



Background

Volunteer Management is a complex role, requiring highly skilled, knowledgeable individuals who are prepared to work flexibly to provide a quality experience for their volunteers. The aim of developing a National Training Strategy for Volunteer Management is to help build the leadership, management and learning capacity of those who manage volunteers.

This report summarises the training needs analysis for Volunteer Managers, carried out by Volunteer Centre Warrington, on behalf of the Volunteering Hub.

Methodology

Information regarding the training needs and preferences of Volunteer Managers was gathered using the following methods:

- Web link to an on-line survey distributed nationally to individual Volunteer Managers via Volunteering England's website and through additional local and regional groups.
- Feedback from members of the Charity Trainers Network, the North East Learning Network and Volunteer Development Scotland.
- Views expressed by individual Volunteer Managers via the web-based e-forums, UKVPMs and CSV IAVM.
- Conversations with various individuals with experience in the field of Volunteer Management as heads of volunteering, independent consultants and trainers.
- Feedback from different individuals and groups from the North East network of Volunteer Centres through the Regional Volunteering Development Officer.
- Regional Volunteer Co-ordinators' meeting with NCH (national organisation).
- Feedback from a range of Volunteer Centres and CVS who provide training and/or one-to-one advice and support for local Volunteer Managers.
- Paper-based questionnaire sent to members of local Volunteer Managers Forum in Warrington.
- Focus group attended by Volunteer Managers in rural Cheshire.

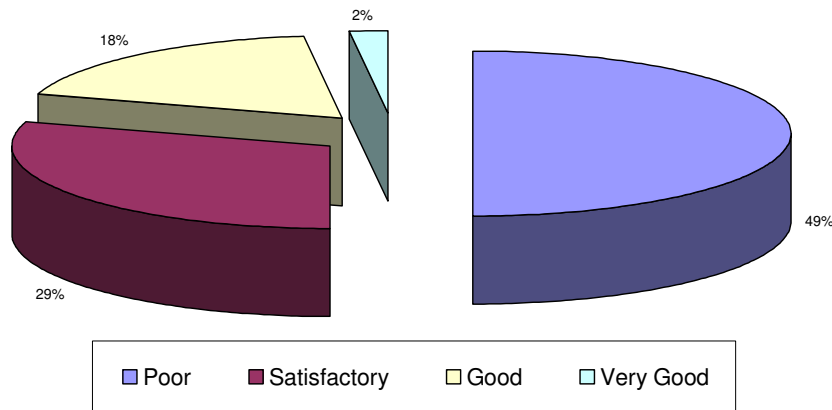
The aim was to consult with a wide range of individuals and groups, and as a result, the feedback provided good geographical and sector coverage.

Results from Volunteer Management Training Needs Questionnaire & On-line Survey

Current situation

1.

Rating existing local training and learning opportunities for volunteer managers



2. Rating existing training and learning opportunities in volunteer management provided by key **national** agencies:

CSV

Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Don't know
29%	40%	18%	-	2%	11%

DSC

Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Don't know
38%	27%	9%	4%	-	22%

VE

Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Don't know
22%	42%	16%	9%	-	11%

NCVO

Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Don't know
25%	40%	11%	-	-	24%

Other

17% named their local or regional volunteer managers' forum (a more informal learning experience), as Good.

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report
May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

Comments and general views:

The comments made can be summarised into the following 3 key themes:

1. The training opportunities provided by national agencies is usually of a good standard, but too expensive. In some cases the quality of the training is not as good as expected and doesn't match up with the promotional information produced.
2. Volunteer Managers are encouraged to attend training that is local and low-cost, however there are limited formal training opportunities in particular areas eg North East, Lincolnshire, South West.
3. Most available training is only covering the basics and is aimed more at those new in post. There is little available for those working in a more strategic or senior role or for the more experienced Volunteer Manager.

3. Training opportunities provided by Volunteer Managers' own organisations:

42% reported that their organisation provided **no training opportunities** relating to managing volunteers.

Of those that did provide opportunities or encourage training, the following activities were stated:

24%	Encouraged to attend any local, free or low cost training
18%	Organisation delivers specific sessions relating to volunteer management, either by in-house trainer or through national body
11%	Specific development eg general management courses
7%	General support from line manager/other staff member
7%	Member of related managers' forum or other group
2%	Linking up with other organisations eg shadowing

Training and learning experiences

4. When asked to describe the **best volunteer management training and learning opportunity** in the last 2 years, the following themes emerged:

- Work-based learning within own organisation or something that relates directly to own role.
- Interactive, focused, condensed training with information to take away.
- Training which focuses on dealing with specific, relevant issues
- Action learning sets and coaching.
- 18% named local and regional forums and conferences, particularly due to networking opportunities with those working in a similar role.
- 16% named training delivered by their local Volunteer Centre or CVS.
- CSV's Institute for Advanced Volunteer Management with speakers from overseas as well as the UK was named by several respondents for being very inspiring, challenging and diverse.

27% gave no response.

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report
May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

5. When asked to describe a training experience that **wasn't enjoyable or beneficial**, the following points were made:

- Poor quality, badly prepared and inexperienced trainer
- Trainers lecturing or unable to bring the subject alive
- Too much information being condensed into too short a time
- Training not directly relating to own situation
- Content not appropriately pitched and not challenging enough

60% gave no response

6. Respondents highlighted the following as being **ingredients of an effective training and learning session**:

91%	Trainer engages group
82%	Sharing experiences
80%	Trainer encourages discussion
80%	Meeting others
80%	Reference materials to take away
76%	Clear learning objectives
69%	Direct relevance to role
56%	Having fun
56%	Working in groups
9%	Lots of presentations

Other suggestions:

Training that suits a range of personal learning styles.

7. When asked, **what motivates you to learn?** Responses can be summarised through the following themes:

i. Quality trainer

An enthusiastic trainer and facilitator who knows their material/subject and who is an excellent communicator. Someone who keeps the session focused and moving and who responds to individual needs, without allowing delegates to 'take over' with their particular issues.

ii. Variety of delivery

A good balance of delegate participation and trainer input, including facilitated discussions and activities. Where delivery is concise, yet flexible using a variety of styles to engage participants.

iii. Working in groups

Being able to support and help each other through sharing experiences. Smaller groups, working to resolve issues. Where delegates are working with others at a similar level with appropriately pitched, relevant material.

iv. Tackling issues

Using role play/scenarios/case studies to deal with 'real life' experiences and issues, not just talking through the theory. Practical activities and discussions that help to challenge participants' views and perceptions.

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report
May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

v. Ongoing learning

Participating in training and learning where the benefits to the individual and the organisation are clear. Where personal learning objectives can be set and met and where there is the possibility of a 'follow-up' from training, such as one-to-one support from the trainer or a mentor.

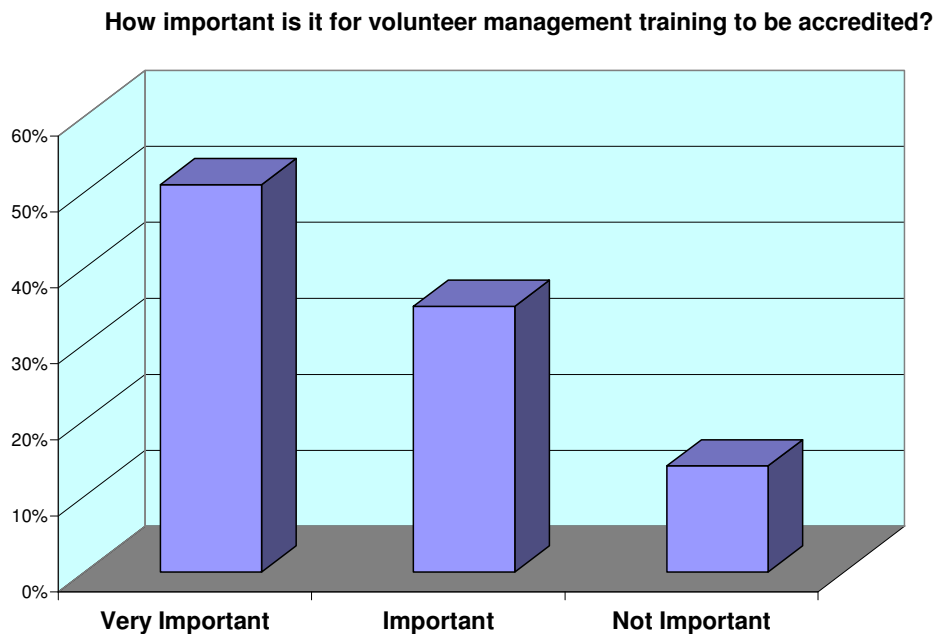
vi. Positive environment

Where participants are encouraged to express their views confidentially and feel comfortable taking part in activities. Delegates feeling empowered to take control of their own learning.

vii. Measurable quality

Content that is relevant, up to date and not just covering the basics. Learning that can be assessed. Opportunity to gain accreditation or where learning contributes to the achievement of an overall qualification.

8. When asked, how important is it for Volunteer Management training to be accredited? 86% responded either Important or Very Important.



9. How often do Volunteer Managers use the Internet to research information to support them in their role?

Regularly	Sometimes	Never
63%	36%	1%

10. Which on-line resources would Volunteer Managers make use of, if available? (Respondents were asked to mark all that apply).

80%	'How to' guides & general info and guidance
60%	Learning modules on different aspects of VM
44%	Tutorials on VM to support classroom training

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report
May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

64%	On-line accredited training
64%	E-groups or on-line discussion forums

11. Websites named as useful to Volunteer Managers:

53%	Volunteering England
38%	None named
22%	Local VC, CVS, Training/Volunteer Managers' Forum
20%	Role setting specific (eg sport)
10%	NCVO
4%	Energize
4%	Other
2%	DSC
2%	Working for a Charity

12. Which training and learning options would Volunteer Managers choose if made available? (Respondents were asked to mark all that apply).

57%	Classroom/group training
53%	On-line training packages
53%	Books and general information
51%	Networking groups
36%	Distance learning qualifications
25%	One-to-one coaching
22%	Study groups

If Volunteer Managers could **choose just one** from the above list:

36%	Classroom/group training
18%	Networking groups
13%	On-line training packages
9%	Distance learning qualifications
9%	Books and general information
9%	One-to-one coaching
4%	None stated
2%	Study groups

Practical considerations

13. How far will Volunteer Managers travel to access training?

24% would travel between 70 to 100 miles with just a few stating they would travel anywhere if it was worthwhile.

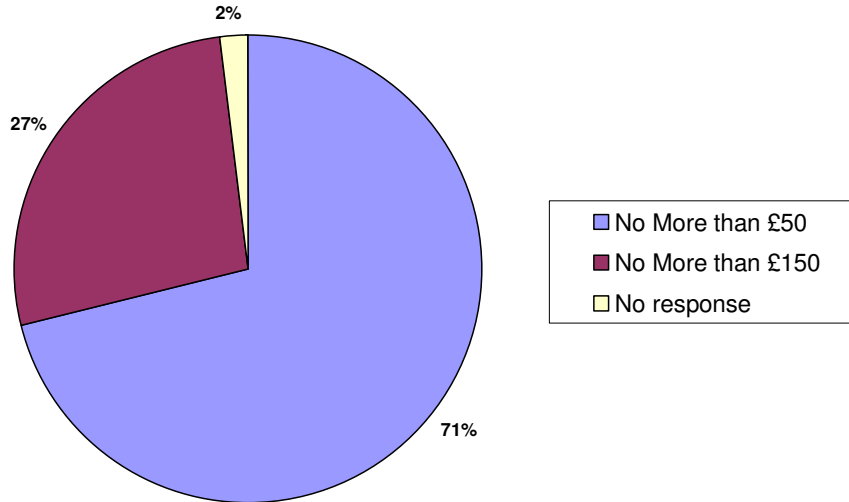
52% would travel approximately 50 miles to key towns and cities within their region or just outside.

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report
 May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

24% would travel up to a maximum of 25 miles, preferring a local setting because of expense and restrictions regarding their role.

14.

What are volunteer managers prepared to pay to attend a one-day training session?

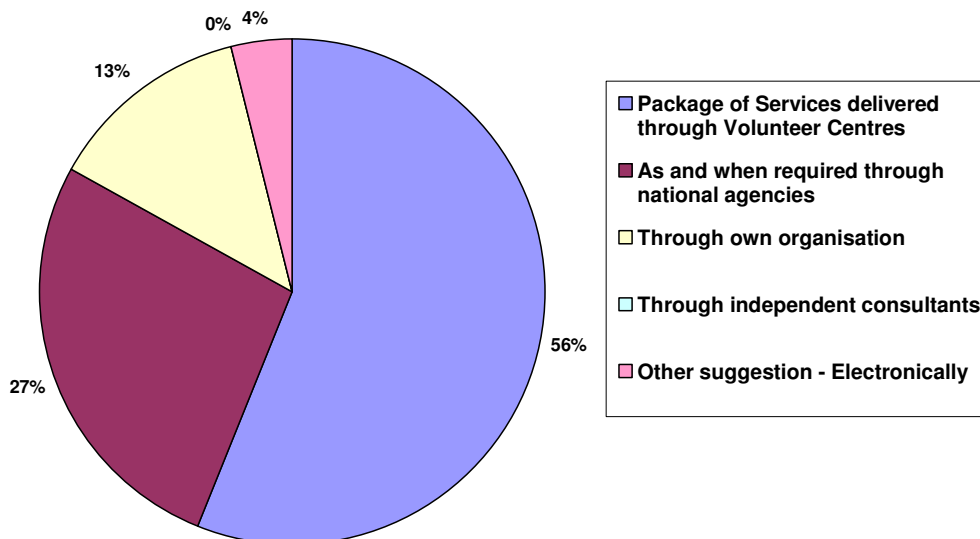


15. What would Volunteer Managers expect to receive as part of this training for that cost?

100%	Packs with handouts and templates
69%	Lunch and refreshments
20%	Individual learning plan/action plan

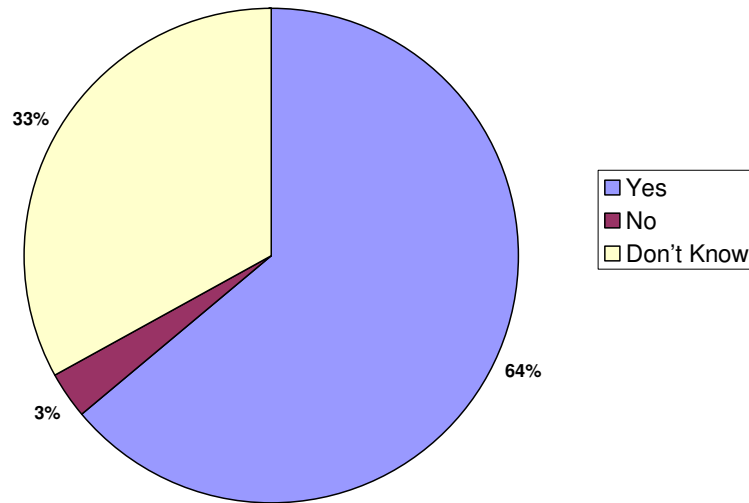
16.

How would volunteer managers prefer to access training and learning options?



17.

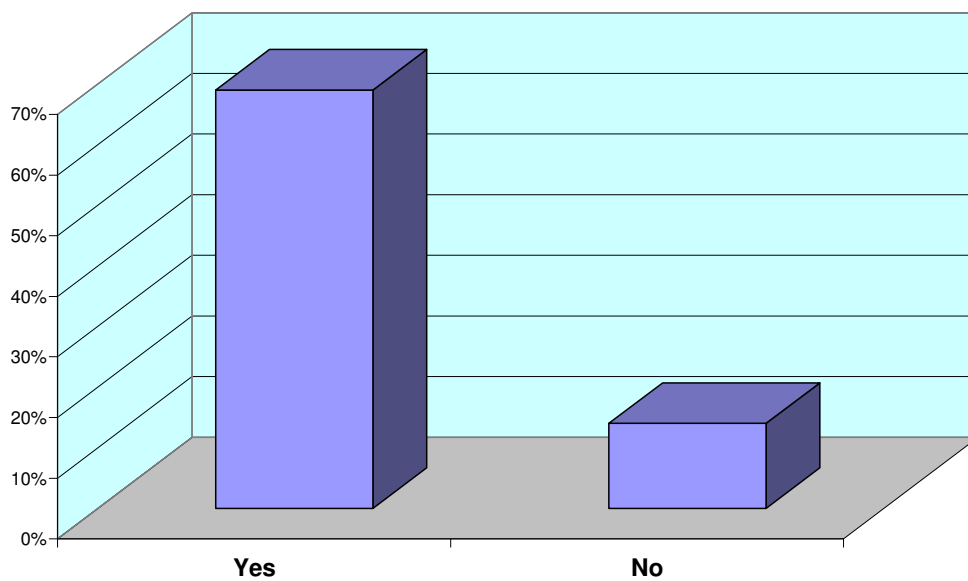
Are Volunteer Managers interested in learning how to 'benchmark' their volunteer programme?



This question was asked in relation to helping Volunteer Managers raise standards of performance and links with existing benchmarking tools such as NOS (National Occupational Standards) and IIV (Investing in Volunteers).

18.

Percentage of Volunteer Managers working in a 'dedicated' role



Summary of feedback from individuals and groups

Existing training and development provision:

There is general agreement that access to existing training and development provision is fragmented, inconsistent and depends very much on the following factors:

- How well supported the individual Volunteer Manager is within their organisation, including time out for learning and budgets for training.
- Quality of training opportunities focusing on Volunteer Management that are available within their own organisation
- The extent of the focus on Good Practice training and support by local Volunteer Centres in their area.
- Their geographical location.
- Their own personal approach to training and development.

The study revealed that Volunteer Centres acknowledge the importance of their role in providing a range of support services for Volunteer Managers, especially in bringing to life the Core Functions. In practice however, there are only a limited number of Volunteer Centres who are offering a comprehensive package of services, such as; access to training, running networking forums, one-to-one support, lending books and other resources. Even fewer numbers are using technology to extend this support through e-forums; information downloads and live web-based discussions etc.

In the main, Volunteer Centres are offering what can be described as important, but basic level services, such as one-to-one advice and information when approached. And where possible, bringing Volunteer Managers together to learn in an informal setting through forums and meetings.

This inconsistency is also reflected across different national organisations. That said, there are some excellent examples of particular organisations focusing heavily on developing the knowledge and skills of Volunteer Managers. This ranges from structured support and guidance on working with volunteers within that particular organisational setting, to providing access to ongoing professional development, including qualifications and external training. For Volunteer Managers in other national organisations, opportunities are less structured, making use of whatever provision can be accessed locally and at a low cost.

Some interesting approaches to training and development across different organisational settings were also identified. In the NHS, for example, the recent introduction of a Knowledge and Skills Framework for all staff has implications for Voluntary Service Managers. They will need to benchmark their work, both in relation to their work with volunteers, and in terms of their wider role within a health care setting.

Regardless of setting and the quality of support that individuals currently receive, there is agreement that whatever provision exists needs to be re-thought and greatly improved in order to meet the needs of those involved in this fast-developing, diverse role.

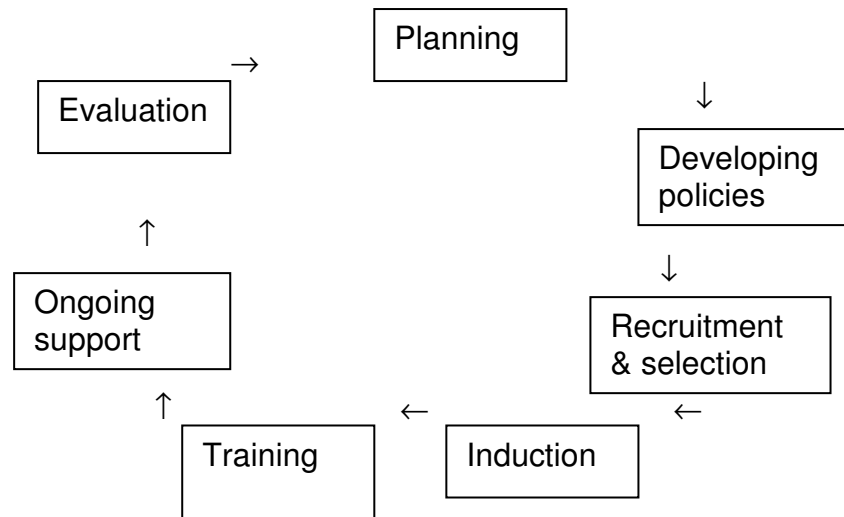
There are mixed views about the quality of training and development opportunities provided by the main national agencies. Whilst particular workshops or events may meet an individual's specific need or spark a new focus on any given day, there is agreement that a more structured, progression approach to learning and

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

development is needed. One consistent view is that historically, the focus, particularly in Volunteer Management training, is a topic-based, knowledge-heavy approach which repeatedly only meets the needs of those new to the role. There is subsequently a huge gap in provision for more advanced, skills-based learning.

Topics and subjects:

As already highlighted, there has been a trend towards developing content for training and learning which focuses mainly on the themes supporting the Volunteer-Programme cycle, for example:



Whilst there is a clear need to focus on these subject areas, particularly for those starting out in Volunteer Management, there are also more skills-based aspects of the role, which also need exploration. The study revealed that often, these are the more challenging, unsupported areas such as; developing people, project management, organisational skills, influencing skills and time management. Interestingly, these are also the skills that Volunteer Managers say sometimes go unrecognised in terms of how their role is perceived. Yet, these are potentially the most transferable skills in terms of their personal and professional development.

Another significant theme to emerge from the study was the need to develop training and learning that focuses on Volunteer Management within a particular setting, for example; disability, museums, environment, hospice, health care etc. Feedback suggests that this is rarely being addressed within individual organisations, although there are some informal networks in existence. One setting that is perhaps starting to address this is sport, with the forthcoming consultation on Education, Training and Qualifications for Volunteers and Volunteer Managers in the Sport sector.

Learning needs:

The need for a 'blended' approach to learning was emphasised repeatedly throughout the study. Indeed, some of the specific needs identified highlight the diverse nature of the role itself, and how this needs to be reflected in the options for training and development.

For example:

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

- More focus on skills development.
- Working to an individual learning plan.
- Scope for 'follow-up' and ongoing tutor/mentor support.
- Access to a bank of resources and activities for trainers that relate specifically to Volunteer Management.
- Packs/information/toolkits that can be adapted for use and encourage learners to think for themselves.
- Learning in 'chunks' or modules, which both stand alone and fit together.
- Combining different ways of learning. For example, in groups, one-to-one, using technology etc.

Delivery methods:

One of the clear themes of this study was the need for more training and development options to be delivered locally. One example consistently referred to was the potential to develop the role of Volunteer Centres, however it was noted that this depended on there being strong links between local organisations/individuals and their Volunteer Centre, to ensure that access would be as wide-reaching as possible. Also highlighted as needing development was the role of collaborative working across local areas and regions with Volunteer Centres and individual trainers/learning providers.

Others felt strongly that training and development shouldn't be exclusively delivered through, for example Volunteer Centres, but that this role needed to be taken on by whoever is best placed to deliver training and learning in that particular location.

There was acknowledgement that plenty of information exists already to support Volunteer Managers, but that it is too time-consuming to locate and subsequently keep abreast of. The study also revealed the need for a 'package' of services, to be delivered using a variety of methods; with emphasis on developing some sort of provision for ongoing support and development.

Issues:

All those who provided feedback and took part in the discussions highlighted several issues surrounding the role of Volunteer Managers and the subsequent implications for the development of any training and learning options:

- Volunteer Managers are often working in dual (or more) roles and the focus on managing volunteers is often regarded as less important.
- Perceptions concerning the general 'status' of the role, both external and internal.
- Lack of support and understanding from line managers or senior management, resulting in poor or no follow-up to training and learning.
- Questions raised about the value of accreditation for Volunteer Managers, particularly in terms of how well recognised certain qualifications are outside the sector and the confusion surrounding which qualifications to follow.
- Concerns that the focus will shift away from the value of informal learning and that accredited training will be the only option, therefore excluding large numbers of participants.
- That the focus should be on the longer-term benefits for the individual and the organisation, rather than on simply gaining accreditation.
- Understanding where their training and learning fits with existing benchmarks such as NOS and IIV.

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report
May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

- The need to break away from a culture of thinking about training and development only in terms of attending training courses, which is limiting individuals' progression.
- There is no clear progression route and therefore the onus is on the individual Volunteer Manager to determine their own training and development needs at varying stages in their role.
- Volunteer Managers are often not able and sometimes not willing to take responsibility for their own personal and professional development.
- Mixed views about using technology which are not so much about barriers and access, but more about where individuals will first go to look for information and ask for help. Web-based support is not always 'naturally' the first option for so many Volunteer Managers.

Additional research

Current, published research on Volunteer Management and Training and Development highlights significant changes in terms of what is required from Volunteer Managers and how they approach learning:

- We are clearer now about what's expected from Volunteer Management as a role, as we acknowledge its complexity and the need for a "blend of different management approaches". (A Choice Blend. Gaskin, K. 2003).
- There are implications for Volunteer Management regarding the evolution of Volunteering as a brand, and its role in society.
- The specific benchmarks and standards now exist to support the development of the role and to help individual Volunteer Managers raise their performance.
- There has been a shift in emphasis within training and workplace learning towards a more learner-centred style of delivery.
- As the role of the 'training department' changes to "more a facilitator of learning than a provider of instruction", (CIPD Learning and Development Survey 2006), Volunteer Managers have a responsibility to take control of their own learning and development.

Conclusion

This study highlights the diverse training and development needs of Volunteer Managers and confirms the call for change in terms of how these needs are met. The development of a National Training Strategy will provide the opportunity to begin addressing the gaps identified in training provision and enable individual Volunteer Managers to take ownership of their own long-term development.

Appendix 1

Feedback from delegates attending the Workforce Hub Conference, “Workforce Development: whose job is it anyway?” on June 6th 2006.

1. Participants were asked what they would want from web-based information and resources. Their responses can be grouped into the following 3 areas:

Access	Content	Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access. • Materials available on DVD/CD-rom and via downloads. • Not too much focus on the web • Options for paper formats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest thinking • Updates on legislation • Good Practice examples • Strategic snapshots • Specialist advice • High quality • Skills based examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear signposting • Discussion groups/boards • Mentoring system • Ways to track own progress • Hot topics • Q&A area – linking in with experts • Tutor forums

2. Participants were asked how they would prefer to access training and learning opportunities.

The responses reflect the full range of learning preferences, from a clear need for on-line materials to others wanting to access face-to-face training. One clear need is for there to be choice through a blend of options, taking into account the differences in working situations and peoples’ geographical context. There is also a keenness to maintain and develop informal learning methods, such as networks and peer support.

Other requests focus on the need for learning to be based around the individual, with support available from line managers and/or tutors and a process for self-assessment. Workbooks, DVDs, booklets and guides were also mentioned as additional ways to learn.

3. Participants were asked about their best experience of learning.

Again, the responses highlight the variety in learning styles as well as the roles involved and can be divided into 2 key areas:

Delivery methods

- Inspiring and knowledgeable trainer
- Working with experts
- Demonstration
- Being part of a skilled group

Volunteer Management Training Needs Report
May 2006, Sue Jones, Volunteer Centre Warrington

- Interactive
- 'Real' learning
- CIPD
- Work-specific
- Tailored to own needs
- Learning on the job
- Appreciation of roles
- Team building
- Focusing on bad experiences and moving on

Personal impact

- Trust
- Sense of personal achievement
- Reflections
- Empowerment
- Positive feedback
- No blame