

Valuing potential

New thinking on recruitment
and retention of staff in the
voluntary sector

A discussion document by Lucy Ball
and Julia Unwin commissioned by

cpf CITY PAROCHIAL
FOUNDATION



Preface

At a time when there are high expectations of voluntary organisations, many are finding it difficult to recruit and retain the staff they need. This discussion paper looks at some of the strategies used to deal with this problem, and raises questions both about the effectiveness of these strategies, and about the approach taken by voluntary organisations in an increasingly competitive employment market.

In raising questions it seeks to point to alternative solutions to enable the sector to make the best possible contribution. The paper focuses on the development of recruitment for paid staff, but acknowledges that recruitment of trustees is also a live issue within the sector, and will have a significant impact on the performance of voluntary organisations.

Julia Unwin OBE

Julia Unwin is the Deputy Chair of the Food Standards Agency.

She has worked in the voluntary sector, local and central government and in the private sector, and has a long track record in promoting and developing the public interest in social policy. Julia was a Charity Commissioner from 1998 to April 2003 and served on the Board of the Housing Corporation for over ten years. She is a member of the Committee of Reference for Friends Provident, a Board member of the National Consumer Council, and is also an independent Board member of the DTI, and a member of the Audit Committee there.

In a freelance capacity Julia has been an adviser to grant making trusts and to companies and has researched and published on the funding of the voluntary sector. As a consultant she has specialised in issues of governance and organisational strategy. As a Senior Associate at the Kings Fund she is chairing the current Inquiry into the care market serving older people in London.

Lucy Ball

Lucy Ball is co-founder of Charis, established in 2003 to facilitate the creation of new charitable trust funds and to provide grants administration for grant making trusts. She has advised on the creation, strategic planning and policy development of grant making trusts for the last decade including work with KPMG, the Baring Foundation, Nat West, Comic Relief, the, the National Lotteries Charities Board, Scottish Power and the London Housing Foundation.

As an organisational consultant Lucy has worked with dozens of voluntary and statutory organisations including the Association of Charitable Foundations, Community Foundations Network, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, CancerBACUP, the Mental Health Foundation, the National Youth Agency, the London Probation Service, the Diocese of London, the Refugee Council and ABANTU.

Foreword

One of the challenges facing independent grant-making trusts is finding the time to stand back from the detail of committee meetings and grant-making so that they can reflect a little more generally about what is happening.

City Parochial Foundation has always taken some pains to review progress and to try to identify trends and problems, and, when we have come across problems which seem to have wider implications, we have often tried to share our perceptions and to invite others to join in working towards practicable solutions. This document is a part of that process.

Over the past several years City Parochial Foundation's field officers have noticed that a growing number of organisations have delayed taking up grants made by the Foundation for the purpose of employing workers in voluntary organisations. Time and again organisations report that they have been unable to appoint suitably experienced staff at the first attempt.

Sometimes the posts have had to be re-structured so that a higher salary can be offered for a part-time post before a successful appointment can be made; on other occasions the problem has been retention of staff rather than recruitment. Sometimes really exciting and badly-needed initiatives have been blighted by these basic problems and have simply failed to achieve their objectives.

In response to situations like this, the staff of the Foundation undertook discussions with a number of grant-holders, with second-tier organisations, with other funders and with trades unions to try to identify the key issues.

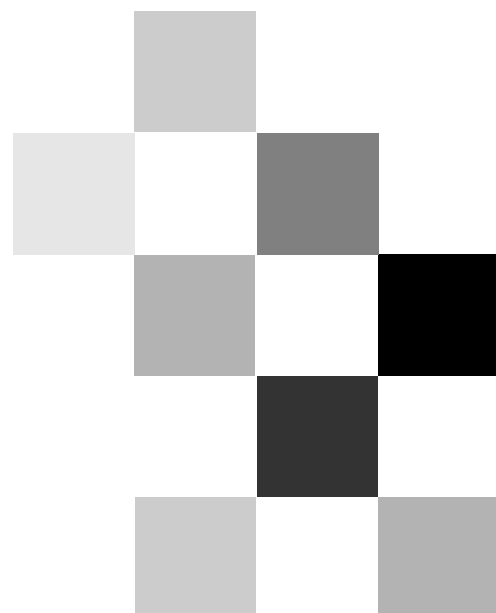
The Trustees subsequently agreed to appoint two highly-experienced voluntary sector consultants – Julia Unwin and Lucy Ball – to take part in some of these meetings and to produce a discussion document which would attempt to identify the issues more clearly, explore some possible solutions, and, above all, provoke public debate on these important matters.

It is of course not in the gift of a funder the size of City Parochial Foundation to spend its way out of such problems nor would this probably be the right solution. What is clear is that, if the voluntary sector is to become a provider of public services, as many, including the Government, would wish, then something effective has to be done to address these recruitment and retention problems.

Otherwise such unresolved issues will surely have a perceptible, negative impact on the quality of public services, and the whole of this ambitious initiative to involve the voluntary sector will be imperilled. Voluntary organisations have much to offer the public services, but they cannot play their part if they are unable to attract and retain top-quality staff.

City Parochial Foundation has a London brief and this document therefore focusses on voluntary sector issues in the capital. However, it is clear enough that this is also a country-wide problem, and I do hope that our discussion, which explores some provocative possibilities and tries to suggest some ways ahead, may also be helpful to those voluntary agencies which face the same problems as ourselves and find no easy answers to them.

John Muir,
Chairman of the Grants Committee,
City Parochial Foundation



Key issues

Retention and recruitment of staff in the voluntary sector is an increasing problem as it is in many other sectors. Serious efforts need to be made to counteract this otherwise the voluntary sector's contribution to delivering services could be adversely affected.

- ▶ As in other parts for the economy, many voluntary organisations find it difficult to recruit and retain the staff they need.
- ▶ Many grant-making funders are finding that exciting and potentially very important schemes are failing to take off because of a lack of staff.
- ▶ Many of the solutions available to government, such as a house-building programme for key workers, are simply not available to the voluntary sector. Yet without some radical thinking the problem will only increase.
- ▶ The role of the voluntary sector as the initiator of new ways of dealing with desperate social problems needs to be preserved and enhanced but without the people to do the work this is unlikely.
- ▶ Government, which has addressed the funding crisis of the sector with vigour and enthusiasm has still not recognised the need to develop the staffing base of this important sector.
- ▶ Funders need to recognise their contribution to the problem.
- ▶ Without a response from all players the voluntary sector faces a real crisis.
- ▶ Recruitment of trustees is also a live issue within the sector, and will have a significant impact on the performance of voluntary organisations.
- ▶ Ways to tackle the problems amount to 'fishing in different pool' and 'using a different rod' specifically:
 - honesty about motivation to work in the voluntary sector;
 - more attention should be given to pay and pensions issues;
 - flexibility in terms and conditions needs to be actively promoted developed;
 - more attention to job design;
 - voluntary organisations need to develop their 'brands' to attract recruits;
 - more creativity is needed to meet individual preferences in styles of working;
 - broadening the pool of potential recruits;
 - adopting techniques such as the university 'milk round' to attract graduates;
 - further efforts in promoting diversity particularly among senior levels;
 - considering new types of recruits with less reliance on relying on traditional people such as young and committed graduate;
 - consider great use of secondments from other sectors, perhaps through joint approaches such as a voluntary sector agency;
 - improve access through joint working on recruitment to promote the voluntary sector as a career;
 - better job structures including fixed term contracts.

Challenges

- ▶ If the days of a job for life have gone, do we really want to encourage people to spend their whole career in the voluntary sector?
- ▶ Is it a good use of charitable or public money to pay the costs of recruitment, rather than redesigning work to meet the costs of retention?
- ▶ Is there a danger that the assumptions and norms of those who came of age in the 1970s are shaping the recruitment market for those who came of age in the 1990s?
- ▶ Can we be brave enough to offer completely different types of jobs for the 21st century?

Challenges to the voluntary sector

- ▶ Where are the voluntary sector champions changing the way in which people are recruited to the sector?
- ▶ In a competitive environment is it possible for organisations to share their approaches and develop new and co-operative ways of recruiting?
- ▶ Can the ingenuity and imagination of the sector be harnessed to find new ways of considering the employment of staff in just the same way that the ingenuity of the sector has focused on changing tired, wasteful and de-motivating funding patterns

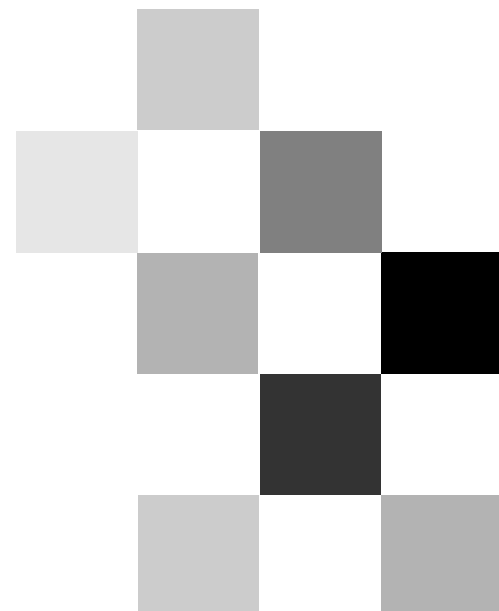
Challenges to the funders of the sector

- ▶ Can new ways of recruiting and retaining staff be financed?
- ▶ Do funders see this issue as fundamental to the health of the sector? Or will it remain an extra, and therefore expensive, addition?

- ▶ Can systems funding be adjusted to ensure that they contribute to a strong platform for the sector, rather than eroding this strength?

Challenges to government

- ▶ Can the voluntary sector be strengthened through a programme of planned senior level secondments into the sector?
- ▶ Can the operating environment be adjusted to enable the sector to continue to develop new approaches to complex problems?
- ▶ Are there adaptations to the funding codes within the compact which would enable the sector to recruit and retain staff more effectively?



1. Introduction

The issue of recruitment in London and the South East needs little introduction. The press coverage of the issue as it affects the National Health Service, local government, the teaching and medical professions, as well as the civil service, has been extensive. Even major corporate organisations openly recognise that recruitment presents them with one of the biggest management challenges they face.

All the major sectors, and particularly the private and public sectors, have mobilised significant resource to address the problem. They have adapted their recruitment methods, have analysed their performance, and are focused on responding to this challenge.

It is much more difficult for the voluntary sector to do this. It is a collection of small and medium sized enterprises, which in extremely different circumstances, are searching for an ever-widening skill base; it has been hit by the same challenge, but the response has been varied.

As this paper describes, the recruitment problems facing the sector are a matter of public concern. London grant-making trusts are acutely conscious of the issue because of their own experience of funding exciting and potentially very important schemes, only to find them failing to take off because of a lack of staff.

They also recognise that there are obstacles to addressing this problem creatively. Many of the solutions available to government, such as a house building programme for key workers, are simply not available to the voluntary sector. Yet without some radical thinking the problem will only increase.

This paper offers a range of challenges. It seeks to draw attention to the issue, but also to provoke. It seeks to invite all those involved to apply lateral thinking, imagination and skill to designing a sector which can then attract the staff it needs. The paper speaks to voluntary organisations as the bodies that can themselves think differently, design jobs differently, and describe their work in new and more persuasive ways.

It speaks to funders who need to recognise their own contribution to the problems the sector faces. And it speaks to government, which has addressed the funding crisis of the sector with vigour and enthusiasm, and yet has still not recognised the need to develop the staffing base of this important sector. Without a response from all these players the voluntary sector faces a real crisis. A sector with such a critical role to play needs to be able to attract able and skilled staff. Without these staff it will be unable to renew itself, and may become stale and less effective. The role of the sector as the initiator of new ways of dealing with desperate social problems needs to be preserved and enhanced. Without the people to do the work this is unlikely.

Focus of the paper

This paper describes the experiences of small and medium sized voluntary organisations in London. It focuses on the smaller, frequently local, organisations that are supported by City Parochial Foundation and which find their path to development blocked by the inability to recruit and retain the staff they need.

National initiatives led by ACEVO on the development of a Leadership Academy, and the work done by NCVO on the sustainable funding environment, as well as work to address quality standards, provide the backcloth for this paper which focuses on the challenges facing organisations operating in London and the South East.

Origins

This is a discussion paper, not a piece of primary research. It is based on a wide range of conversations, both formal and informal, seeking to identify the challenges faced in recruiting staff in the voluntary sector, and exploring some of the more radical strategies that could be deployed to overcome these challenges.

Discussions with trustees and staff from across the voluntary sector, and extensive discussions with individuals with experience of recruiting within and for the voluntary sector have informed the development of the paper. The principal ideas were discussed at a seminar organised by City Parochial Foundation in the winter of 2003, which in turn drew heavily on work commissioned by the Baring Foundation in 2001/2.

This seminar involved the active engagement of funders, both voluntary and statutory, umbrella organisations and trades unions involved in organising in the voluntary sector.

Structure

The discussion paper sets out a range of challenges and issues facing the sector in terms of recruitment and retention of staff. It then considers the strategies available under two headings:

- ▶ Using a different rod – identifying different approaches to attracting and keeping staff
- ▶ Fishing in a bigger pool – identifying the ways in which the range of potential candidates could be expanded

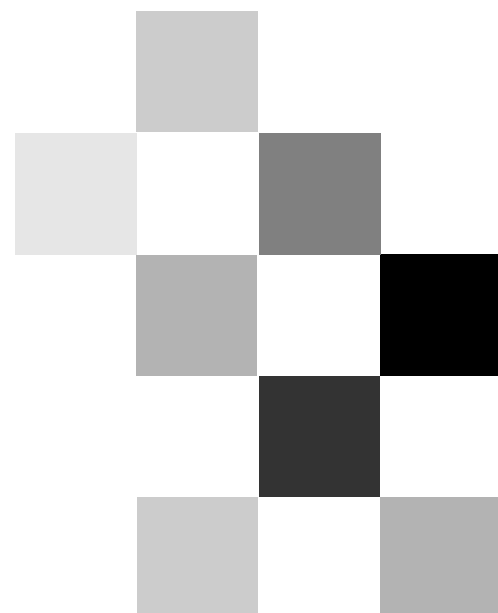
This paper proposes a range of strategies under each heading, considers the pressures on them, discusses the issues affecting recruitment under these headings and concludes with some challenges for both the sector and its funders.

Background

The voluntary sector is being called upon to play a larger and more significant role both in the delivery of public services and in building a strong civil society. Many parts of the sector are energised by this call, and are indeed enthusiastic to make an ever greater contribution.

However, in all parts of the voluntary sector this growing crisis in recruitment is reported. Voluntary organisations, of all types and sizes, are finding it difficult to fill the jobs they advertise, and are dealing with a high level of turnover. The problem is particularly acute in London and the South East and this paper was commissioned by City Parochial Foundation to explore the challenges and the opportunities.

The impetus for the paper has been the recognition by a number of grant-making trusts that their funding intentions are being frustrated by the lack of skilled and appropriate people to do the work. All too often funders respond positively to well considered and imaginative proposals only to find that these plans falter, or indeed fail, because of problems with recruiting the right staff.



2. The issue

Imagine for a moment a gathering of trustees and chief executives. While everyone is engaged with the big macro debates about the future of the public service, the need to generate diverse sources of funding and the challenge of protecting organisational independence, the almost unspoken worry is about finding the people to do the job.

At all levels the same lament, or a variation on that lament, is heard. Trustees are concerned that they will not be able to fill a chief executive's post. They dearly want to appoint a visionary and charismatic leader, who can mobilise a volunteer workforce, speak with authority on the BBC's Newsnight and comply with the regulatory framework. They fear they will be forced to appoint someone who disappoints on all counts. They fear that the choices will be too limited.

Equally, chief executives worry about filling the post of development managers. They secure the funding with the anxiety at the back of their minds that they will not be able to attract the right sort of person. And project managers know that in the search for really committed care workers they are in direct competition with better funded hospital trusts offering better packages and less stress.

At the same gathering, the chief executives acknowledge that their role is becoming increasingly untenable – and the notion of developing a portfolio career starts to seem very much more attractive.

In the next door room a group of funders of the sector are gathered. They too believe that the voluntary sector has an enormous contribution to make. They are enthused and excited by the ideas in front of them, and yet they know, with certainty borne

“Recruitment is the single biggest problem facing our sector. We don't talk about it because we don't know what to do about it. We don't know what to do about it because we don't really understand it.”

Chief executive of large service-providing charity

of long experience, that none of the proposals they are considering will work if the people are not there to fill the roles.

They also know, in all their experience of funding voluntary organisations, that the key determinant of success is not the robustness of the business plan, or the glittering array of support, but the qualities and abilities of the person appointed to the job.

The problem they all worry about is recruitment. They know that this apparently unglamorous concern has the potential to destabilise the whole sector. In the next few years, it will require urgent attention if any of the voluntary sector's ambitions are to be realised.

3. The context

There is, of course, a considerable body of research on the pressures and problems affecting recruitment into the public service. One of the crucial pressure points is the supply of housing. Research published by the Halifax Building Society in February 2004 drew attention to some of the financial pressures on public sector workers, pointing out that:

- ▶ Public-sector workers such as teachers and nurses have been priced out of the housing market in more than half of Britain's urban areas.
- ▶ Such workers cannot afford to buy an average-priced house in more than 60 per cent of the country's 634 principal cities and towns, showing that the problem is no longer confined to the South East and London.
- ▶ House prices are rising faster than public-sector pay, with the average house price in 80 per cent of the towns analysed being in excess of £100,000.
- ▶ Comparing average salaries and house prices, the survey showed that 496 towns (78 per cent) are unaffordable for nurses. Police officers cannot afford to buy a house in 400 towns (63 per cent), while 390 (62 per cent) are now unaffordable for teachers.
- ▶ The average price for a house in Britain in the last quarter of 2003 was £139,716, almost six times the average salary of nurses and fire-fighters. For teachers on an average salary of £30,274, the house price to earnings ratio was 4.61, and for police officers it was 4.44.
- ▶ According to the Office of National Statistics, the average salary for nurses is £24,000, while police officers earn £31,450 and fire-fighters £23,546.

In response to these figures, and to many other similar pieces of research, an energetic and well resourced programme targeting key workers has been developed by government and public sector agencies. The funding available for key worker housing, particularly in the capital, has enabled the development of specially allocated housing in nearly all London boroughs.

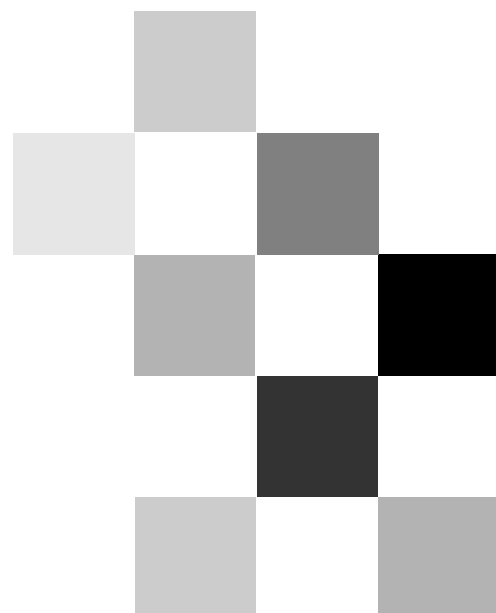
The NHS, through its Workforce programmes, has focused both policy attention and considerable financial resource on the practical measures that can enable young nursing, medical and other staff to take up positions in London. Simultaneously, the Metropolitan Police and the education authorities have developed extensive programmes of housing and other incentives to enable people to take up these roles.

For the voluntary sector two separate sets of issues can be identified. Firstly there are issues related to the sector itself. On the one hand, individual organisations and the sector itself need to design the mechanisms that will attract and keep the right people. On the other hand, there is a strong, and valid, sense that it is not right that individuals should profit excessively from their work within the sector.

The tension between these two pressures provides the context for this discussion paper. There are also issues about the sector in relation to other sectors. With the level of support now available to encourage people into the public service, it may well be that the voluntary sector finds itself in competition with an increasingly well-resourced public sector in pursuit of the same talented and committed individuals. This paper seeks to describe the ways in which the voluntary sector can offer an attractive, and competitive, recruitment market.

In the voluntary sector the problem is by no means easily defined. There are a number of ways of dividing the issues. Firstly there are differences within the **workforce**.

1. At the level of **basic grade staff** – those offering



caring or support services directly to clients, frequently without a professional qualification. At this level the voluntary sector market mimics the public service market, where there are significant and well-documented problems recruiting staff to basic grade or support functions, and these difficulties are the same in local authorities, health authorities and the voluntary sector. (*Future Imperfect*, The Kings Fund Inquiry)

- ▶ Are there particular measures that could make it easier for the voluntary sector to recruit to this level?
- ▶ Where do they find their competitive edge?
- ▶ What will be the experience of public sector front line workers if and when their jobs are transferred to the voluntary sector under TUPE arrangements?

2. Middle managers and project development staff – a seminar at the Baring Foundation in 2002 reported particular difficulties in recruiting to this level, and it has been the experience of funders in the sector that these jobs are hard to fill. There also seems to be very high turnover in some parts of the sector.

3. The most senior posts in the organisation, whether termed manager or **chief executive**. There are anecdotal reports of a range of difficulties with these posts. They can be difficult to fill, and trustees say they believe they are selecting from too narrow a field. At the same time, there is a concern at the rapid turnover at some levels in these jobs, with comments about the job simply becoming much more difficult and demanding at a time when those potential recruits consider the benefits do not outweigh the disadvantages. And there are also concerns about the chief executives who have stayed too long.

The second way of dividing the issue is by the **type of organisation**. A review of the organisations funded by CPF, and by a few other London grant-making trusts, indicates that, although some organisations encompass both functions, it is still possible to divide organisations as predominantly service delivery organisations, or predominantly policy or second tier organisations.

- ▶ Are there differences in recruitment and retention problems?
- ▶ Do service delivery organisations working directly with service users find it more difficult to recruit staff, and so mirror the dilemmas in the public sector?
- ▶ Does the passion for the issue and the desire to be personally involved outweigh this?

Policy development organisations, or those concerned with offering infrastructure support, may seem more remote from the service. On the other hand, they can offer their staff apparently more comfortable conditions, and in some cases the opportunity to have a real influence.

The third means of analysing the sector is by the **size of organisation**. Large organisations can offer more support, and sometimes even the opportunity for progression. But sometimes they may seem insufficiently distinguishable from their public sector rivals in the recruitment marketplace. Equally, in small organisations staff may have more opportunity to influence the direction of the organisation, and may therefore feel more of a sense of motivation, while foregoing the opportunity to develop a career within a larger organisation.

4. Why does this matter? To whom does it matter?

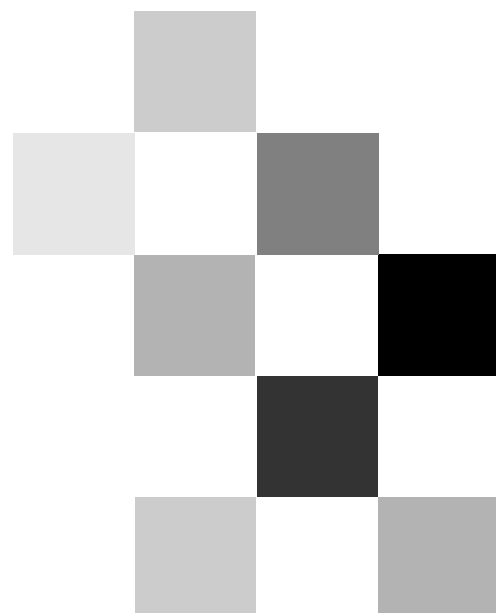
This paper has described an urgent problem as ‘one that threatens us all.’ Is this simply alarmism? Who does it threaten? Does it matter if the voluntary sector loses staff to other providers of public services?

Threats to Government – a core feature of current government policy is to work closely with the voluntary sector both to improve the delivery of public service and to build strong communities. If these voluntary organisations are not able to attract or retain staff of the necessary quality the contract delivery will be poor. This will imperil the success of the strategy.

Threat to the voluntary sector – many national and local voluntary organisations have taken on government contracts to deliver services, and many are basing their current business plans on their ability to do so. If they are unable to recruit and retain staff with sufficient skill, this will endanger the funded project, and may well have a greater impact on the reputation of the organisation itself, and on the sector as a whole. Contract conditions will be tightened or contracts may be lost, resulting in a loss of reputation, of funding and, possibly, of identity. The reputation of the voluntary sector amongst the community and amongst its funders may be damaged. Will independent funders fund organisations that have failed to get contracts because they are too expensive or which have lost them because they have lost key staff or failed to recruit?

Threat to grant-making trusts – all independent funders experience periods in which projects and funding are frozen while replacement staff are recruited. This is particularly crucial in schemes that are starting up and where there is a strong element of innovation and monitoring and evaluation. Trustees become wary of agreeing funding where it cannot be guaranteed that the scheme will start and finish to the agreed timetable because of recruitment and retention difficulties. These sorts of failures may lead to trustees becoming risk-averse.

Threat to the users of voluntary sector services – the voluntary sector in London has the potential to reach the poor and deprived communities of London more effectively than either the public or the private sectors. However, inadequately skilled and motivated workers do not provide the best services for poor and deprived communities in London.



5. The impact of the environment

Voluntary organisations do not exist in isolation. Just like all other sectors they are both a product of the financial structures that shape and define them, and to a certain extent the regulatory environment in which they operate. They are also, perhaps even more than other sectors, moulded and influenced in their behaviour by public perception and views.

The funding environment

Although the funding of the voluntary sector is immensely varied, common features are that it is frequently uncertain, nearly always complex to manage, and usually provided by a number of different sources.

Most voluntary organisations of whatever size, but particularly the small and medium sized organisations, are funded by a mixture of relatively short term grants for particular projects, and possibly contracts for service delivery. The role of the trustees and senior staff is to reconcile this uneven and apparently unstable funding base with the need to provide a stable service and a sound platform for recruiting and retaining staff.

The prevalence of short term funding for projects is frequently cited as one of the reasons for the difficulty in finding appropriate staff. In a three year funding period it can take six months to recruit the right person, a further six months to get their activities fully operational, and then, before the third year begins, the post-holder is inevitably seeking alternative employment. The cost to the sector and to its funders of false starts and aborted projects has not been quantified, but, if the anecdotes are to be believed, it is significant.

The complexity of the funding environment also has implications for the role and task of senior staff. Repeatedly, the challenges of grant and contract compliance were cited as reasons for the exhaustion and dissatisfaction of senior staff. Juggling the expectations of different and, occasionally, contradictory funders is part and parcel of the role of the senior staff member in a small voluntary organisation.

It is not, however, normally the reason they were motivated to apply for their job in the first place. This dissonance between hopes and aspirations, and the reality of the funding environment, is seen as one of the key challenges for these roles.

The regulatory environment

The regulatory environment also plays its part in influencing the recruitment and retention of staff. For good reasons charitable organisations must only apply their resource to meeting their own charitable objects. Enhanced salary packages, 'golden hellos' and other financial inducements are normally seen as inappropriate ways of spending charitable money.

Trustees – rightly – feel they are under an obligation to maximise the funds available for direct charitable purposes, and yet they also know that they are operating in a competitive environment in which the conditions offered to staff will mean real and tangible differences to their ability to recruit. The regulatory environment extends beyond charitable law.

Housing organisations are restricted in the extent to which they can offer housing to their staff as part of an incentive package. Care organisations need to account for the ways in which they recruit and retain staff.

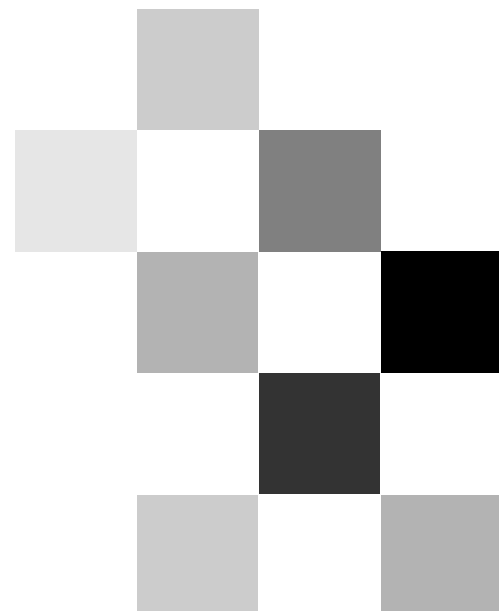
While these regulations are all important checks to protect both the integrity of the organisations, their resources and, crucially, the well-being of service users, the regulatory environment does inhibit managers from using maximum flexibility in the recruitment and retention of staff.

The public interest in the voluntary sector

These restraints are in place in part because of the vulnerability of the users of voluntary sector services, but also because of the critical role played by public attitudes to the voluntary sector. The sector has a reputation for operating from a firm values base, acting in a way that demonstrates that the only beneficiary of the voluntary organisation is the service user themselves, and that staff and trustees do not benefit excessively.

All the research illustrates that retaining high levels of public trust and confidence is essential if the sector is to thrive. Once suspicion develops about the motivations of the sector, and in particular any sense that individuals are motivated by greed or self-interest, the future of the sector is jeopardised. It is therefore an important part of the environment that voluntary organisations, in seeking to address the recruitment crisis, attend to the concerns of the public and their attitudes to the sector.

These three aspects of the environment – the funding environment, the regulatory environment and the environment of public opinion – have a major impact on the extent to which the voluntary sector can address the recruitment crisis it is now facing.



6. Using a different rod

What draws people to work in any sector? What are the incentives and attractions? What offers are voluntary organisations making when they start the process of recruitment?

Passion

Traditionally people have been drawn to work in the voluntary sector by a passion for the cause, and by a feeling that the voluntary sector offered the primary vehicle for making a contribution to the community. Even a cursory glance at the job advertisements demonstrates that this is no longer the province of the voluntary sector alone.

Advertisements for organisations as diverse as the Metropolitan Police and Shell offer the opportunity to make a contribution to the community. Organisations competing for applicants in the graduate market are particularly conscious of the need to demonstrate that their organisations offer applicants the opportunity to make such a contribution.

For many people in the voluntary sector, a passion to change the world or meet particular needs was undoubtedly a motivator in first applying for a role. The fact that the organisation was in the voluntary sector was largely coincidental. The motivation was the cause.

However, with much more movement between sectors, particularly between the public and voluntary sectors, the value of passion and commitment is no longer only found in the voluntary sector, and indeed other organisations searching for staff are clearly seeking to attract people on the basis that they could fulfil a desire to 'make a difference' in other settings.

Challenge to the sector

Can the voluntary sector do more to promote job opportunities as offering a chance to make a real difference? Is there a risk that the more professional voluntary sector brand has made it difficult for the sector to promote itself as a place where people with a passion for social change can flourish?

Example – recruitment literature from the Metropolitan Police

London's Metropolitan Police Service is recognised as one of the world's finest. Responsible for policing an area of 620 square miles and a population of 7.2 million, the Met employs well over 35,000 people who work together to achieve the goal of making London the safest major city in the world. As we embark on the 21st century, London is more crowded and multicultural than ever before. While this makes for an exciting melting pot of nationalities, faiths, backgrounds and persuasions, it also presents the Met with a unique – and uniquely rewarding – set of challenges. The variety of roles and experience available through working for the Met mirrors the diversity of the communities we serve. Armed with the very best in training and with the latest technology at your disposal, you could play an important part in creating a city to be proud of. If you are interested in contributing to the efforts of the Metropolitan Police Service – working with and for your community, as well as its visitors – please feel free to explore the rest of this website. Or drop in to our friendly careers office, located at New Scotland Yard.

The very different interests that motivate people require further analysis. While for some the desire to work closely with a particular client group may be attractive, for others the ability to influence policy at a high level may be just as important. Again, some value the high media profile that some voluntary sector jobs offer, while others are motivated more by the chance of closeness to particular communities. Honesty both about these motivations, and about the 'offer' that any particular job makes, will be an important component in making recruitment in the sector easier.

Pay and pensions

In preparing this paper we have encountered more anger, emotion and confusion on the issue of pay than on anything else. People working in the voluntary sector assert that they would not be working there 'for the money'. Almost universally there is an assumption among them that pay levels are lower than the equivalent roles in the public or private sectors.

While stating that they are personally not motivated by pay, they have a tendency to lament the fact that others now coming into the sector, apparently find lower pay a barrier to entry. At the same time they resist recommendations which suggest higher pay is the answer.

In truth, the issue of pay is probably more complex and more varied. While undoubtedly some voluntary sector roles pay less well than some apparently comparable public sector roles, equally some are rather better paid.

It may be useful to consider the two differing perspectives on reward that this paper has highlighted. There is the perspective of the applicant, and the extent to which s/he is likely to be influenced in their choices by remuneration. And there is the perspective of the organisation, and the extent to which it believes that there is justification for spending scarce resources attracting individuals.

There is, of course, a significant literature reviewing the extent to which people are influenced by remuneration in their search for work. As in all other sectors individuals coming to work in the voluntary sector have a number of different and frequently contradictory attitudes to pay.

What does seem clear is that these attitudes change at different stages of people's lives. For example, a number of senior recruits to the sector already have commercial or other pension arrangements in place, and for them the level of remuneration may be less determining than for someone at a different stage of life.

However, the levels of pay do have an influence on the range of people willing and able to apply for roles in the voluntary sector. Salaries set below market rates will attract people for whom salary is either not perceived as an important factor, or those for whom it is not the only income. This narrowing of the pool from which people are recruited is a serious inhibitor for the sector.

Pay is also important because it forms part of perception. Many observers of the sector, including those professionally engaged in recruiting into the sector, reported that low pay is an assumed norm for posts in the voluntary sector, and that candidates from outside will frequently reject the sector as a source of possible jobs because they believe, rightly or wrongly, that the pay will be inadequate.

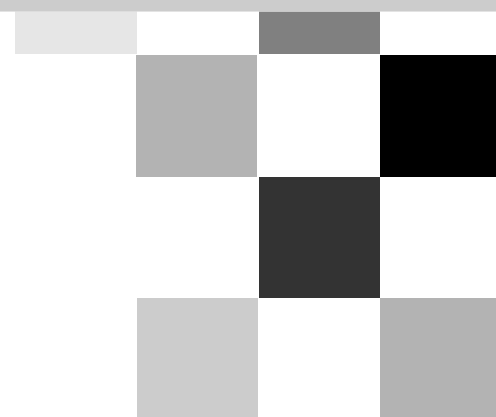
A rough survey of posts advertised in the broadsheet papers in the first month of 2004 revealed that the picture is, in truth, much more complicated. Levels of pay vary enormously between advertised posts, but it is hard to draw the conclusion that the voluntary sector, particularly in London, is paying any less well than the public sector.

What is different is the other advantages that come with pay. Whitehall recruitment offers career progression and a degree of security of tenure, even though the pay does not compete with similar posts in the sector. Equally senior posts in the voluntary sector are advertised with very different levels of pay, but even the best paid tend to lack the support structure that senior posts in the health service or local government offer.

A critical difference between the sectors, especially at a senior level, is compensation for severance. While rapid turnover in the senior jobs in the public sector is well documented, there is scope for compensation when relations sour. The voluntary sector, partly because of its income base, and partly because of the regulatory environment, is not able to offer these sorts of compensation packages, and this may well be a disincentive to those who believe they are taking a risk in joining a voluntary organisation at a senior level.

Challenges to funders

Funders need to consider whether paying the additional cost of recruiting the right individual is a suitable use of their funding. They also need to develop policies about meeting the costs of pension contributions and other salary enhancements.



Perks – conditions of service

The need to attract people back into the workplace has created a real interest in different terms and conditions for staff at all levels in a wide range of organisations. Part time working, term time working and flexible arrangements are all widely advertised across the public sector. Specific NHS campaigns to encourage clinicians back to work have highlighted the possibilities of working in different ways, and across Whitehall, in policy jobs, there are a growing number of senior people working very differently from their predecessors. Equally, organisations are experimenting with offering sabbaticals as a reward for long service.

While it is rare for voluntary organisations to advertise that flexible working is available, many voluntary organisations do actually offer it in practice. In terms of attracting people to work in the sector it may be necessary to formalise some of these advantages and publicise the possibility of different working patterns.

For some organisations the cost of offering flexibility presents a real barrier. However, losing staff or failing repeatedly to make good appointments costs organisations dear. It may be that by restricting the budget required to retain staff, voluntary organisations are instead using scarce charitable funds on repeated recruitment exercises.

Conditions of service go far beyond working hours and leave arrangements. The physical conditions in which many voluntary organisations are housed are unattractive and uncomfortable. Although this is frequently a result of costs, it may also reflect an attitude to the organisation which is part of the culture of the sector and is unhelpful in attracting new people.

Recruitment consultants report that the image potential candidates have of the voluntary sector is frequently coloured by the poor physical working conditions and the lack of good support. In many ways these voluntary organisations are similar to small and medium enterprises that cannot offer the package of support provided by large institutions. Nevertheless, small and medium enterprises, particularly in the growing creative industries, are increasingly developing good conditions for staff in order to enable them to recruit in a very tight and difficult employment market.

EXAMPLE

In Whitehall it is now commonplace for very senior officials to work part time. This is not now apparently any bar to progression and indeed Sumar Chakrabarti, on his appointment as Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development, announced the fact that he would be adjusting his hours in order to spend time with his family.

Job design

In an earlier piece of work for the Baring Foundation on the role of chief executives in small and medium sized organisations, many respondents commented on the sheer difficulty of their roles. They were now expected to operate on so many different levels, and take such wide ranging responsibility, that many felt that their job was simply not attractive anymore, and were either contemplating leaving or recognising that they would be hard to replace.

Many of the senior staff who contributed to this paper commented on the significant pressures created by the funding and regulatory environment. Juggling different systems of funding compliance, a package of different funding periods as well as an increased regulatory and inspection regime, has contributed to the pressures experienced by senior staff. At the same time many report that the demands of working in partnership with other agencies, while desirable in itself, is stretching their capacity and skills.

Much of the voluntary sector has adopted a management model, with associated job descriptions, that is based on many aspects of the civil service or local government. This style assumes a pyramid structure for management, with accountability for policy development and for delivery ending in the apex. At a time when these major employers are changing their style of management, and seeking to find and promote new models of leadership, this approach needs at least to be reconsidered.

Challenge to the voluntary sector

Each role in an organisation needs to be considered afresh at the time of a vacancy. Are there different ways in which the function can be structured? Could the organisation afford to employ some additional support, possibly even on a temporary basis, to enable the design of the particular job to reflect the reality of the current environment?

The requirement of heading the professional service of any organisation, as well as running the business, is a taxing combination. Theatres are run by an executive director with an artistic director. Health centres increasingly have a practice manager working alongside senior clinicians. Law firms will retain a head of chambers.

Do these models of dual accountability offer anything for the voluntary sector? Are there ways in which the complex and demanding funding and regulatory environment can be responded to through a new way of defining and developing the roles at the senior level?

More radically still, are there ways in which some organisations can share their business management work, allowing a separate organisation to deliver services, or develop policy, while a shared resource function offers the company secretary, and financial management functions?

The effect of the programme of ‘Modernising Government’ is to make the management of public services much more responsive to consumer needs, and it does this through encouraging delegation of decision making as far as possible, and by enabling a much more flexible working environment, in which the emphasis is more on task than on role.

This approach is more motivating for staff, freeing them from some of the adverse consequences of hierarchical systems and allowing them more influence in their work. There has been no equivalent in the voluntary sector, and this is largely because the voluntary sector itself has developed a number of pioneering and innovative ways of working. However, there must be a risk that new styles of work in the public sector begin to offer a more flexible and attractive option for some candidates.

EXAMPLE

A voluntary organisation in search of a new chief executive concluded that actually they wanted to appoint a two year transformational chief executive, but would in the long term seek a more consolidating senior manager.

EXAMPLE

A voluntary organisation reconsidered the role of the Company Secretary and created a senior post with responsibility for governance and compliance, thus freeing the chief executive for leadership and development.

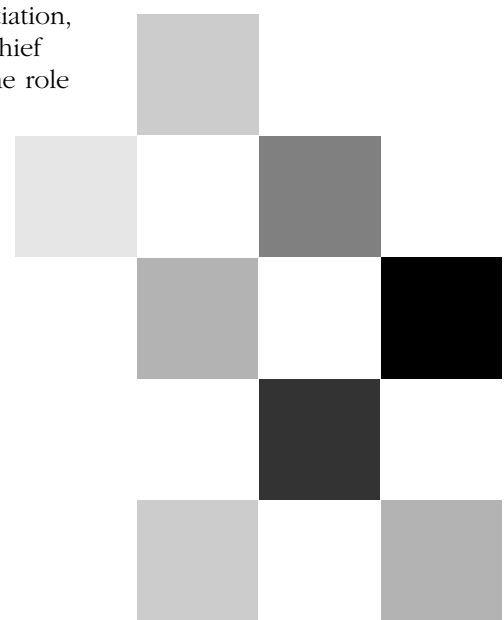
There are particular issues about the role of the director or chief executive. Many chief executives report feeling both over-stretched and over-burdened as they shoulder responsibility for finance and human resource management at the same time as trying to offer strategic guidance and manage services. The burden is great, but the skill set required is also large.

There is also an issue about job definition. There are differences between the requirements of a chief executive in a period of growth compared with a period of consolidation. The traditional model of appointment through which a senior post is filled for an indefinite period may not be the best way to achieve the essential ‘fit’ with the skills of the candidates and the needs of the organisation.

EXAMPLE

A group of councils of voluntary service in South West London commissioned some brand development work considering the CVS brand, its associations and its strengths and weaknesses. The resulting work enables them to describe more effectively their activity, and serves to position them more effectively.

As the work of the voluntary sector gets more complex and more demanding, the workload of senior managers in the sector is likely also to increase. Regulatory requirements, and the demands of fund raising and fund negotiation, can both burden the chief executive and make the role less sustainable.



Profile

In a very competitive recruitment market, brand recognition is very important. People apply for jobs because they have some sense of identity with the advertising organisation. While — undoubtedly — some voluntary organisations are household names, most are not. The profile of voluntary organisations, and the way in which the whole sector is viewed, is therefore rather critical for recruitment.

Despite the high profile of the voluntary sector, and the important work it does, it continues to be seen by outsiders as essentially an amateur operation, frequently not very effective and offering little to someone with ambition, entrepreneurial skill and the desire to make a difference.

This crude, and inaccurate, image of the sector significantly influences the recruitment market in which it is operating. The sector often fails to sell itself effectively. This means that its image continues to be a poor one, and this has a direct impact on the range of people applying to work in the sector.

In fact, there is a good story to tell. The sector has offered many individuals successful and interesting careers, with real opportunities for change and for challenge. The breadth of the voluntary sector enables people to explore really very complex areas of policy, and — for those who reach senior positions — it increasingly provides opportunities for real influence and impact. Although there is no career structure, the biographies of some of the leaders of the sector suggests that enriching and rewarding careers can be built.

Preference

Once people join organisations there is frequently a great deal of work establishing working styles, leadership and learning styles. Organisations that do spend money on building strong teams often explore Belbin roles and Myers Briggs categories.

But working preferences before joining an organisation are rarely explored with the same intensity or rigour. These preferences will change at different times of a person's life, but may also indicate deep and abiding styles. So, for example, some will always be happier working in small, co-operative teams, sharing responsibility, while others will crave the stimulus of large, more structured organisations.

Challenge to the voluntary sector

To develop a more persuasive brand with which to attract the sort of recruits that are required.

Recruitment consultants focus very strongly on personal preferences and organisational fit. They will advise their clients to seek out individuals who will be most comfortable working in a particular style of organisation. Yet most voluntary organisations, for good reasons, manage their own recruitment, and will therefore tend not to focus sufficiently on personal preference.

Traditional recruitment is not usually based on a good understanding of the different motivations that attract people to particular types of organisations, and will instead seek to match candidate's skills with particular roles, without analysing in too much detail the style and nature of the recruiting organisation.

7. Fishing in a different pool

If using different inducements is one way of addressing a recruitment problem, the other way is to change the pool of people who we expect to work in particular ways.

Expanding the pool of potential recruits

The voluntary sector is not alone in being concerned about the numbers of people responding to recruitment approaches, and, in common with many other sectors, is considering the potential size of the pool. While there have traditionally been a number of different sources for recruits, this study suggests that the most common routes into the voluntary sector seem to be:

- ▶ recruitment of new graduates;
- ▶ people, particularly women, returning to work after a career break;
- ▶ people who have completed successful careers elsewhere, perhaps the armed forces or the City, then taking on senior roles in larger charities.

Obviously, this is a simplification of the very many different routes used to enter the sector, but examination of the work of other sectors suggests that these approaches may need to be broadened still further.

Diversity

In the corporate sector it is striking that a number of companies have consciously pursued a diversity agenda in order to widen the pool of potential recruits. The business case for equality in employment is focused clearly on the need to recruit the best, rather than on social justice. This is echoed in the 'Modernising Government' agenda, which recognises that for public service delivery the public sector also needs to diversify the pool in which it fishes.

Recruitment exercises by service companies such as Centrica, as well as by other businesses, focus on the need for a diverse workforce, and particular efforts are made to recruit people from the black and minority ethnic communities.

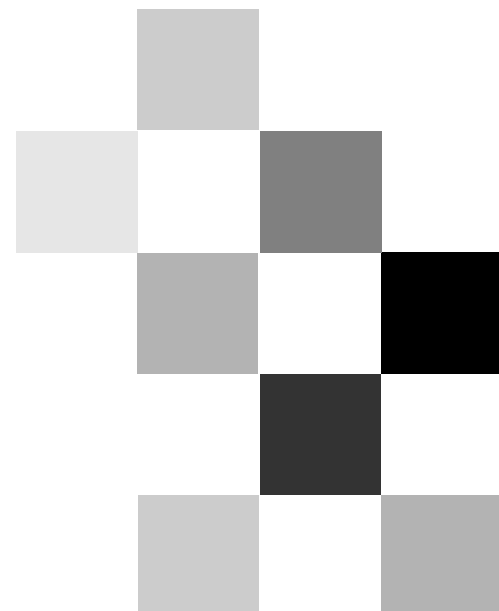
EXAMPLE

The Employers' Forum on Disability has been established in order to help companies attract disabled employees. The rationale is clearly expressed in their literature:

"More and more businesses are realising that equal opportunities in employment makes commercial sense. Recruiting and retaining the best workforce is vital for future success. Disabled people are a largely untapped pool of talent and an often neglected market, but promoting best practice can be difficult. Membership of the Employers' Forum on Disability makes it easier to gain top team commitment and develop practical programmes for change, to learn from the experience of other organisations and to keep up to date with the fast changing and complex issue of disability."

The voluntary sector in the UK pioneered the development of policies promoting and facilitating equal opportunities. The result of this pioneering work can be seen in the shape and style of the modern voluntary sector in London. It has created a significant number of local organisations that are run by disabled people for disabled people.

This has contributed to the fact that the Disability Rights Commission can be run by highly skilled and experienced disabled people. There are over 1,000 mother-tongue and supplementary schools in London that are run by refugees themselves. The voluntary sector has a good track record of promoting women to senior executive positions and it even has a distinguished record of achievement in creating workplaces in which lesbians and gay men can work with confidence.



In many ways, the voluntary sector has traditionally pursued equality policies on the basis of social justice, but has reaped some of the benefits of a wider recruitment pool. The voluntary sector has led the way over at least two decades in bringing in a wider workforce. This competitive edge may now be eroded as other employers demonstrate its openness to recruit people from under-represented groups. The private sector in particular is increasingly advertising the warm welcome it offers to groups previously overlooked in their recruitment processes.

While it is important not to overstate this, it is clear that the strategy of 'fishing in a wider pool' is now much more widespread, and this has been adopted because of the recruitment crisis facing most sectors.

If the voluntary sector is no longer the brand leader in this respect it will have implications for the ways in which the sector recruits in the future. There is also no room for complacency. While the voluntary sector has pioneered the development of equality policies in recruitment, the continuing lack of many visible black and minority ethnic leaders in the voluntary sector is a powerful illustration of the weaknesses of the strategy, or at least of its implementation.

Different types of recruit

There are other ways of expanding the pool, however. Voluntary organisations have successfully recruited people with very different career paths and at different stages in their lives. The reliance on young and committed graduates for particular jobs may come to seem outdated. The voluntary sector can offer interesting work opportunities for people at retirement age, or for those taking a career break.

But the sector also needs to acknowledge the very wide range of people already working in the sector who could do so much more. In London the contribution of refugees to the development of the refugee community sector is a largely unsung story. The wide-ranging skills and experience devoted to the development of this part of the sector has resulted in the development of some energetic and successful voluntary and community organisations.

Refugees are not, however, found in the rest of the voluntary sector. While this may, in part, be informed by the willingness of refugees to seek work in other organisations, it must also be a reflection of recruitment practices that do not attract and support people who have already demonstrated high levels of skills and commitment.

EXAMPLE

One London borough successfully addressed its problem in recruiting home care staff by targeting young Australian women in London for their 'gap year'. They found that the different type of recruit was popular with service users and brought a perspective and energy to the role that was otherwise difficult to find.

Equally, the voluntary sector could well become a sector in which many people expect to spend a portion of their working lives. Civil service secondments to industry are now commonplace. Secondments from Whitehall to management jobs in the voluntary sector are much rarer.

Yet at the same time the voluntary sector has provided a steady supply of secondees and long term recruits to the public sector. Perhaps the voluntary sector needs to be nurtured and made more attractive and competitive, in order that this seed-bed of talent is renewed.

Challenge to government

While the government wishes to continue to work with and through the voluntary sector, it needs to understand it better. By running a programme of secondments into the sector from Whitehall, the sector itself would be strengthened and developed, while at the same time senior civil servants would develop the skills and understanding to enable them to work even more effectively with the sector.

The charitable sector is held in high public esteem and yet at the same time it is not seen as a place where successful careers are built. Hilary Armstrong MP, when she was Local Government Minister in 1998, addressed a group of senior managers in Whitehall and made a persuasive case that modern careers will be judged successful if they include time in the private, voluntary and statutory sectors.

While there is a growing amount of movement between the public and private sectors, the voluntary sector remains excluded from this circle, with few people coming into the sector for five or six years as part of a varied and rich career.

It is possible to imagine a time when routinely high flying and ambitious individuals would seek to work in a voluntary organisation for a period of their lives, without necessarily making a commitment to the sector for their whole careers. Notable individuals have done this, and their practice and knowledge is considerably enhanced by doing so. Making this into more common practice would significantly affect the recruitment problem, and would also erode the unhelpful myths and misconceptions that bedevil voluntary sector development.

Matthew Taylor, formerly Director of IPPR, has argued that one response to the crisis in teacher recruitment is to make it somehow obligatory for graduates to spend at least two years of their lives teaching in schools. There are, he argues, a great many people who do not wish to teach for a lifetime, but could make a real contribution for a period of their lives. The voluntary sector, with a much wider offering, could, perhaps, try to build a culture where far more people expect to work within it at some time or another.

Different sources

Traditionally secondment has been the poor relation of recruitment. Charities have accepted secondments as part of the offering made by companies, and occasionally by government, but again with rare exceptions, they have not been used as well as they might.

EXAMPLE

When a high flying Treasury civil servant was seconded to work in a community project, he not only brought invaluable skills of financial analysis, but was also able to help the organisation to position itself in the emerging debate about regeneration.

Skills in creating and managing secondment opportunities might also be developed as a response to the recruitment crisis, and not simply as an additional extra. There is no reason why a great many jobs could not be done by people on secondment, and the voluntary sector could become adept at structuring its requirement for staff to attract secondees.

Challenge to funders and to the sector

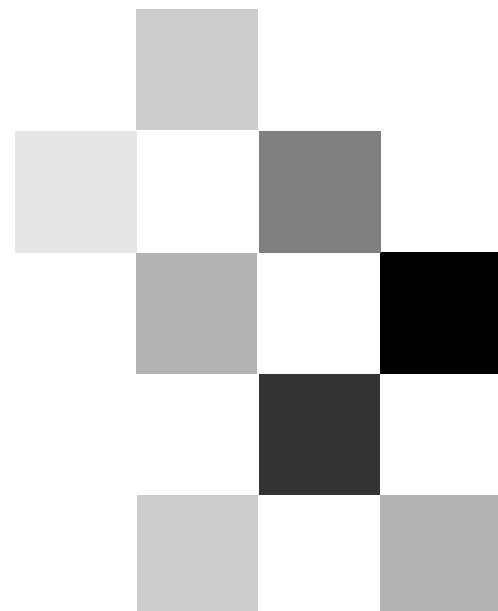
Is there a need for a better resourced brokerage service, using modern human resource techniques to place people on substantial secondments within the voluntary sector? Is there scope for the development of a new approach to secondment that sees some particular roles carried out through secondments? Whitehall departments second staff to do particular functions, frequently operating at very senior levels. Could there be some reciprocity about this, with a planned series of secondments, filling senior executive posts in the voluntary sector?

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Access to the sector

There also seem to be questions about access to jobs in the voluntary sector. Repeatedly those with whom we discussed this described the sector as unwelcoming to outsiders, and difficult to access both by people at the start of their careers and by those who wished to make a change later in life.

Young people without experience tended to be ignored by organisations searching through the established advertising route, and the lack of intern schemes, or a recognisable approach to those about to graduate, made it difficult for people to join the sector at the start of their careers. Equally, we had a number of comments about the difficulty of making a change at a later stage. While this seems to be contradicted by the number of people in very senior jobs in the sector that have come from a military or commercial background, it seems to be difficult to make this move below chief executive level.



Challenge to the sector

Can the sector devise an intern scheme to help young people explore the sector? Can it offer a 'milk round' at universities, competing with corporate and statutory players to recruit new staff?

The drive to recruit new graduates preoccupies the private sector. Considerable sums are devoted to travelling around the universities, speaking to students in their final year and seeking to spot talent. This 'milk round', as it is still disparagingly known, is a ready source of recruits for the corporate sector, and is relied upon even in this era of complex and diverse career paths.

Yet there is no equivalent promotion for the voluntary sector. Graduates find themselves working in the voluntary sector as if by accident. They join an organisation for the reasons this paper has spelt out, but there are no readily accessible routes. The inexperienced believe that they cannot simply apply for jobs, and the requirement to work first as a volunteer precludes all but those with independent means.

Challenge to funders

Can this be supported? Is there a funding structure that enables a shared recruitment exercise? Would voluntary organisations be prepared to subscribe to such a service? Could futurebuilders support an initiative that might have such potentially far reaching implications for the strength and vitality of the sector? Is there a way in which such an activity can become self supporting?

Job structure

The other part of enlarging the pool is to consider job structure. The current arrangements offer little scope for new structures, when the only constraint on the length of contract offered is the amount of funding available.

Articles about interim management comment on the attraction that these roles have for certain people. With anticipated high turnover in some jobs, is it possible to structure particular roles as fixed term ones? Is it possible to recognise right from the start that some jobs will be filled by people who will stay for 18 months and then structure those jobs accordingly?

With senior jobs, is it possible to invite individuals to tender for the role, rather than applying for the job? Candidates could be asked to explain what they could offer for a given sum, in a given period, and for some significant senior roles this would allow for appropriate skills to be targeted at the right time. It is particularly noticeable in the burgeoning consultancy and interim management market, that those who enjoy this method of work will often describe the pleasure of fixed-term assignments, and yet the recruitment market for executive jobs still assumes long-term commitment.

It is equally striking that most job advertisements in the voluntary sector still describe roles as full or part time, or suitable for job share. It seems unlikely that the sector which offers so many different opportunities is not better able to structure work to meet the needs, aspirations and other interests of candidates.

Are some voluntary sector jobs better suited to part time work? Have we explored sufficiently the value of particular roles being done for one or two days a week? Or six months in a year? Or one week a month?

8. Conclusions

This paper started with a description of the private worries of chief executives, trustees and funders in the voluntary sector. Its premise was that unless these worries were addressed, and with some urgency, the voluntary sector would prove incapable of rising to the challenges ahead.

The voluntary sector shows ingenuity and imagination in dealing with the myriad of problems facing it. It is renowned for its skill in developing new funding streams, attracting public policy attention and devising brilliant solutions to complex and challenging problems.

This paper has argued that this ingenuity needs now to be focused on the recruitment needs of the sector. Imagination and lateral thinking will be required in a highly competitive market. This paper has made a number of suggestions which provide a starting point for a much more elaborate and far reaching strategy.

The challenge to funders is to take note of the recruitment crisis, and back the imaginative and risky ways of averting it. The challenge to the sector is to apply skill and ingenuity to resolving a problem that otherwise threatens us all.

Yet none of these strategies will be cost free. They require champions and supporters, both to promote new ways of working and to finance them. Those who wish to see a thriving, energetic and engaged voluntary sector, able to rise to the challenges of the 21st century, need also to consider where and how the looming recruitment crisis can receive an adequate and effective response.

Summary of strategies to be used

Using a different rod

Passion
Pay
Perks (terms and conditions)
Job design
Profile
Preference

Fishing in a different pool

Diversity
Different types of recruit
Different routes
Access
Changing job offer

Appendix

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Attendees at CPF Seminar

- Stuart Barber *Unison*
- Mark Clarke *LVSC*
- Peter Dale *City Parochial Foundation*
- John Muir
- Robin Hazelwood
- Martin Jones
- Bharat Mehta
- Elahe Panahi
- Jacqui Finn *Richmond CVS*
- Ruth Power *Advice UK*
- Ian Redding *Association of London Government*
- Sharon Shea *Esmée Fairbairn Foundation*
- Brian Wheelwright *Wates Foundation*

Information received from

- Tudor Trust
- Baring Foundation
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- City Parochial Foundation
- Richmond CVS



The logo for the City Parochial Foundation features the lowercase letters 'cpf' in a stylized, green, cursive font. To the right of this, the words 'CITY PAROCHIAL' and 'FOUNDATION' are stacked vertically in a black, uppercase, serif font.

CITY PAROCHIAL FOUNDATION

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City Parochial Foundation exists to benefit the poor of London and to provide support for community organisations that have charitable purposes. Set up in the late nineteenth century with an endowment provided through the sale of redundant City churches and the pooling of their assets, it has helped establish and support a large number of organisations.

Tackling disadvantage has been a key theme over the years. Current priorities include action to support disabled organisations, those tackling discrimination, violence and isolation particularly among black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, lesbians and gay men, young people, women's groups and established communities, often predominantly white, in areas of long term poverty.

The needs of refugees and asylum seekers are another important priority, and CPF was involved in setting up Employability Forum which assists agencies helping displaced professionals to find appropriate employment.

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