



Research Report



Skills in the Justice Sector: A survey of third sector employers 2009

Executive Summary

Prepared for Skills for Justice



SKILLS for JUSTICE

Developing skills for safer communities

Skills in the Justice Sector: A survey of third sector employers 2009

Prepared for: **Skills for Justice**

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October 2009

A number of individuals and organisations have been involved in this research. BMG Research designed and delivered the study, having overall responsibility for day-to-day management, including questionnaire design, fieldwork, data analysis, weighting and written reporting. The report was authored by June Wiseman and Emma Parry of BMG Research, whilst Gemma Decent of BMG Research was also extensively involved in the delivery of the survey.

BMG Research would like to thank Ilona Haslewood, Senior Research at Skills for Justice for her significant contribution to delivering this project.

Both BMG Research and Skills for Justice would also like to thank all those who took part in the survey.



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Produced by BMG Research

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British Quality Foundation Member
Market Research Quality Standards Association (British Standards Institute) BS7911
for Market Research - Certificate No. FS76713
Investors in People Standard - Certificate No. WMQC 0614
Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) Member Company
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Executive Summary

Skills for Justice is the dedicated Sector Skills Council tasked with developing skills for safer communities. One of its core functions is to provide sector-specific Labour Market Information and Intelligence (LMII).

The majority of the workforce in Skills for Justice's footprint is employed by large organisations, particularly in the Police and Law Enforcement strand. However, some strands, particularly the Community Justice strand, contain a large number of third sector organisations, many of them small. As comparatively less LMII is available regarding these organisations, BMG Research was commissioned by Skills for Justice to undertake a survey of third sector employers working within the justice sector.

The main aim of the survey was to gather labour market information particularly with regard to the characteristics of the workforce, including both paid employees and volunteers; workforce development practices; skills gaps and shortages and future skills demands.

In total, 506 interviews were conducted by telephone with employers in the justice sector across the United Kingdom in March, April and May 2009. The survey was conducted at establishment (i.e. site) level.

Profile of the Surveyed Establishments

The majority of the establishments (53%) participating in the present survey prefer to describe themselves as voluntary and community sector organisations, fewer describe themselves as not-for-profit organisations (23%), third sector organisations (19%) and other, non-government organisations (6%).

Most establishments are active in more than one area of the justice sector, but half (52%) consider that they have a main area of involvement, most frequently those working with victims or survivors of crime.

In terms of geographical location, the majority of the surveyed establishments are located in England (85%), with more than a quarter of all establishments based in London (27%).

Nearly two-fifths of the surveyed establishments (38%) are part of a larger organisation with other sites.

A quarter (24%) of all the organisations that the surveyed establishments were part of operate across the whole of the UK, the remainder (76%) in parts of it. A third of English organisations (32%) operate across all the English regions.

The surveyed establishments tend to rely on funding from a number of sources. They are most likely to receive funding from charitable organisations/grant making trusts (60%) and/or local government (58%). Government funding is a particularly important source for Scottish and Welsh establishments.

Although nearly half the establishments (47%) receive funding from individual donations, this source of funding tends to account for a small proportion of the overall

size of the funding (less than 10% in more than half of the establishments receiving this type of funding).

Around two-thirds of establishments employ no more than 10 paid staff or 10 volunteers, with one in twenty (5%) employing no paid staff and a higher proportion (14%) using no volunteers.

Profile of the Paid and Voluntary Workforce

Of the total (paid and voluntary) workforce, a third are paid staff and two-thirds are volunteers (ratio 32%:68%) in the surveyed establishments.

Whilst smaller establishments (as defined by the number of paid staff) tend to be more reliant on volunteers, larger establishments tend to employ larger numbers of both paid staff and volunteers.

The survey findings indicate that the participating establishments have a dedicated core of volunteers: the majority (60%) of them volunteer at least once a week on a regular basis, and an additional 36% do so at least once a month.

In terms of demographics, the findings suggest that this part of the third sector has a high percentage of females and part-time workers, a higher than average proportion of people from a minority ethnic background and a considerable proportion of disabled workers among the paid and voluntary workers.

- Both the paid and volunteer workforces are predominantly female (70% in both cases). Although this reflects the findings of the Voluntary Sector Skills Survey 2007¹, it is considerably different from the overall justice sector workforce profile (as described by the Skills for Justice Labour Market Information matrix²), which suggests that the representation of females among the paid workforce is just 43%.
- The female bias across the paid workforce is reflected in the relatively high proportion that work under 30 hours a week (compared with the UK workforce in general).
- The representation of minority ethnic groups among the paid workforce is higher than that across the UK economy and the justice sector overall (20%, compared with 9% of the paid workforce UK-wide and 5% of the paid workforce across the justice sector).
- The black minority ethnic group is the most widely represented among both the paid and voluntary workforces (11% of the paid workforce and 10% of volunteers, compared with 4% of paid workers across the UK economy as a whole and 2% across the justice sector).
- Around one in four establishments employ at least one member of staff with a disability and one in three has volunteers with a disability.

¹ Voluntary Sector Skills Survey 2007, undertaken by The Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham on behalf of the UK Workforce Hub. Data referenced is England only due to issues in aggregating data across the UK (see Appendix).

² <http://www.skillsforjustice-lmimatrix.com/>

Most members of the paid and voluntary workforce are between the ages of 18 and 49, but around one in five is aged 50+, with this proportion slightly higher among volunteers.

The roles that both paid staff and volunteers fulfil are many and varied.

The data suggests a considerable degree of synergy and in some cases perhaps interchangeability between the roles of paid staff and volunteers:

- paid staff are most likely to work as advice workers/counsellors, direct support staff or administrators; and
- volunteers are also most likely to be deployed as direct support staff or advice workers/counsellors.

Recruitment

At the time of the survey fieldwork one in five establishments (20%) had vacancies for paid staff.

The proportion of establishments that had positions available for volunteers was considerably higher (52%). Naturally, the two figures are not truly comparable as the need for volunteers tends to be on-going and volunteers generally spend less of their time working for an organisation and may do so on a more sporadic basis.

Establishment size is a chief determinant of the propensity to have vacancies and recruitment activity in general.

Advice workers/counsellors and administrators account for the highest number of positions available for paid staff and volunteers, while direct support staff account for a high number of posts needed among volunteers. This is a reflection of where roles are in most demand.

Around three in ten establishments with current vacancies (29%, or 6% of all establishments) report having at least one paid vacancy that is proving difficult to fill.

The tendency to have hard to fill vacancies for paid staff is higher amongst establishments working with victims or survivors of crime, witnesses, substance misuse, legal advice services and community safety.

According to the surveyed employers, the causes of recruitment difficulties with regard to paid staff tend to stem from a lack of technical or specific skills and lack of experience.

There is a higher incidence of hard to fill positions amongst volunteers: 42% of establishments with vacancies for volunteers. The incidence of hard to fill positions for volunteers tends to be consistent across all areas of activity.

Recruitment difficulties appear to lessen as establishment size increases, perhaps reflecting the advantages larger establishments with larger budgets have over smaller establishments when it comes to attracting volunteers, but it is possible that belonging to a long-established and/or well-known organisation also plays a part.

The most frequently cited reason for having difficulty filling volunteer posts is a lack of applicants. It is particularly difficult to fill volunteer posts at chief executive/director level, as well as posts relating to finance, human resources and administration.

Although these posts are the most frequently cited, they are relatively small in number. The difficulty in filling these posts with volunteers may reflect the fact that these high level or specialist roles require a depth of involvement that is difficult for people to commit to, as well as the difficulties in obtaining a person of the appropriate calibre, on an unpaid basis.

Nearly half (46%) of all establishments that have recruited paid staff in the last 12 months report that the recruits previously worked for them as volunteers. This proportion increases with the size of the establishment. As a proportion of all recruits, 19% were previously volunteers, suggesting that volunteers are an important pool of potential paid workforce.

Word of mouth is a significant method of recruiting volunteers (reported by 61% of establishments), with around one in four establishments using the next most frequently cited recruitment methods of newspaper advertisements, publicity material and recruiting among previous service users. These findings suggest that establishments may prefer to use low cost recruitment options when recruiting volunteers, and that personal recommendation may be an important factor when an individual makes a decision about volunteering for an organisation.

Nearly three-fifths (58%) of all establishments have experienced paid staff departures in the last year and this equates to 16% of all paid staff.

Staff turnover (with regard to paid staff) is highest within establishments working with adult offenders and ex-offenders and/or their families. One reason for high turnovers of staff across the third sector may be short contracts which do not allow organisations to keep their staff even if they wish to do so and staff wish to stay.

With regard to volunteers, at 19%, turnover rate over the past 12 months is slightly but not significantly higher than it is for paid staff (16%). It is at its highest within smaller establishments and amongst establishments in London, the South East and the West Midlands and amongst those involved with providing legal advice service and working with witnesses.

Skill Gaps

Few establishments in this survey identify skill gaps, but those that do strongly acknowledge the need for more training and development to overcome them. At the same time, there is widespread acknowledgement of the need to improve a broad range of skills, regardless of whether or not they are lacking to any significant extent.

The majority of establishments feel that paid staff and volunteers have the right skills, with no more than one in eight identifying staff within any occupational group that are under-skilled. This is the proportion citing leadership and management roles being under-skilled, thereby indicating a key area for skills development.

According to the surveyed establishments, the main causes of skill deficiencies are a lack of funding for training and development and lack of time to attend or complete training.

Those establishments with skills deficiencies amongst volunteers are more likely to cite individuals not being in the role for very long, implying that on-the-job experience is a significant element in developing skills amongst volunteers.

Specialist skills, covering the varied areas of human resources, fundraising, legal knowledge, among others, are most likely to be identified as skills that need improving across the range of occupational areas for both paid staff and volunteers, whilst volunteers are more likely than paid staff to need to improve their specific skills which have more to do with directly interacting with particular service user groups (i.e. managing violent or aggressive behaviour, drug awareness etc).

Training Activity

There is a high level of training and business planning across the sector, which reflects the fact that there are a higher proportion of larger and multi-site organisations amongst employers than would be typically seen across the UK, across all sectors.

The survey provides evidence of diverse approaches taken to training and development, borne out of a need to train and develop both paid staff and volunteers as cost-effectively as possible. In doing so, establishments tend to focus more on training for paid staff compared with volunteers.

- Although the sector workforce consists of a high proportion of volunteers (66% volunteers; 34% paid staff), the ratio of staff receiving training is in favour of paid staff (68% of those receiving training are paid staff; 32% volunteers).
- Over the past 12 months, 83% of establishments have trained paid staff and 63% have trained volunteers.

Formal business and training planning is undertaken by the majority of establishments:

- Nearly nine in ten establishments (88%) have a formal business plan
- Three-quarters of establishments (76%) formally assess skills needs
- Two-thirds (69%) have a training plan
- The majority (90%) of those with a training plan link this to a business plan; and most report meeting the aims specified in the training plan in the 2008/09 business year
- Slightly fewer establishments (62%) have a recruitment, learning and development plan specific to volunteers. More than two-fifths of all establishments (44%) have an environmental plan in place.
- The propensity for having formal business and training planning mechanisms increases with establishment size.

Around three-quarters of establishments (73%) have a training budget and this also increases with establishment size.

A third of establishments (35%), report that grants or contracts always have a specific training and development budget attached. A similar proportion (32%), report that this is sometimes the case.

Training activity, as with planning, increases with establishment size, reflecting the greater need for training resulting from having more staff and more resources available for providing training. However, differences can be seen between the most frequently used methods to train paid staff and volunteers:

- External learning providers are most frequently mentioned as a means of delivering training for paid staff (83% of those providing training mention another voluntary and community organisation or HE/FE colleges).
- In-house training is prevalent too, with two-thirds of those providing training for paid staff doing so through informal in-house training (69%) and/or structured in-house training (64%).
- Volunteers, on the other hand are most likely to receive in-house training, either informally (71%) or in a structured way (67%), whilst fewer use external training provision (57%). This is another indication of the extent to which establishments seek to develop volunteers cost-effectively.

The most frequently cited areas of training are those which are essential or legally required and include health and safety, induction and first aid.

Among establishments that do not provide training, lack of funds and lack of need are stated as the main reasons in respect of both paid staff and volunteers.

Short Term Outlook

It is probably little surprise that three-quarters (78%) of establishments participating in the survey feel they face significant challenges in the next 12 months. This proportion is even higher in Wales (84%) and Northern Ireland (83%).

Main concerns revolve around the difficulties in securing new funding or maintaining the current level of funding. The most frequently named areas where the impact of the challenges are likely to be felt are the provision of training and staffing levels.

However, only a minority of establishments consider funding difficulties or anticipated changes in staffing levels to be due to, or directly related to the current recession (24% and 27% respectively). This suggests that these concerns and challenges are faced on an on-going basis and that the current recession has only served to heighten them.

Despite the overall level of concerns, there is a considerable degree of optimism with regard to the outlook for changes in the size of the workforce: 49% of all establishments anticipate an increase in the number of volunteers in the next 12 months, and 28% anticipate an increase in the number of paid staff. In comparison, few establishments anticipate a decrease in either.

Awareness and Use of Initiatives and Standards

The considerable difference between levels of awareness and take up of various initiatives and standards indicate a need to investigate the reasons behind this, and to promote various initiatives focused on developing skills within the workforce and encourage greater levels of take up where appropriate.

- Whilst the level of awareness of Investors in People is high (over 80%), the level of take up is much lower (32%).
- As regards Apprenticeships, the level of awareness is similarly high, but only 10% report taking apprentices.
- Some two-thirds of English establishments (69%) are aware of Train to Gain with a third of these establishments having been involved with it (32%).
- Around one in four to one in three establishments are aware of Skillsmark (26%), the Skills and Training Charter (29%) and Skills Pledge (32%).
- Nearly two in five establishments (37%) use national occupational standards for all paid staff and volunteers, with an additional 8% using these for only some staff.

A third of all surveyed establishments (34%) are aware of Skills for Justice. Compared with England (30%) or Northern Ireland (43%), levels of awareness are significantly higher in Wales (64%) and Scotland (63%)³. The level of awareness increases with establishment size.

Conclusions

The sector is people-orientated in terms of both its organisational structures and who it serves. Having appropriately skilled and experienced staff in place is crucial to delivering organisational aims and objectives.

Many organisations serve a range of service user groups with few working in just one area. They also accommodate a diverse range of roles amongst both its paid staff and voluntary workforce. Therefore, there are multiple layers of skill development requirements accounting for high level generic, functional skills and branching into specific interfaces with groups where differing approaches and experience are required.

The survey suggests that establishment size is a chief determinant of recruitment activity. Larger organisations will have more established and structured recruitment mechanisms in place making recruitment easier, whilst smaller organisations may find it disproportionately difficult to recruit suitable paid staff and volunteers because they are less likely to have these mechanisms in place.

Recruitment difficulties are most likely to be experienced with regard to roles that are in most demand, such as advice workers/counsellors. These are arguably roles that require specific skills, experience and personal qualities, and it may be difficult to meet the needs for these staff through training alone.

³ This figure may also reflect the fact that some of the Scotland contacts were sourced directly from Skills for Justice itself.

Volunteer roles at the highest level are hard to fill, perhaps as a result of the need for greater levels and depth of involvement from those giving their time when acting in their posts.

Whilst the advantages of recruiting volunteers through word of mouth should not be underestimated, there is also evidence of the greater use of low cost options when recruiting volunteers in general. This is also evident in respect of training, with disproportionately low numbers of volunteers in receipt of training, compared with their representation in the workforce and greater use of in-house training options for these unpaid staff.

Few establishments identify skill gaps but those that do strongly acknowledge the need for more training and development to overcome them.

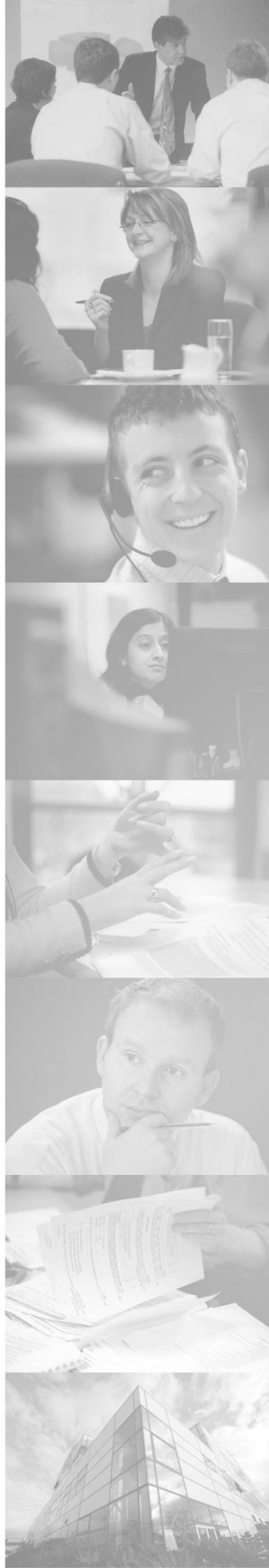
Establishments identify a broad range of skills to be improved and it is implied that while most staff do not lack these skills there is always a need to build on what they have.

Establishments address training and development needs in a range of different ways, in most cases to realise their goals as cost-effectively as possible, particularly with regard to volunteers. To that end take up of existing training and business initiatives should be encouraged as a means to address skill gaps and skill shortages in a cost-effective way.

There are higher levels of skill shortages and skill gaps amongst volunteers, while also evidence of lower levels of training of the voluntary workforce. Potential difficulties in finding volunteers with the right skills coupled with possible problems caused within organisations by the presence of voluntary staff lacking the appropriate type and level of skills would suggest that increasing investment in training volunteers is in organisations' interests as well as benefiting the individuals who volunteer and encouraging more people to volunteer.

While most establishments report facing significant challenges in the next 12 months and there are considerable concerns with regard to securing and maintaining funding, it is likely that these challenges are faced year in and year out to some extent in many establishments and that the current recession has only heightened them.

A copy of the full report is available at www.skillsforjustice.com.



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