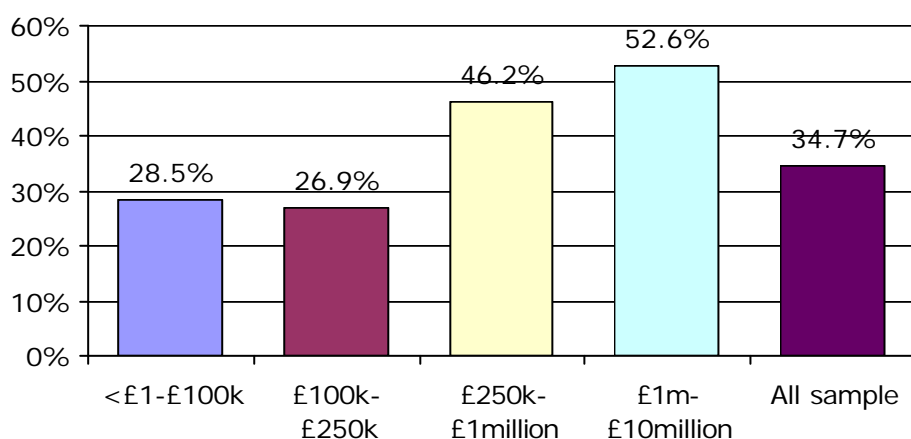
The majority of difficulties experienced by an organisation when a vacancy has been hard to fill are characterised by organisational inertia and an inability to meet specific objectives. Given the project-orientated nature of funding, it is perhaps unsurprising that this is likely to have a significant impact on the core work of organisations.

It is also apparent from Table 3.6 that an inability to fill job roles is having a financial impact on organisations beyond additional recruitment costs. Almost two thirds of organisations have experienced a financial impact in the form of increased operating/running costs, while 33% noted that this limited their ability to generate new funds.

3.5 Recruitment difficulties - areas of concern for the future

One out of every three organisations (34.7%) anticipates recruitment difficulties in the next two to three years. Organisations in the £1 million to £10 million income bracket were most likely to be pessimistic, with a greater proportion of small organisations showing optimism.

Figure 3.4: Organisations anticipating recruitment difficulties (%)



Base: 138 (all responses)

A number of reasons have been put forward to explain why organisations believe recruitment will continue to be difficult. The concerns relate to the following specific areas:

Lack of funding - comments included *"Recruitment will depend on funding", "Due to funding issues the desirable posts are not filled", "Maybe due to short-term funding", "We have a problem that in less than two years the posts need to be renewed and the challenge is securing the funding to do this", "Funding ceases in two years time"*.

Past experiences - in this instance some of the comments included *"We would expect to recruit another two project managers, given the experience we have had recruiting for this in the past I wouldn't expect it to get any easier" and "Because these posts are notoriously hard to fill"*.

Difficulties in recruiting certain staff with the appropriate skills/experience - *"Continued problems recruiting nurses", "People don't have the skills we need — qualifications, people skills and flexibility in working are all areas that applicants are lacking in. The applicants are not prepared to take any further training to improve their skills", "Within the residential live-in posts", "Lack of people with skills for financial and human resources roles"*.

Inability to offer competitive terms and conditions of employment - *"I anticipate problems with recruiting staff for the core services due to being unable to offer a competitive salary", "Salary offered too low. Terms and conditions not as attractive as other sectors", "We have difficulty recruiting staff that require specialist skills. There are shortages in the pool of people who are suitable for these positions. We are unable to attract a large amount of people due to us being unable to offer competitive terms and conditions", "Being able to afford and pay fairly and competitively for the staff needed is a problem", "Unable to review salary scales, concern over sustainability, hard to attract people to voluntary sector"*.

Difficulty in recruiting volunteers - *"Recently acquired some premises to turn into cross community programme but we need staff and it is hard to get volunteers because there is no salary to offer.", "Hard to get community involvement, always the same people involved hard to get new people involved", "The funding is a major worry and the availability of volunteers with people working weekends and shifts"*.

Working hours - *"Lack of people interested in part time work", "Need to recruit but it will be only on a part-time basis. Flexibility is the key particularly in terms of hours".*

Locality - *"Mainly cause of locality", "Area that we are developing into - difficult location unless they have own transport".*

However, a number of organisations are optimistic about the future recruitment of individuals. The reasons for such optimism relate to the following specific areas:

Labour supply - *"I know there is an abundance of youth workers in our area who would help us meet our recruitment needs", "Work with other groups where there is a lot of training, so potential workforce", "Because our volunteers could take up any future positions and there is a good skills base locally", "Always people willing and available to do the work", "Available workforce in area", "There are enough skilled people in the area", "Plenty of suitable candidates out there if recruitment is done correctly", "More skilled workers available", "Lots of people have been laid off", "Lot of people doing similar work".*

Didn't experience problems in the past - *"Going on past experience there has never been a problem", "We are a small organisation and we have never experienced any problems in the past", "Usually get lots of applicants, no reason to suggest that will change", "There have always been loads of people for positions in the past".*

Low staff turnover - *"Have good workforce don't anticipate anyone leaving", "Small organisation not a lot of turnover never experienced any problems in the past", "Low staff turnover. It's never been a problem", "Not high turn over of staff... in house training".*

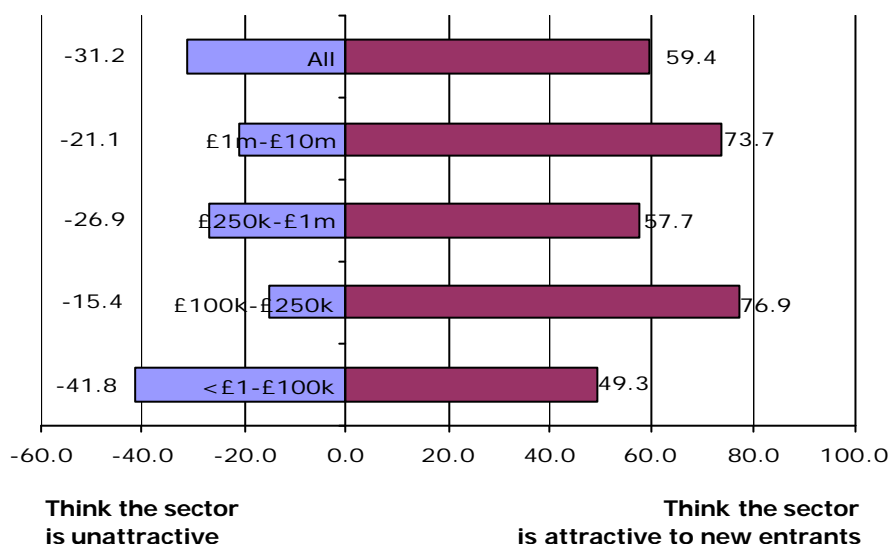
Adequate levels of funding: *"Anticipate to have lottery funding for positions and therefore we will be able to offer competitive salaries with flexible working conditions", "So long as get funding will be OK", "If get funding will be able to offer competitive salary".*

Internal recruitment/training procedures - *"We can recruit internally", "Use a lot of internal recruitment - have never had any major problems", "We take anybody in and give them full training, after that we monitor them and keep them on depending on the skills they have developed".*

3.6 How attractive is the sector as an employer?

An indicator of future recruitment difficulties might be gained from an assessment of the attraction, relative to other sectors, of the voluntary and community sector for first time job seekers. Figure 3.5 illustrates the views of the respondents.

Figure 3.5: Is the voluntary and community sector relatively attractive to new entrants?



Base: 125 (excludes 'unsure' responses)

If those answering unsure are excluded, 59.4% of respondents think that the sector is an attractive destination for newcomers. Respondents were asked why they felt the sector was an attractive option for new entrants. The comments included such themes as:

To gain good experience/good grounding - *"Can be used as a stepping stone for furthering career", "See it as a good way of gaining experience", "The perception of gaining good grounded experience", "It's a good stepping stone and good grounding", "Good experience and character building", "People like to work in the sector to get experience".*

Job satisfaction - *"Joy of job is better than money - job satisfaction", "Wages don't match other sectors but the work is more satisfying", "Offers people chance to work in innovative ways, provides a lot of satisfaction and experience, not as dependable", "Challenge in voluntary sector - work in public sector becomes boring!! Have to go out and fight for what you get - makes you feel you have achieved something - job satisfaction", "Fulfilling something else within the person", "High job satisfaction - putting something back wider scope."*

The overall working environment - *"Salary is getting better, working environment is better than public or private sectors", "Career advancement not as good but friendly and people orientated sector", "Superb support and money spent on training. No limitations and no expectations placed on them, confidence building, welcoming environment", "Flexible working environment and way to gain skills but not secure", "There is more flexible approach with in this sector however there is better security with in the public sector", "It is informal but professional, provides a good network of support, the terms and conditions are flexible and supportive. It encourages people to use their own initiative and creativity", "Good spirit everyone working together", "Sense of community within employees, poor pay".*

Good causes/ethos of organisation - *"People believe in organisation and ethos of organisation", "Ethics and morals of the community and voluntary sector are admirable", "Working within the community sector is a worthwhile cause".*

Flexibility - *"There is more flexible approach within this sector however there is better security within the public sector", "The voluntary sector can be a lot more flexible", "There is good flexibility and the promotion of using one's initiative is good in the voluntary sector, but it lacks the security and routine of the public or private sector", "It's interesting and flexible and is very broad in terms of the experience you can gain".*

Sector becoming more professional - *"Most childcare organisations work on a voluntary basis, in our case the salary and conditions are quite good. I also feel that the voluntary sector tends to be more professional and focuses more on quality", "It [the sector] is informal but professional,*

provides a good network of support, the terms and conditions are flexible and supportive. It [the sector] encourages people to use their own initiative and creativity", "Come out with professional organisation".

Variety/innovation - *"Offers a lot of variety, less red tape, insecurity of voluntary sector", "Offers people chance to work in innovative ways, provides a lot of satisfaction and experience, not as dependable".*

In contrast, the reasons for the relative unattractiveness of the sector centre on issues concerning pay and conditions rather than the more esoteric reasons cited for the sector's relative attractiveness. Some of the themes raised by respondents include:

Lack of job security - *"Uncertainty as to the future, also salary doesn't compare favourably with other sectors", "The voluntary sector is unlikely to be able to offer permanent pensionable posts", "Lack of stability and poor wage rates", "Little security", "Doesn't offer job security, is a sector with a low profile and is a difficult work to be involved with need life experience to be able to cope", "Lack of job security and lack of terms and conditions and pay compared to the private/public sector", "Because of short-term contracts, poorer terms and conditions, no pension, no job security and no promotion prospects", "Lack of job security relating to funding".*

Lower wages - *"Lower wage rates", "Uncertainty as to the future, also salary doesn't compare favourably with other sectors", "Unsociable hours and salary too low", "Low wages and bad conditions", "Bad image, particularly in terms of pay", "Poor terms and conditions of employment.", "Low wages and bad conditions", "Public sector can offer better terms and conditions", "Because of short term contracts, poorer terms and conditions, no pension, no job security and no promotion prospects".*

Short term contracts - *"Because of fixed term contracts and insecurity of funding", "Because of short term contracts, poorer terms and conditions, no pension, no job security and no promotion prospects", "No permanence about the jobs, too many fixed term contracts".*

4. Skills gaps

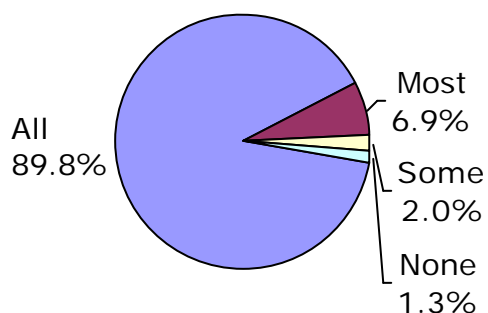
Summary

- An average of almost nine out of ten organisations (89.8%) report that *'all'* their staff are fully proficient in their roles.
- Where employees do lack the skills they need to undertake their job proficiently, insufficient training and development by the employer is identified by almost four out of ten organisations (39.1%).
- Where the deficiencies arise, planning and organisational skills are cited most widely; 61.4% of organisations related a lack of proficiency to a skills gap in this area.
- Organisations quite clearly view the provision of training as a method by which skills gaps can be addressed. Just over three quarters of all organisations which identified the existence of skills gaps in their organisation have provided additional training.

As mentioned previously, a second type of skills deficiency, skills gaps, are an internal issue. Skills gaps occur when staff working in an organisation lack appropriate skills to undertake their role competently. It is important to note that skills gaps do not necessarily indicate a failing in the organisation; it is possible that they are indicative of an expanding organisation.

Organisations were asked to rate the proficiency of those working for them, ranging from *'all are proficient'* through to *'none are proficient'*. Proficiency is, of course, subjective but it is generally taken to mean an ability to do a job at the required level.

Figure 4.1: Level of proficiency - employee based measure



Although recruitment is obviously a problem for many organisations, managers appear to be happier with the skills levels of staff already working within their organisations. This is shown in Figure 4.1, which uses an establishment-based measure (in other words the number of organisations affected by skills gaps). An

average of almost nine out of ten organisations (89.8) report that 'all' their staff are fully proficient in their roles.

4.1 Why skills gaps occur

Table 4.1 shows how the interviewee rates the proficiency of staff working in their organisation against different job levels. Of course this type of analysis is subjective and open to personal bias and interpretation but it does however give an insight into the relative perceived strengths and weaknesses of staff in relation to their skills base.

Only one in ten respondents does not think that all their staff are fully proficient (10.2%). Most of this group are reporting that '*most*' of their staff are fully proficient at their job, with a handful reporting only '*some*' or '*none*' of their staff are proficient.

Table 4.1: Reasons why staff lack proficiency

Job category	NI %	UK %
Insufficient training and development for staff	39.1	40.8
People not been in the job long enough	37.0	28.8
Workforce find it difficult to keep up with change	32.6	26.6
Training programmes only partially completed	32.6	23.5
Other (please specify)	19.6	19.7
Recruitment problems	17.4	15.8
High staff turnover	10.9	7.7
None of these	6.5	5.8

NI Base: 23 (respondents claiming lack of staff proficiency)
 UK Base: 417 (respondents claiming lack of staff proficiency)

Organisations that identified skills gaps were then asked further questions about the causes and characteristics of skills gaps. Because of the low level of respondents which reported skills deficiencies within their organisations, the responses to this question are quite low which means any percentages should be interpreted with care.

The reasons for staff lacking full proficiency in their posts are shown in Table 4.3. Where employees do lack the skills they need to undertake their job proficiently, insufficient training and development by the employer is identified by almost four out of ten organisations (39.1%). More worryingly is that one out of every three organisations are finding that staff fail to complete training courses.

4.2 Types of skills gaps

For staff not fully proficient in their job, respondents were asked to identify what type of skills require development. Table 4.2 shows the list of skills that respondents were asked to rate in relation to their staff.

Table 4.2: Skills gaps in voluntary organisations (% of respondents answering yes)

Skill type - organisation-wide	%	Skill type - management	%
Problem solving skills	50.0	Planning and organising	61.4
Customer handling skills	38.6	Project development	59.1
Team-working skills	59.1	Strategic/business planning skills	47.6
Written communication skills	38.6	Leadership skills	34.1
Oral communication skills	37.2	Strategic use of ICT	48.8
Other technical and practical skills	23.3	Partnership skills	28.6
Basic computer literacy / using IT	28.6	Managing volunteers	36.6
Campaigning/lobbying skills	32.5	Skills to deliver/negotiate contracts	35.0
Literacy skills	20.5	Developing social enterprises	33.3
Using numbers	16.7		
Language skills (non-English speakers)	14.3		
Other	14.0		

Base: 23 organisations (reasons for lack of proficiency)

When looking at where the deficiencies arise, planning and organisational skills are cited most widely; 61.4% of organisations related a lack of proficiency to a skills gap in this area. Similarly, a further 59.1% and 47.6% cite project development and strategic/business planning skills respectively as areas in which staff are not fully proficient. Because of the low response rate to this question, any percentages should be interpreted with care.

What might be termed more basic skills are also cited widely. Team-working skills (59.1%) and problem solving skills (50.0%) feature frequently.

4.3 Addressing skills gaps

The persistence of skills gaps is obviously a cause for concern. Respondents were therefore questioned about their own organisation's responses to their internal skills gaps. Table 4.3 illustrates how organisations have gone about addressing these gaps.

Table 4.3: Responses to skills gaps

	NI %	UK %
Providing further training	78.3	75.1
Changing working practices	54.3	41.5
Redeploying work within the organisation	54.3	36.9
Increased/expanded trainee programmes	28.3	25.2
Increased recruitment	17.4	16.5
Expanded recruitment channels	17.4	13.4
Recruited from overseas	8.7	4.6
No particular action being taken	6.5	9.6
Other	6.5	7.7

NI Base: 23 organisations (reasons for lack of proficiency)
 UK Base: 417 organisations (reasons for lack of proficiency)

Organisations quite clearly view the provision of training as a method by which skills gaps can be addressed. Just over three quarters of all organisations which identified the existence of skills gaps in their organisation have provided additional training. Other responses are less widespread. For example 54.3% of organisations have changed their working practices or have redeployed work elsewhere within the organisation.

Table 4.4: Lack of proficiency in paid staff - the reasons for changing skills needs

	NI %	UK %
The development of new projects and services	39.1	41.2
The introduction of new technology	34.8	31.2
None of these	34.8	33.6
The introduction of new working practices	28.3	39.6
Increasing emphasis on partnership working and collaboration	17.4	26.6

Base: 23 organisations (reasons for lack of proficiency)
 UK Base: 417 organisations (reasons for lack of proficiency)

Respondents were asked if skills needs within the organisation might be changing due to internal factors, such as a change in the volume of work, etc. From Table 4.4 there are no clear reasons why skills needs within organisations are changing. Such drivers of change are more likely to be sub-sectoral or function-specific and therefore not entirely visible given the low response rates to some of these questions.

The development of new projects and services is undoubtedly a driver for change and can be related to the concern over project working/project-based funding identified in Section 2.

5. Training and staff development

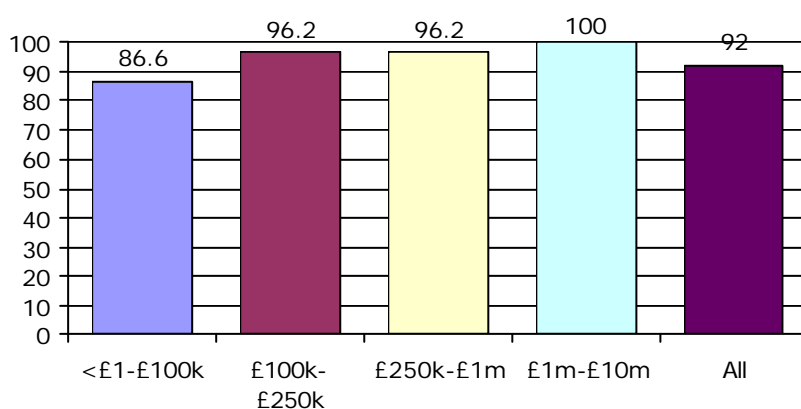
Summary

- Nearly all voluntary and community organisations taking part in this survey fund training, with a small minority (8%) proving to be the exception.
- Of the specific types of organisation wide training undertaken, health and safety (73.2%) and job specific training (68.8%) were the most widespread.
- The benefit to most (86.6%) organisations is the increased proficiency of staff resulting from training.
- Lack of funds is cited most frequently (45.5%), with almost one out of every two organisations using this, as a reason why training has not been provided over the past twelve months.
- In relation to quality standards, PQASSO is the most popular standard (23.6%) in terms of achieved accreditation and those working towards this level.

Nearly all voluntary and community organisations taking part in this survey fund training, with a small minority (8%) proving to be the exception. Even in these cases, it is likely that they have resorted to informal, work based learning and development.

As is shown in Figure 5.1 most organisations undertake job specific training, though this is less widespread amongst the smaller organisations.

Figure 5.1: Organisations that have arranged or funded training in the last 12 months (%)



Base: 138 (all responses)

As mentioned above there is a slight drop-off amongst smaller organisations, where tighter resource levels and the difficulties of releasing staff are more likely to impact on the use of formal training.

Table 5.1: Training undertaken by voluntary and community organisations in the last 12 months

Types of training undertaken	%
Organisation-wide skills	
Health and safety/First aid	73.2
Job specific training	68.8
Induction training	63.8
New technology/ICT	55.8
Diversity/Equal Opportunities	43.5
Other	34.8
Fundraising	34.1
Campaigning/lobbying	15.2
Non-English languages	10.9
None of these	0
Management skills	
Management skills	40.6
Supervisory skills	34.8
Volunteer management	31.2
Strategic development	31.2

Base: 138 (all responses)

Of the specific types of organisation-wide training undertaken, health and safety (73.2%) and job specific training (68.8%) were the most widespread. The second part of Table 5.1 shows the prevalence of management training, with four out of ten organisations providing training in this area.

Table 5.2: The perceived organisational benefits of training (%)

Benefit	%
Staff more proficient at their job	86.6
Staff are more motivated	32.3
Quality standards met	25.2
Other	22.8
Organisational objectives met	15.0
Better recruitment and retention of staff	9.4
New working practices introduced	7.9
Greater success raising or generating funds	6.3
New technologies introduced	5.5
Provision of new services	5.5
Greater success recruiting volunteers	1.6
Decreased operating/running costs	0.8

Base: 138 (all responses)

The obvious benefit to most (though not all) organisations is the increased proficiency of staff resulting from training. In other words, most respondents

believe that staff training successfully addresses a skills gap within their organisation.

Table 5.3: Reasons for not undertaking training in the last 12 months (%)

Reason	%
Lack of funds	45.5
Other	18.2
No appropriate training available	9.1
Staff already fully proficient	9.1
Lack of cover for training	9.1
Training not a priority for the organisation	9.1
No training necessary in the type of work carried out by the organisation	9.1
We don't know what our training needs are	9.1
Don't know of any suitable training providers	9.1
Lack of time for training	0
Staff not keen to participate	0
High staff turnover	0

Base: 11 (organisations not providing training over the last 12 months)

Although nearly all organisations in the sample provided some form of training, there are strong reasons for limiting either the level or range of activities. The arguments for not undertaking any training in the last 12 months are illustrated in Table 5.3.

Lack of funds is cited most frequently, with almost one out of every two organisations using this as a reason why training has not been provided over the past 12 months.

5.1 Quality standards

Commitment to training and staff development is also evidenced by organisations' awareness of and adherence to quality standards, particularly those standards which relate to the human resources of the organisation.

Table 5.4: Awareness and uptake of quality standards

	Aware	Achieved accreditation (A)	Working towards (B)	Total (A+B)
PQASSO	26.1%	13.9%	9.7%	23.6%
Investors in People	87.7%	12.4%	9.5%	21.9%
ISO 9002 or BS5750	55.8%	9.1%	7.4%	16.5%
Occupational Standards	43.5%	5.0%	9.4%	14.4%
Business Excellence Model	49.3%	4.4%	7.9%	12.3%
Social Audit	42.8%	3.4%	0.0%	3.4%
None of these	9.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

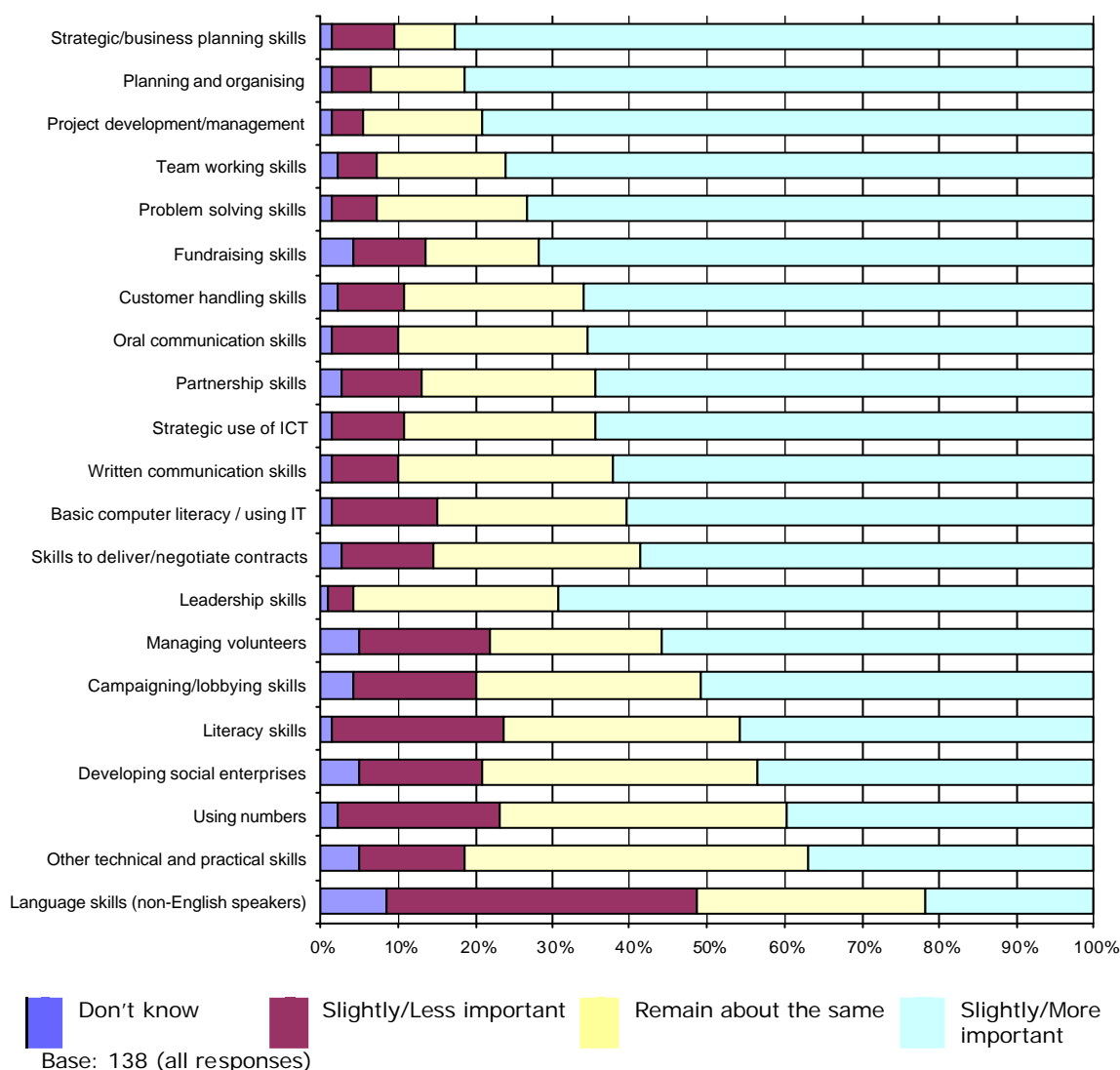
Base: 138 (all responses)

Awareness of Investors in People is almost universal, with just over one in ten organisations having gained this accreditation. However, PQASSO is the most popular standard in terms of achieved accreditation and those working towards this level.

6. Future Skills Needs

The changing demands placed upon voluntary and community organisations are likely to combine with a range of external drivers to influence the skills necessary for the effective management and operation of organisations. The impact of these drivers on the quantity or breadth of skills needs within the sector is difficult to predict with any accuracy. Similarly, it is difficult to say where skills deficiencies will be concentrated in the medium term.

Figure 6.1: The relative importance of future skills needs - summary analysis



As has been consistently shown throughout this report, management skills are the source of current skills gaps and deficiencies in new employees. Figure 6.1 demonstrates this is an area of future concern for organisations with strategic/business planning skills, planning and organisational skills and project

development/management all of which were cited as slightly/more important in relation to future skills needs.

This reflects the ever increasing professionalism expected within the sector due to funder requirements and the greater prevalence of accountability and transparency expected of organisations.

Respondents have additionally identified the skills or competencies that they expect to be more critical to their organisation in the future. A wide range of responses covering both technical and generic issues were given.

- *Managing funds/finances.*
- *Financial planning and analysis.*
- *Marketing skills and financial skills.*
- *Numeric skills are possibly the most important; we feel people are reluctant to take on the responsibility of treasurer.*
- *Need tutors qualified to deliver numeracy and literacy.*
- *More advanced IT skills eg using the advanced ECDL, would be good to see everyone at a similar high standard of IT proficiency.*
- *Mediation and conflict management will be more important.*

Organisations were also asked to provide some insight into future initiatives or developments that may help address the issue of skills gaps both from an organisational and a sectoral perspective. Listed below are some of those comments:

More training - *"There is a need for more appropriate training. More consideration has to be given to the time, place and cost of training for voluntary organisations", "Having a training organisation aimed specifically at the voluntary sector", "Continuous professional development. Provision of specific training and a review of working practices", "Long-term funding for community sector, present situation is very unsatisfactory. Sector is very run down and not operating at full capacity and therefore less effective. More training essential at affordable prices so people can be recruited to replace them while training".*

Funding - *"Resolution of funding — ends the uncertainty, a sustained plan. Recognition from the government of the importance of voluntary*

sector”, “Securing funding to keep us afloat”, “There should be a central agency for funding as there is too much bureaucracy and too many hours are lost hunting for funding rather than providing a service”, “Funding is the main problem. Money is inconsistent. Dependent on European and Peace money - will lead to long-term problems when it runs out”.

The sector as a whole - *“Raise the profile of the voluntary sector and the benefits of working in it”, “Awareness of the ethos of the voluntary sector and the infrastructure as a whole”, “Having a training organisation aimed specifically at the voluntary sector”, “Availability of relevant training within the sector”, “Need for the skills and abilities of the people within the voluntary sector to be recognised on a par with the more commercial and statutory sectors”, “More competitive rates of pay, better PR for the voluntary sector as a whole”, “There needs to be a strategic development of good relations between voluntary organisations, eg Northern Ireland Hospice fiasco. Also thought needs to be given around how to manage change from a divided community to a resource for the area as a whole”, “Networking of information is important. So that the voluntary sector can work better, it is necessary to share information about training and such things so that organisations can achieve their full potential”.*

This brief analysis of future skills needs indicates that such needs cover a broad range of areas. While some of these are job specific, there are many generic skills needs that cut across both functional and sub-sectoral boundaries.

Support roles (administrators, finance, etc) within an organisation are vital to the successful delivery of services. Organisations need to recognise this and ensure that training to develop skills for support staff is not overlooked to the detriment of those actually delivering the services.

The increasing pervasiveness of ICT, whether in voluntary organisations or the wider environment, is obviously still a concern for organisations in terms of their skills needs. Getting to grips with existing technology may be a priority for many organisations. This relates not just to a digital divide in terms of access to technology but also in terms of the skills required to extract the maximum potential from the new technologies.

Uncertainty relating to the future direction of the economy and the concern that funding is increasingly tied to projects is a concern for organisations. However, organisations must become aware that national and international fiscal developments will affect the pool of applicants available to them and as such the voluntary and community sector is at much at risk of the inequities of supply and demand as any other sector.

The analysis indicates that voluntary and community organisations anticipate future skills needs across a broad range of areas. This in part reflects the 'gearing up' of the sector's involvement in service delivery as well as the recognition that the operating environment is increasingly uncertain and complex.

Many anticipated future skills needs relate to organisations' recognition that the operating environment for organisations is increasingly uncertain and complex. Respondents therefore argue that skills which enable their organisation to deal with complexity and uncertainty, such as planning and organising, will become more important.

6.1 Policy Recommendations

The issues raised by this research have a number of policy implications. These are as follows:

Management

Addressing management skills from project management through to strategic management is a key priority.

Innovative initiatives such as NICVA's Management Development Programme should form the model for future mainstreamed government intervention in relation to providing the skills necessary to produce effective and competent managers. Current bursary schemes operated by the Department for Employment and Learning should be reviewed and assessed in relation to their accessibility and relevance for voluntary and community sector organisations seeking specific management development training.

If contracting and the procurement of public services in the voluntary and community sector is set to increase, government and in particular the Central Procurement Directorate should help develop training and awareness raising

programmes which will help augment the skills of managers in the sector in relation to the negotiation and delivery of contracts. Conversely, in order to take advantage of the increased opportunities available (eg, *Futurebuilders* funding) the voluntary and community sector needs to review its position and ensure that future training and development opportunities focus clearly on the service delivery option as a key area for growth and sustainability.

Salary levels

Wage differentials, with respect to voluntary and community sector salaries, are a barrier to recruiting new staff, particularly in the senior management positions. Therefore salary levels need to accurately reflect the level of multi-skills required in order to meet the high demands associated with the delivery of public services. This will need to be acknowledged by funders.

Funding skills development

In an ever increasingly competitive labour market it is clear that voluntary and community sector organisations cannot rely on recruiting staff who are fully proficient in all the skills required to deliver project work. It is therefore important to work with funders to press for allowances for staff development and training to be included in funding awards.

Regulatory burden

Compliance with regulatory requirements is a particular problem for some parts of the sector. The impact in terms of demand for new skills within an organisation has not been fully addressed. Therefore it is suggested that an assessment of the direct and indirect impact of new regulations, specifically in relation to skills deficiencies, would prove to be very useful. A number of organisations point to the burden that changing legislation is having on their organisation and the impact on skills needs that such change produces. Government and its agencies should recognise the compliance costs this is having in terms of skills needs on the sector.

Co-ordination

Northern Ireland does not have a co-ordinating training organisation for the voluntary and community sector such as the Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation (VSNTO). The voluntary and community sector should work in partnership with government to lobby for an extension in the remit of the VSNTO

or alternatively develop a mechanism by which strategic action and co-ordination of training and skills development can be achieved.

7. Sample characteristics

7.1 Sample methodology

This report is based upon a stratified random sample of 138 voluntary and community organisations operating in Northern Ireland. This sample forms part of the 1,000 voluntary and community organisations included in the *Future Skills 2003* report (VSNT0, 2003). NICVA's *SectorNet* database¹ was used to generate the list of organisations which formed this sample.

An initial stratified, random sample of 220 organisations was selected in Northern Ireland. Organisations were contacted by letter to advise them they had been randomly selected for interview. The sample was stratified by income (an indicator of size) and geographic location. Table 7.1 shows the sample matrix for Northern Ireland.

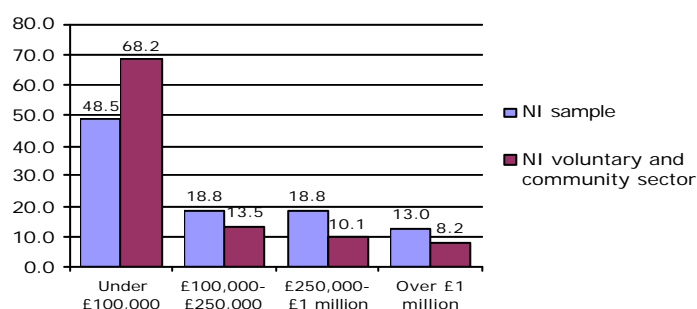
Table 7.1: Sample strata - Northern Ireland

Strata	Sample	Required	Achieved
Up to £100,000	114	67	58.7
£100,000-£250,000	46	26	56.5
£250,000-£1 million	32	26	81.2
£1 million-£10 million	28	19	67.8
£10 million and over	0	0	0
Total	220	138	62.7

Interviews were conducted by telephone in December 2002 and January 2003. Interviews followed initial contact by letter and lasted between 30-45 minutes. Interviews were undertaken using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing software.

7.2 Sample characteristics

Figure 7.1: Respondent organisations by income



Source: NI voluntary and community sector statistics from State of the Sector III, NICVA 2002.

¹ The NICVA *SectorNet* database which contains verified, contact details on approximately 5,000 organisations in the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

Previous research by NICVA demonstrated that almost seven out of every ten organisations have an income of less than £100,000 (NICVA, 2002). However as these organisations account for a relatively small share of total paid employment in the sector, the sampling strategy concentrated on medium and large sized organisations.

Table 7.2: Respondent organisations by area of operation

Area of operation	Number	%
Regional/national (i.e. Northern Ireland)	50	36.2
Local area	41	29.7
Your local authority district or town	35	25.4
County	7	5.7
On a UK wide basis	3	2.7
International	1	0.7
Other	1	0.7
Total	138	100

Table 7.3: Urban and rural organisations

	Number	%
A mainly rural area	35	25.4
A mainly urban area	43	31.2
Both rural and urban	60	43.4
Total	138	100

8. References

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, *Quarterly Employment Survey – September 2001*, Statistics and Research Branch, DETI, 2002.

Hillage, J et al, *Employers Skill Survey 2002*, Department for Education and Skills, 2002.

NICVA, *Salary Survey 2001*, NICVA, 2001.

NICVA, *State of the Sector III*, NICVA, 2002.

Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation, *Skills Matter*, VSNT0, 2000.

Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation, *Future Skills 2003*, VSNT0, 2003.

Web resources

NICVA Management Development Programme:

www.nicva.org/events/training/index.asp

Sector Skills Development Agency:

www.ssda.org.uk

Task Force on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector:

www.taskforcevcsni.gov.uk

Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation:

www.voluntarysectorskills.org.uk