



# The UK Voluntary Sector Skills Survey

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## Executive Summary

This research explores skills gaps and skills shortages in paid employees within the voluntary sector. It was commissioned by the UK Workforce Hub (now Workforce Development at NCVO) to provide information on the skills and workforce development of voluntary sector employees in the UK. This report focuses only on England; separate reports are available for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

### Aims and objectives

The overarching aim of this research is to explore and examine the nature, scope and impact of skills shortages and skills gaps in the paid workforce of the UK voluntary sector.

This research will provide reliable measures at a national level by sector and size of organisation. The analysis covers areas including:

- Employers' experiences of hard to fill vacancies and the reasons for these;
- Employers' views on recruitment over the next three years;
- How many employers have skills gaps in their workforce, the types of functions and skills affected, the causes of these gaps, any actions taken to overcome them, and the impact these deficiencies have; and
- The extent to which organisations have a formal training plan and training budget.

### Key findings

The findings within this report focus on England only. Separate reports are available for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

#### **Recruitment problems are evident across the sector ...**

One-quarter of employers reported hard to fill vacancies within their organisation. For most functions, vacancies were more likely to be identified as hard to fill. Whilst micro and small organisations were less likely than large organisations to have vacancies within their organisation, they were more likely to report those they did have as hard to fill.

#### **...particularly within specialist activity functions**

Employers most frequently identified hard to fill vacancies within youth work, social care and health care. As these functions are not sector specific, it may be that there is a lack of understanding of the sector among potential applicants or that there are issues regarding job security, such as short-term contracts, and the terms and conditions of the post.

#### **Skills shortages lie at the heart of hard to fill vacancies**

Over one-third of employers with hard to fill vacancies reported skills shortage vacancies. In particular, nearly a quarter of employers cited a lack of specialist skills and/or experience in applicants. The sector workforce, however, is well qualified with only 13% of employers reporting a lack of qualifications as a problem.

### **Skills gaps are apparent across the sector...**

Around three in ten employers report under-skilled staff within their organisation. Small organisations are more likely to report skills gaps within their employees. This is likely to be due to the staff having to be multi-skilled to perform a variety of functions.

### **...particularly within specialist skills...**

Employers were most likely to identify under-skilled staff within the functions of marketing and fundraising. Over one-quarter of employers reported skills gaps within strategic use of IT, legal knowledge and fundraising. Within medium sized organisations, gaps in leadership skills were an issue.

### **...with a detrimental impact on the organisation**

An increase in the workload of other employees was the greatest impact of having under skilled staff for organisations of all sizes and across all sector skills council areas. Furthermore, one-quarter of employers, particularly small employers, resort to using volunteers to cover the work.

### **Employers anticipate future skills shortages and skills gaps**

Two-fifths of employers anticipate recruitment of at least one occupation to get more difficult over the next three years. Nearly one-fifth expect recruitment of fundraisers to become more difficult.

Nearly half of employers identified a skills need within their organisation that whilst not apparent now, is likely to be apparent within the next three years. Most frequently these were specialist skills, particularly strategic use of IT, fundraising and legal knowledge.

### **A lack of time and funding for training and development are evident**

Half of employers identified that the skills gaps within their organisation were caused by a lack of time and/or funding for training within their organisation. Micro and small organisations were more likely to report these causes.

### **However, employers acknowledge the importance of training**

Overall, just under three-quarters of employers formally assess whether individuals have gaps in their skills and/or hold a training and development policy. Half of organisations hold a formal annual training plan. Due to the lack of time and funding for training these strategic intentions cannot be fully realised.