

# Third Sector Opportunities

A study of work-related learning opportunities in the  
third sector for young people aged 14-19

FreshMinds



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# 1. Overview

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## Introduction

The third sector is a fast-growing part of the UK economy. Charities and social enterprises combined represent an annual turnover of around £75 billion, and that does not include over 11 million unpaid people who regularly engage in formal volunteering.

It is not just the impressive size and growth of the sector that attract interest. Third sector organisations reflect the working habits of a changing economy – relying on being flexible, having pockets of deep expertise and intelligently balancing the demands of multiple stakeholders.

There is a common misconception that a career in a third sector organisation is a ‘soft option’, that the lack of a competitive environment in some way limits improvement and stifles innovation. With social enterprise representing a genuinely viable alternative to the funding, fundraising and legacy payments models adopted by traditional charities, the sector is developing ‘sharper teeth’. Alongside their core activities, which are typically paid for through fundraising initiatives, larger charities have been swift to embrace the concept of social enterprise, and in some cases could be said to be the front-runners in developing it. Selling second-hand clothes in itself has little to do with international development or curing cancer, but when allied to organisations like Oxfam, or Cancer Research, it is an undeniably innovative model.

What can young people expect to learn from the third sector? They can learn how the competing pressures of making money, pursuing a mission, and creating an impact make the sector a challenging one in which to operate. They can learn how it is possible to realise a desire to do good and still earn a living, that it is possible to measure success in terms of impact, as well as profit, and that the desire to achieve and succeed exists in these organisations as much as it does in any hedge fund or recording studio.

With the private sector increasingly represented publicly in the bullying, hectoring tone of *The Apprentice* and *Dragons’ Den*, and headlines from the public sector highlighting problems with an underperforming NHS and education sector, the third sector is not only becoming an attractive employment option but is also in danger of becoming trendy. Efforts by celebrity chefs to improve school dinners, green entrepreneurs in the climate change debate, and private sector appointments at board level in charities are highlighting the dynamism, commitment and passion that third sector roles demand and the difference that they can make.



## Executive summary

Work-related learning (WRL) is defined as planned activity that uses work as a context for learning. It involves young people learning about themselves and the world of work, and develops their skills and attributes to succeed in the future working environment.

Commissioned by the NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts), this is one of three reports looking at how organisations and businesses in different sectors can engage more effectively with education. The other reports focus on the rural economy and the creative industries.

The study challenges traditional approaches to WRL and examines models of engagement between third sector organisations and 14-19 year olds, which provide the opportunity for young people to develop the skills necessary to succeed in the future. Case studies are used to highlight some of the key benefits for those participating: young people, schools and colleges, and third sector employers.

### The third sector and the future world of work

The third sector includes charities, voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutual bodies. Their shared characteristic is a commitment to social value rather than shareholder profits.

The third sector is a fast-growing part of the UK economy. Charities and social enterprises combined represent an annual turnover of around £75 billion, excluding the contribution of over 11 million unpaid volunteers. Third sector organisations reflect the working habits of a changing economy – they rely on their flexibility, expertise and ability to balance the demands of multiple stakeholders.

By engaging with the third sector, young people can learn how to operate among the competing pressures of making money, pursuing a mission and creating impact. They can learn how it is possible to do good and still earn a living, and that success can be measured in terms of impact, as well as profit. They can also see that the desire to achieve and succeed exists in not-for-profit organisations as much as it does in any hedge fund or recording studio.

## Summary of findings and recommendations

With current changes in education policy, WRL is increasingly growing in importance. Although the quality and scope of some WRL activities is open to criticism, their ability to benefit all those involved has been widely demonstrated. Our research has shown that there is potentially a great role for the third sector in WRL. But to improve opportunities and success, we recommend the following broad stages:



### 1 Getting the basics right

This means putting the third sector more explicitly on the government education and skills agenda – striking the right balance between local links and national structure, while learning from the best examples of WRL.

### 2 Developing suitable packages

This involves understanding what works for whom, and developing a platform for organisations to learn about WRL. Best practice guidelines for schools and third sector organisations would enable them to provide effective programmes for young people. We also highlight the need to get the right messages across in all communications, with appropriate use of intermediaries.

### 3 Fostering innovation

With a good structure in place, and more awareness of the benefits of engagement, more innovative approaches can be promoted. One way to do this is by engaging young people directly with projects and decision-making within them. We also recommend that more should be done to link the third sector with private sector corporate social responsibility objectives and resources, to help support WRL activities. There should also be a wider and more creative use of new technologies.

### Learning from the third sector

Third sector organisations demand commercial and business acumen, which they need to survive and to promote their causes. Wider skills (such as leadership, teamwork, drive, and communication skills) are also very important. Employers in the sector also seek specialist knowledge, and value it when young people challenge them and help them to innovate. But, above all, the sector demands the right attitude. Those working in third sector organisations must dedicate themselves to their mission, and believe that their goals are worthwhile.

WRL has typically been seen by third sector organisations as being about work experience placements, which many employers find both resource- and cost-intensive. Yet there are plenty of other ways to deliver WRL, such as mentoring, volunteering or project work. These need to be promoted so that a broad range of suitable activities is available to third sector employers.

Our research found a growing use of these other types of engagement. Real or virtual assignments and mentoring were both popular, although still mentioned far less frequently than traditional work experience. ‘Active’ forms of engagement, such as social enterprise and charity projects run by schoolchildren themselves, were particularly interesting.

### Why get involved?

As one would expect, altruistic motivations were the most common reason for engaging with education. Organisations wanted to help young people with opportunities for employment. But many also cited the need to promote the mission of their organisation, with an eye to developing a pool of talent to draw on as employees of the future. Third sector organisations also frequently saw WRL as a great way to build networks and reach out to communities, and this benefited both the education agenda and the organisation itself.

### What barriers are there?

During our study we identified many barriers preventing engagement. They will doubtless be familiar in schools and colleges. They were the ‘classics’ – no time, no money, no capacity. These could be tackled by moving from two-week work experience placements to more tailored and flexible approaches.

Third sector organisations had limited awareness of other types of WRL. Schools and colleges must be proactive in sharing such ways of engaging with them. There are some structural issues too – while charities are quite hierarchical, social enterprises represent more of a movement than a sector, and schools and colleges will need to approach each differently.

### Who decides within the third sector?

We also uncovered the dynamics behind the decisions to involve third sector organisations with WRL. The decision-makers are usually chief executives, directors or senior managers, suggesting that WRL programmes often appeal to leading people in organisations. Although senior involvement is undoubtedly good, several respondents had found it difficult to contact the right person to initiate WRL in the first place. The ‘one wish’ that respondents most frequently mentioned was for a better structure that allowed them to engage in the way they would like to.

## Recommendations for improved engagement

Our research has shown that there are challenges to developing better engagement with education in the third sector. Schools and colleges find it hard to engage with the sector, while its diversity and fragmentation can make effective communications difficult.

Despite this, there is a clear need to promote WRL in the sector, and an opportunity to promote and reward good practice widely. Making the third sector an important destination for skilled and committed young people will require the right structure and a broader understanding of the benefits of WRL. Technology could help to raise awareness, improve communications and encourage innovative practices and cross-sector collaboration.

## 2. Work-related learning in the third sector – setting the scene

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### Why this piece of work?

NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) has an interest in the third sector and is committed to nurturing the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs.

This research has been commissioned to examine models of engagement between smaller, more enterprising companies/organisations in the third sector and young people aged 14–19. It seeks to challenge traditional approaches to work-related learning and demonstrate through case studies some of the benefits for all those participating – the young people, those in education and the businesses/organisations.

This is one of three reports looking at how organisations and businesses in different sectors can engage more effectively with education. The other reports focus on the creative industries and the rural economy.

### In a nutshell: what we did

FreshMinds has tackled this project through the following strands:

- **Stakeholder and expert interviews:** detailed qualitative discussions with over 20 individuals in many government and third sector organisations.
- **Literature review:** we reviewed numerous literature sources on employer engagement, WRL and the third sector.
- **Survey of third sector organisations:** we conducted a largely qualitative survey of 55 third sector organisations engaged in WRL across the UK.

### What this is about – some definitions

#### Work-related learning

The Education Act 2002 defines work-related learning as:

*“... planned activity designed to use the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work, including learning through the experience of work, learning about work and working practices and learning the skills for work.”*

Examples of WRL activities include mock interviews, work simulations, role-plays, careers information, curriculum-linked visits, workshops, work experience, tasters, enterprise education, industry days, mentoring, coaching, part-time work, apprenticeships and voluntary work. Figure 1 shows a reasonably comprehensive set of WRL activities.

**Figure 1:**  
**Spider diagram of work-related learning activities**



Source: DCSF 2007<sup>1</sup>

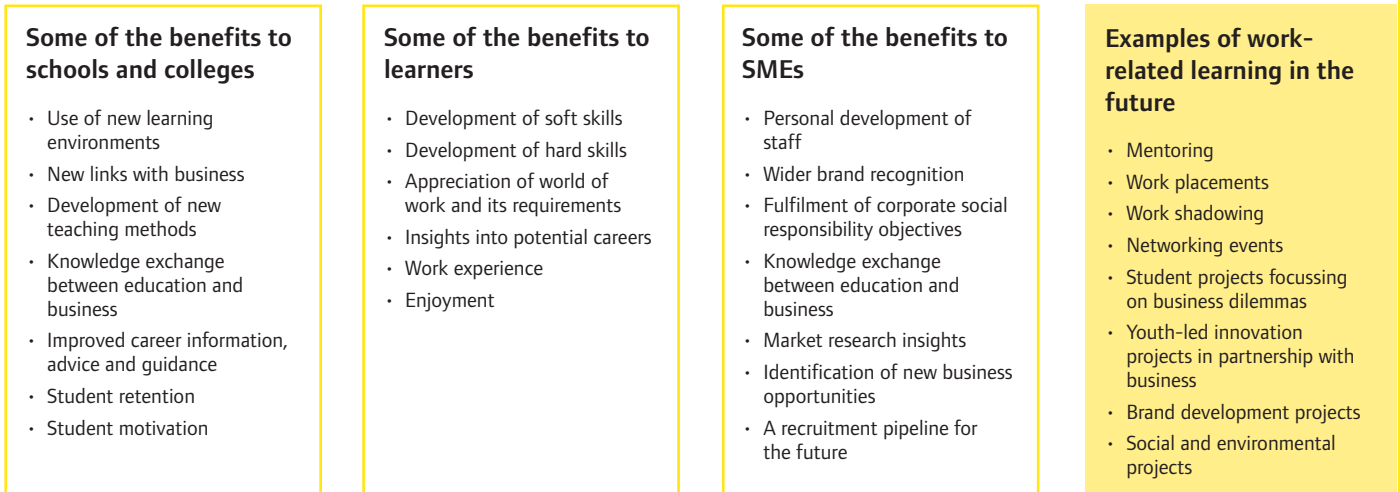
WRL, and employer engagement in the broader sense, has been shown to have a great range of benefits for all stakeholders involved.<sup>2</sup>

1. DCSF (2007) 'Building on the best – final report and implementation plan of the review of 14–19 work-related learning.' London: DCSF.

2. FreshMinds research and analysis.



**Figure 2:**  
**Work-related learning can benefit young people, employers and schools**



Source: Peter Grigg, Make Your Mark Campaign (2008)<sup>3</sup>

↑  
 Where the benefits to schools and colleges, learners and SMEs come together through mutually agreed objectives and outcomes.

## Benefits of work-related learning

Figure 2 shows a range of benefits of WRL for schools, learners, employers and the wider industry. It also shows how these benefits translate to the features of the future of WRL.<sup>4</sup>

These benefits are not automatic, however, and they can only be fully realised when the quality of employer engagement and WRL activities is ensured. Unfortunately, quality often remains an issue in the WRL domain and this can have adverse impact on perceptions of WRL and employers’ willingness to engage in it. Organisations such as the National Council for Educational Excellence and the Edge Foundation are currently undertaking major projects to ensure the quality of employer engagement and WRL delivery across the board.

## Third sector

‘Third sector’ is not an easy term to define meaningfully. For the purposes of this project, we have loosely defined it as comprising charities, voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals. Their shared characteristic is commitment to generating social value rather than focusing on shareholder value and profits. Throughout the project we have frequently engaged in conceptual and definitional debates with members and observers of the third sector who felt strongly about what falls and what does not fall within its domain. For instance, representatives of cooperatives argued against being seen as third sector organisations.<sup>5</sup> Such observations are interesting in that they relate to the nature of the sector, which is often characterised by fragmentation, lack of central

3. Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (2008) ‘Creative Opportunities’ London: NESTA.

4. Grigg, P. Make Your Mark Campaign (2008).

5. FreshMinds interview with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), quoting informed sources in the cooperative sector.

structures and common representation. Notwithstanding these arguments and the conceptual complexity of the sector, organisations falling within it tend to share common characteristics, such as being non-governmental, value-driven and reinvesting any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of conceptual issues, the third sector is increasingly becoming a major player in UK's employment structures and service delivery. The Charities Aid Foundation estimated that there were over 170,000 registered charities in England and Wales, with combined revenues of over £44.5 billion.<sup>7</sup> The recent Voluntary Sector Skills Survey estimates that the English voluntary sector consists of 559,000 people working as paid staff in organisations of two or more people.<sup>8</sup> These figures would be expanded immensely if one considered the vast numbers of unpaid volunteers who engage with the sector every year – a 2002 Home Office survey put that figure at 11.1 million individuals engaged in formal volunteering at least once a month.<sup>9</sup> In addition, there are approximately 55,000 social enterprises in the UK, with an annual turnover of £27 billion, or 1.3 per cent of the total turnover of all businesses with employees, and contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) estimated at £8.4 billion.<sup>10</sup>

## Why should we be interested in the third sector?

Aside from the impressive volumes, it is the rapid evolution of the third sector that merits a strong interest in its needs and development. Ever since the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2002, the voluntary and community sector (VCS, as it was then known) has been increasingly integrated in governmental planning and delivery of services, and government has been increasingly keen to forge long-lasting relationships with the sector and build up its capacity.<sup>11</sup> Subsequent years saw further

developments in this area, which included the setting up of bodies such as the Home Office's Active Communities Unit responsible for **ChangeUp** – an £80 million capacity-building programme for the VCS aiming to stimulate its infrastructure, skills base, and governance, with a view to stimulating its capacity for delivering a wider range of public services.

The term 'third sector' came into use with the 2006 HM Treasury/Cabinet Office report in which the government made further commitment to the sector's role. It was to be done through five commitments:<sup>12</sup>

- Ensuring the sector's voice is heard more loudly over the coming years, through supporting relevant campaigns.
- Expanding the range of delivery of public services by the third sector.
- Using the sector's reach to build active community links with those who are hard to reach.
- Fostering sustainable **social enterprises**, contributing to a strong economy and a fairer society.
- Helping to build an appropriate environment for the third sector organisations to achieve these changes.

The above plans were cemented in the full report in 2008, which set them out in a 10-year programme for working with the third sector.<sup>13</sup>

These ambitious plans are met with an emerging need for changes to the sector which will make it better placed to deliver to the high expectations. The changes are manifested structurally – in the need to explore alternative business models, and in terms of changing the skill sets required to flourish in the changing context.

6. Office of the Third Sector. See: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third\\_sector/about\\_us.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/about_us.aspx). [Last accessed 14th August 2008].

7. Estimates based on Guidestar and Charities Aid Foundation 2007 figures for registered charities in England and Wales.

8. UK Workforce Hub (2007) 'Voluntary sector skills survey 2007.' London: UK Workforce Hub.

9. Home Office (2003) 'Citizenship survey 2003.' London: Home Office.

10. Cabinet Office, Third sector statistics. See: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

11. HM Treasury (2002), 'Comprehensive Spending Review 2002.' London: HM Treasury.

12. Cabinet Office/HM Treasury (December 2006) 'The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration.' London: HM Treasury.

13. Cabinet Office/HM Treasury (January 2008) 'The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration.' London: HM Treasury.

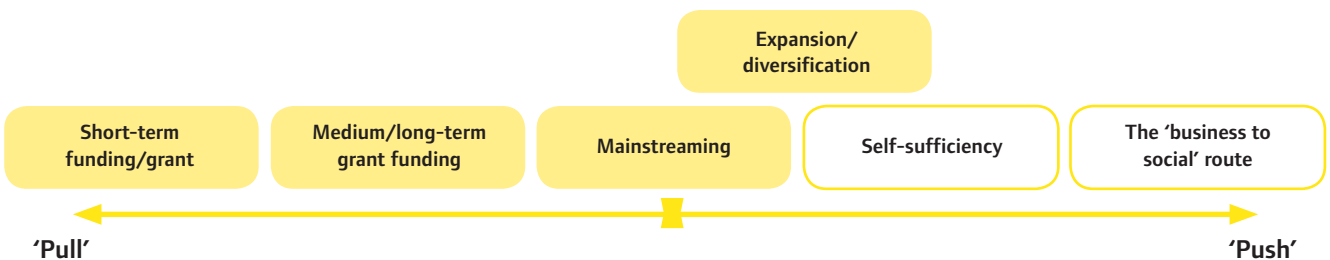
In structural terms, traditional third sector organisations may venture down several possible routes, illustrated in the diagram below.

**Figure 3: Business/funding models in the third sector<sup>14</sup>**

<b>'Pull' Models</b> Tend to rely on generating revenue from public money	Medium/long-term grant funding	Often preferred by traditional charities; desirable in cases of great need and no visible market alternatives on the horizon
	Short-term grant funding	A staple diet in the third sector, happens when there is need for ongoing support, often concurrently with other models
	Mainstreaming	Incorporation of successful projects into statutory-funded bodies/programmes
<b>'Push' Models</b> Tend to rely on 'getting out there' and self-generation of revenues	Self-sufficiency	Examples would include social enterprise model, or a development trust
	Expansion/diversification	Broadening the scope of activity, often taking on alternative legal entity or status
	The 'business to social' route	Starting as a business, then developing social objectives

Source: Rocket Science/LDA<sup>15</sup>

The above models can be placed along a continuum as their belonging to either category can vary significantly.



14. There is of course also 'closure' – where the salience of issues is reduced or success of the project poor.

15. Rocket Science/London Development Agency (2005) 'The 'how to' guide to project success or closure.' London: London Development Agency.

While these models are not necessarily mutually exclusive – for instance an organisation may seek to mainstream and diversify while operating on a short-term grant – they are helpful in showing the variety of approaches available to third sector organisations. Crucially, they can also help illustrate what range of skills is likely to be required by the sector.

The Voluntary Sector Skills Survey publication alludes to that point.<sup>16</sup> It predicts that the drivers in the sector workforce development are multiple and sub-sectoral, and include:

- An increasingly educated, older, mobile and diverse workforce.
- Continued competition for skilled employees as the service sector of the economy continues to expand.
- Wider and deeper engagement with the public services agenda.
- A resource framework tied to impact and outcome.
- Higher client expectations driven by tough regulatory frameworks and a consumerist culture.

The current picture of the sector, with its expanding remit and deep transformations, makes this research project very timely. Although some of the above points may be better suited for experienced hire routes, such as converting ex-private sector employers to third sector careers and providing ongoing support and guidance, it is crucial that the workforce of the future is developed in observance of the skills requirements stemming from the current sector transformations.

## Current state of knowledge

Although there is a great amount of available literature and studies on the third sector in general, and increasingly on employer engagement and WRL, the pool of focused

knowledge linking the two themes is considerably narrower. This is evident from our thorough searches of the websites of long-established third sector organisations, even those with WRL programmes. On the other hand, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence pointing to abundant links between third sector organisations and young people. This suggests that either WRL is not high on the third sector agenda, or that the activities and relationships taking place between third sector organisations and schools are not expressed in WRL terminology.

Our review of available sources of information has yielded some useful insight into the skills requirements of the third sector, and general perception of the sector and careers within it. Through both literature review and expert interviews we were also able to establish that there is a wide variety of WRL activities taking place in the third sector, but limited awareness of the volume, scope, or indeed effectiveness of such activities.

## Conclusions

The third sector is an increasingly important feature of the UK's public and economic life. This is exemplified in its internal dynamics as well as in the government's commitment to make the most of its capacity to deliver services. Accordingly, the sector is undergoing significant transformations which are likely to entail demands for a workforce equipped with the right attributes and skill sets to ensure that it thrives. The next section of this report explores this matter in detail, and examines the extent to which current WRL supply caters for the demand of the sector.

16. UK Workforce Hub (2007) 'Voluntary sector skills survey 2007.' London: UK Workforce Hub.

### 3. Matching supply and demand: the needs of the sector and the current picture of work-related learning

#### Introduction

This chapter has the following aims:

- To examine skills needs of third sector organisation – this is covered in the ‘Demand’ section.
- To examine the drivers and motivations for third sector organisations to engage in WRL – this is discussed in the ‘Drivers’ section.
- To explore the current picture of WRL practice among third sector organisations and highlight the breadth of activities taking place, and their effectiveness in catering to the sector’s needs – this is done in the ‘Supply’ section.
- Finally, to discuss the barriers to wider engagement in WRL, which is covered in the ‘Barriers’ section.

#### Demand

##### Summary

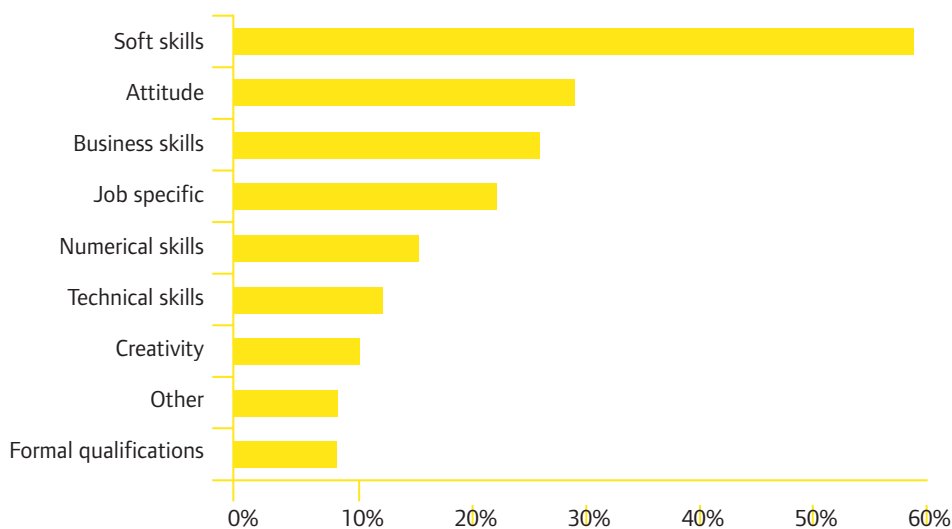
There are several skills-related issues of vital importance to the sector and its future development:

- The importance of the softer side: skills and attitudes.
- Commerciality and business acumen are becoming increasingly relevant.
- Specialist knowledge is a good ‘extra’ to have.
- Contribution from young people is valued and sought after.

All of these are discussed in detail in this section.

A wide range of skills needs emerged from our review of relevant publications and from the surveys conducted. The most frequently cited were ‘soft’ skills. The right attitude to work was a close second. Business skills and more specialist knowledge followed.

**Figure 4:**  
Future skills needs of the sector<sup>17</sup>



Source: FreshMinds survey, 2008 (Base=55)

17. Please note that in case of this and some other questions, responses do not add up to 100 per cent, as these were multi-code questions.

The tag cloud below shows an alternative representation of responses on future skills requirements:<sup>18</sup>

ability able adapted around being budgeting business  
 challenge childcare commitment communication competence  
 depends different driving education employees enterprise etiquette  
 financial flexibility general interpersonal interview knowledge  
 leadership management marketing office org organisation  
 people practical project qualifications quite resilience resources  
 sector **skills** social support team teamwork things third  
 training used work

### The importance of the softer side: skills and attitudes

The prominence of soft skills in the mix is echoed in the pre-existing research evidence. ‘The Voluntary Sector Skills Survey’<sup>19</sup> found that the skills most often cited as areas for improvement among their candidates were communication (19 per cent) and teamwork (17 per cent). A lack of leadership skills was cited by 13 per cent of respondents. Lack of funding and lack of time for training and development were identified as the main causes of skills gaps (57 per cent and 47 per cent respectively).

Communication is key. One survey respondent<sup>20</sup> commented that:

*“Some young people, even those coming out of university, speak and write in ‘text language’. A better level of communication and interpersonal skills are required in the sector.”*

A variety of related soft skills are often required in the same position. One interviewee from a small charity<sup>21</sup> said:

*“Soft skills are key for both managers and those they manage. Being a value-led sector, this skill perhaps matters more than in other sectors but this is often lacking. Managing conflict, which many can find challenging, is essential. And linked to this is how to manage volunteers.”*

Another survey respondent<sup>22</sup> said:

*“We have to be flexible – staff have to adopt a developmental approach to work we do. Employees here have to be able to provide training, motivate people to get them to take on new challenges.”*

Indeed, flexibility and resilience were repeatedly stressed as attributes pertinent to the challenges of the third sector:<sup>23</sup>

*“Our organisation particularly requires enthusiasm and a willingness to do things outside the job description. You have to generally in a charity, in fact – it’s ‘all hands on deck’.”*

18. Tag clouds are built using visual representation software which blows up individual words to different sizes according to their recurrence in a body of text. See: UK Workforce Hub (2007) ‘Voluntary sector skills survey 2007.’ London: UK Workforce Hub.

19. Ibid.

20. Survey with Bromley Mytime.

21. FreshMinds interview with OxFizz.

22. Freshminds interview with Youthmoves.

23. Freshminds interview with City Gateway.

Soft skills are especially useful in the work of a cooperative, namely:<sup>24</sup>

*“A member must be willing to listen, to share, to give, and to take up a challenge. Flexibility, tolerance and the ability to forgive others and yourself for mistakes are also essential ... empathy, tolerance, creativity, making-do, nurturing, caring skills, interest in people, multi-tasking, etc. are all skills which are highly desirable in a successful cooperative.”*

In addition to the classic soft skills, passion for the organisation’s work, and sharing its values and ethos, were felt to be extremely important attributes. This emerged over numerous interviews with third sector organisations and experts. Demonstrating this passion through commitment is of equal importance.

While on the face of it this kind of attitude is innate and could be hard to acquire through WRL, giving young people exposure to the important issues in the sector will undoubtedly serve to ignite this passion early in life.<sup>25</sup>

### **Commerciality and business acumen: increasingly relevant**

Interestingly, generic business and enterprise skills featured in the third place in our survey, although a very large proportion of social enterprises in our sample cited business skills as important to their organisation. This is in some contrast to responses obtained through stakeholder and expert interviews, which tended to emphasise the relevance of business and enterprise skills to the sector.

Organisations in the third sector can differ vastly in their attitudes to business skills, as one survey respondent pointed out:<sup>26</sup>

*“Many organisations just deliver their service – there is a very grassroots approach. By contrast, others have activities similar to small businesses. These include: budgeting, HR, project management, marketing, report writing, resourcing, funding and grant applications.”*

The wide range of business skills was emphasised by one survey respondent:<sup>27</sup>

*“Skills can range from fundraising and business development to technical skills within public sector procurement, depending on the organisation type. It’s essential to understand the market space you’re in and use communication and marketing skills accordingly.”*

A stakeholder added the following points:<sup>28</sup>

*“Necessary skills include: how to scale effectively; how to avoid project drift when in search of funding; how to apply the concept of sustainability to your charity (it is the big buzzword at the moment, but how applicable is it to every charity?), and how to be an effective trustee board – i.e. can you effect necessary change from a strategic level?”*

24. Case study: Wave Design. Available at: [www.cooperatives-uk](http://www.cooperatives-uk) Last accessed 17.09.08

25. FreshMinds analysis.

26. Volunteer Development Scotland.

27. Vital Regeneration.

28. Interview with OxFizz.

Governance is also of obvious relevance to the running of any business; the third sector is no exception, as one stakeholder interviewed<sup>29</sup> commented:

*“Management skills figure strongly within the third sector’s needs. One example is the recent collapse of one high-profile third sector organisation due to bad management.”*

Skills associated with business and start-ups are of obvious relevance to social enterprises. A survey by National Occupational Standards found that the skills required of social enterprise managers and advisers were largely those required in private business management. Understanding profit, funding and governance have also been identified as key.<sup>30</sup> It is important to bear in mind, however, that the skills necessary to run a social enterprise business are multi-faceted.<sup>31</sup>

*“Social enterprise managers have to perform the difficult balancing act of running a successful business, keeping focused on their social aims, and remaining accountable to their key stakeholders, all at the same time.”*

Business skills are not, however, limited to social enterprises in their importance within the third sector. Interviews with many stakeholders and third sector organisations pointed to the relevance of business skills to charities.

Principles of risk and reward were also thought to be important, together with how and why businesses operate and different business models. The social and moral dilemmas associated with businesses, and issues around overall money use, were equally key.<sup>32</sup>

The third sector can require in-depth financial, legal and strategic knowledge. By way of example, one respondent<sup>33</sup> said:

*“Workshops we currently run, which I think reflect the skills needs of the third sector, include:*

- *procurements and contracts: these give trusts and local authorities a chance to learn about tendering and contracts;*
- *governance: this covers both government policy and internal leadership – covers cutting edge action relevant to third sector organisations;*
- *strategic planning: this is very popular: it gives third sector organisations a chance to think about what they want to gain;*
- *full-cost recovery: this can involve financial acumen, such as recognising the full cost of projects.”*

Another respondent<sup>34</sup> emphasised that:

*“We don’t need entry level business skills – we need a particular knowledge of business support within the third sector.”*

One report suggested<sup>35</sup> that directors’ existing business skills are not being efficiently used in charities. This is due to a lack of project management ability, ‘hand to mouth’ funding, and a sense that all funds raised should go directly to the cause at hand. While these issues are not of great relevance to the 14–19 age group, they are good to keep in mind when considering what the future world of work may look like in the third sector, particularly in terms of skills needs.

29. Interview with Scottish Government.

30. See: [www.trusteenet.org.uk](http://www.trusteenet.org.uk)

31. See: [www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk)

32. FreshMinds interview with the QCA.

33. FreshMinds interview with the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO).

34. Interview with Prime Timers.

35. See: [www.onrec.com](http://www.onrec.com)



**Specialist knowledge: the third sector ‘extra’**

By the same token, specialist sector knowledge was felt by a significant number of respondents to be important. This could include a qualification in childcare and/or youth work for those working with children and young people.<sup>36</sup> Knowledge about current green issues and climate change was another example cited by an environmental charity. In addition, several charity respondents said that they required formal qualifications; by contrast, this was cited by almost no social enterprise respondents.

The legal aspects of charities also require attention. An understanding of the law around charitable trusts and volunteering, and of relevant health and safety law, is important to the running of the organisation.<sup>37</sup> An individual could acquire this through previous legal training or ‘on-the-job’ learning in a third sector organisation.<sup>38</sup>

By contrast, it was stressed by some respondents that the skills needs of the third sector did not differ substantially from the private sector.<sup>39</sup> One interview respondent<sup>40</sup> commented that the skills needs of the third

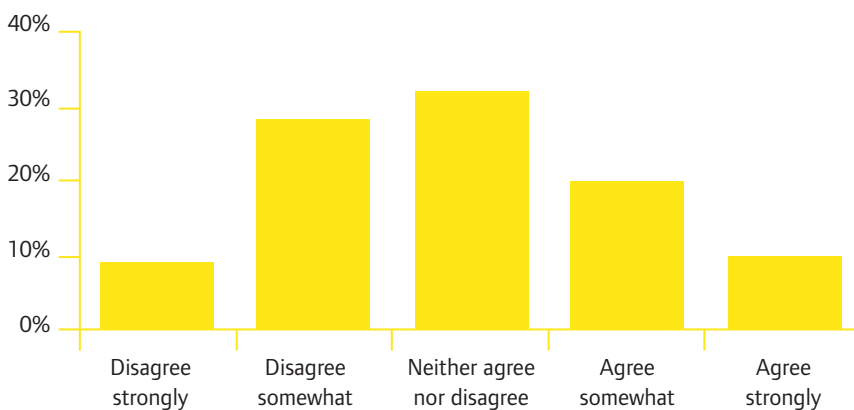
sector are essentially the same as the private sector, but that the third sector has an added skills dimension, particularly in terms of knowing what is relevant to the community (i.e. specific community needs, rather than general market needs), listening skills and noticing skills. Psychology and change management skills also come into this; the respondent felt that people recruited had the relevant skills (curiosity, innate creativity, probing) before joining the organisation.<sup>41</sup>

Another survey respondent agreed with this view of the third sector as requiring a ‘bolt-on’ of skills:<sup>42</sup>

*“Depending on the position, we require the same qualifications as in the private sector – we would, for example, rather have employees with a degree. However, they have to possess the right values and ethos – this is very important.”*

This perhaps reflects a more balanced view of the extent to which skills in the third sector are specialist.<sup>43</sup> Our survey results confirm this sentiment with regard to WRL specifically.

**Figure 5:**  
Third sector work-related learning requirements are different from those of the private sector



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008 (Base=55)

36. Interview with youth work charity.

37. See: [www.charityskills.org](http://www.charityskills.org)

38. FreshMinds analysis.

39. Interview with representative from Scottish government, interview with Space Unlimited and with Young Enterprise.

40. Interview with Space Unlimited.

41. Interview with Space Unlimited.

42. Young Co-operatives.

43. FreshMinds survey analysis.

This is a very encouraging message as it confirms many synergies between the two sectors and potential transferability of WRL methods and schemes.

### Young people in the third sector: making a contribution

Another important point relating to young people that has emerged throughout this piece of research is the real contribution that young people can make to the life of the third sector. This contribution consists of both their future potential as a creative and dynamic workforce, and through work experience and WRL in the present.

Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, Executive Director of CSV, has recently highlighted the role young people can play in volunteer work:<sup>44</sup>

*“Young volunteers bring energy to public services, helping children at risk of offending, reducing conflict in schools and giving dignity to older people in hospitals. There is huge potential to engage young people in tackling community needs and strengthening democracy.”*

To conclude this section, one stakeholder from a small charity offered an optimistic summary of the future of the third sector in terms of skills needs:

*“The third sector will be a place where value-led management is not mutually exclusive with efficiency and getting things done. It will be an environment where a higher proportion of employees have started off working within the*

*sector, rather than the current trend to recruit from outside of the sector (e.g. those who have a corporate or statutory background). It will be a sector confident in its distinguishing features (value-led, means and ends oriented rather than just the latter, etc.) and confident in saying no when necessary (e.g. when funders suggest doing a project which they will provide funds for but which is not essential to the charity’s strategy) and in valuing itself correctly, rather than underselling itself.”*

## Drivers

### Summary

There are three wider categories of reasons for engagement in WRL among third sector organisations:

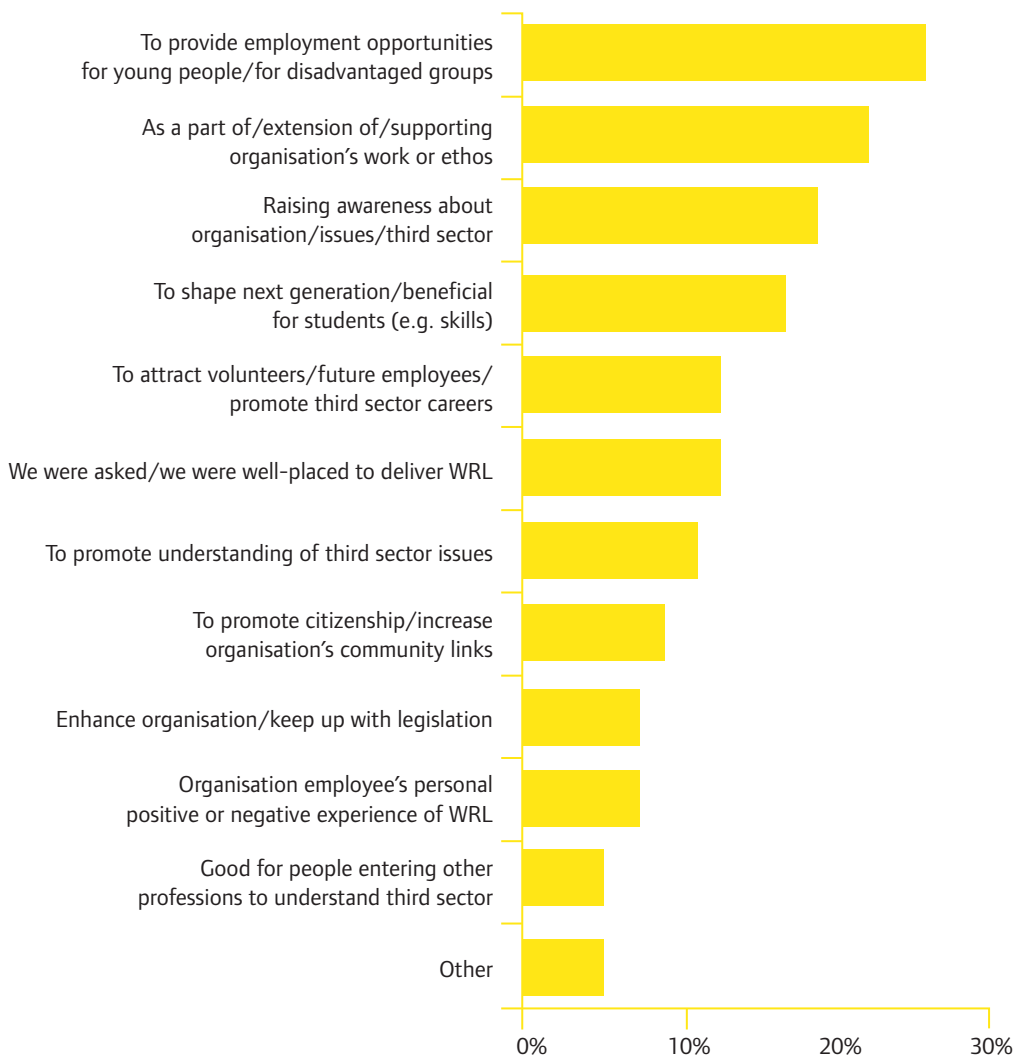
- Benevolent/altruistic.
- Issue and sector-focused.
- Organisation-focused.

All of these are discussed in detail in this section.

Given the conviction with which respondents have spoken about the sector’s skills needs and the many employee attributes identified, it might be expected that WRL would be orientated towards developing those. However, it has emerged that the drivers for engaging in WRL are somewhat more complex and varied.

Why engage – the reasons

Figure 6: Motivations for engagement in work-related learning



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008 (Base=53)

As shown in Figure 6 drivers and motivations for engagement can be split into several conceptual categories:

1. **Benevolent/altruistic:** the key motivation was the willingness to help provide young people with opportunities for future employment, while other

significant motivations were developing the next generation of young people.

2. **Issue and sector-focused:** a considerable proportion of motivations for engagement in WRL were raising awareness of the issues tackled by the third sector, and developing a pool

of future volunteers for the benefit of the sector attracted to the careers it may offer.

- 3. Organisation-focused:** the key driver in this group stemmed from the natural synergy between the organisation's work and ethos and engagement with young people, there was also a strong element of the drive to use WRL as a means of promoting the organisation within local networks and communities, and reaching out to wider audiences.

- 4. Other:** any other motivations.

The most popular reason for being involved for social enterprises was to provide employment opportunities or a chance for young people and/or for disadvantaged groups to learn skills, with this a fairly close second for charities. Interestingly, raising awareness about the organisation, issues or the third sector was the reason for almost twice as many social enterprise respondents as charity respondents. The most popular response for charities was the activity being a part of or an extension of the organisation's work or ethos. Interestingly, this did not figure at all for social enterprises.

The above results provide an interesting insight into the mindset of third sector organisations and their approach to WRL. They show overwhelmingly warm attitudes to young people and WRL, which are not dissimilar to those displayed by private sector organisations known from previous employer engagement research.

The impact on young people of well-executed WRL was tangible to those working alongside them:<sup>45</sup>

*"You can see a young person flourish and develop skills – you really see them go through period of critical transition."*

One respondent within the stakeholder interviews felt that young people can learn skills more over the course of work experience than in a classroom:<sup>46</sup>

*"Skills should be contextualised, not taught in abstraction. It's possible to engage students emotionally in many ways – e.g. talking about the exciting work Cancer Research does. Students can be introduced to new thinking and concepts, such as 'triple bottom line', without it being explicitly about learning skills in a formal sense."*

In addition, survey respondents were motivated by the scarcity of WRL opportunities for young people wishing to broaden their horizons:<sup>47</sup>

*"Community arts organisations aren't as widespread as, say, manual labour companies. Consequently, placements in organisations like mine are rare, so it's helpful to open our doors to young people."*

Benefiting disadvantaged groups was a particular concern in this respect. As one respondent put it:<sup>48</sup>

*"Too many young people find themselves labelled negatively at an early age. Consequently, they become de-motivated. Many are underachievers and/or live in deprived areas. They want to be able to join in the community but can't. There is a lack of support from the private sector in terms of listening to these groups and allowing budget to help them."*

Another respondent agreed:<sup>49</sup>

*"We have come into contact with a lot of non-academic and excluded youths. They can't get access to career advice. We offer computer rooms and information about training and careers."*

Students with disabilities may particularly benefit from this driver, as it is illustrated by two case studies on pages 21 and 23.

45. FreshMinds interview with Vital Regeneration.

46. In the below quote, 'triple bottom line reporting' refers to the need on report on social objectives in addition to profit and loss.

47. FreshMinds interview with Action Space Mobile Community Arts.

48. Freshminds interview with The Bridge.

49. Freshminds interview with The Bridge.

## Case study: Action for Blind People

Action for Blind People is a charity founded in 1857. The charity works with blind and partially sighted people and helps them to transform their lives. The work experience offered by the charity varies in length, ranging from two weeks to several months. The placements are always in administrative roles and the activities undertaken are matched to the individual's ability. Actions for Blind People's staff interact with schools by making school visits in a bus.



### Who makes it happen?

The organisation's mission is to inspire change and create opportunities to enable blind and partially sighted people to gain an equal voice and equal choice. Sandra Malone (Senior Administrator) indicates that the WRL was initiated to "give kids a chance to know about careers in organisations such as Action for Blind People."

### What are the benefits?

- **Young people:** the charity provides the opportunity for blind or partially blind people to take part in work experience placements; individuals have the chance to see how they will fare in such an environment and what roles they most enjoy doing. Furthermore, the work experience provides a new and challenging environment, compared to their normal school education. This can be a fantastic opportunity for young people; their confidence is developed and they learn how to communicate with new people from a wide range of different backgrounds.
- **Education provider:** Action for Blind People provides a service to schools whereby staff from the charity visit and interact with schools using their own bus. This helps to break down any barriers that they may face when working with schools. Action for Blind People's interaction with schools helps schools to understand what it is to be visually impaired.
- **The charity:** Action for Blind People is excellent for raising awareness of the organisation's services. Sandra Malone indicates that "work experience students may talk about us within their families, and might come back as clients and tap into our services".<sup>50</sup> In addition, the placements raise awareness among young people of what it is like to work in the voluntary sector.

**What's the unique selling point (USP)?**

The majority of young people that work at Action for Blind People come from specialist schools and have special needs and therefore often need greater time and dedication. Such young people often struggle to find opportunities for work experience because of a lack of resources and time constraints. Action for Blind People helps by offering work experience within their offices, and the charity takes into consideration the needs of the young people they work with. This is unique in that the organisation provides opportunities for young people who do not always get the same chances to experience life in the workplace.

**A model for the future?**

This is a fantastic model of WRL within the third sector. However, in terms of replicability, it would be challenging. Providing a placement for a young person with special educational needs requires a host who is very patient, tolerant and fully aware of their needs. Sandra Malone explains<sup>51</sup> that a number of the placements need special equipment and software. Obviously, any organisation looking to replicate this would need to try their best to accommodate and ensure those taking part get the best opportunity available.

51. UK Workforce Hub (2007) 'Brighter futures, positive influences'. London:UK Workforce Hub.

## Case study: Whizz-Kidz

### What's on offer?

Whizz-Kidz provides and brokers WRL placements for disabled young people.

The WRL opportunities are designed to give disabled young people an insight into work environments, increase their confidence and motivate them to develop new skills.

Work experience placements take two forms. Ambassadors (beneficiaries of Whizz-Kidz who voluntarily act as representatives for the organisation) are invited to undertake placements with corporate collaborators, such as Tesco and Credit Suisse. Disabled young people from specialist colleges are invited to do placements within Whizz-Kidz' head office. These placements often consist of administrative, research and IT office work.

### Who makes it happen?

The youth participation officer coordinates the external placement of ambassadors while the volunteer development officer organises internal placements of local students. These students are from colleges and schools with which Whizz-Kidz has built partnerships. These include Westminster Employment – a specialist government service devoted to supporting disabled people in their search for work – Lambeth College, and Northern Counties College, part of the Percy Hedley Foundation.

### What are the benefits?

- The young people: Whizz-Kidz' consultations with disabled young people indicated that a significant number are denied work placement opportunities because school programmes are not inclusive.

A primary aim of the placements is to prepare disabled young people for future employment, and feedback from participants suggests this is being achieved. The programme has also served to build the confidence of the young people and can support the growth of important 'life skills' that non-disabled people take for granted. In addition, those participating gain increased motivation for their own school work from having had an insight into the world of work.

The Whizz-Kidz 2008 Young People Consultation showed that working in the third – or voluntary – sector was a popular career choice for disabled young people, and also the most popular for WRL. As such, the scheme is a chance for young people to gain an insight – and hands-on experience – in an area of work of genuine interest.

- Educational providers: the work experience placements were also found to complement schools in terms of their work preparing young people for life after education.



- The charity: working with disabled young volunteers allows Whizz-Kidz to engage with their beneficiaries in a more dynamic and rewarding way, beyond providing them equipment. It allows the charity to tap into the new skills and creativity these young people bring with them – and to an extent use them to inform their work as an organisation. This is a valuable way for Whizz-Kidz to become a more inclusive charity.

#### **What is the USP?**

The charity is able to offer work experiences to a variety of disabled young people through specially adapted equipment such as accessible work stations and enlarged computer screens for people with visual impairments. Whizz-Kidz can also provide personal care assistance where necessary for those on placement.

#### **A model for the future?**

Whizz-Kidz practises a collaborative approach in its relationships with local businesses, schools, colleges and specialist employment services. This creates a network of contacts that it uses effectively for organising WRL for young people. The charity intends to build on this model to increase its levels of participation.



## Case study: Bexley Community Media

### What's on offer?

Bexley Community Media (BCMA) is a not-for-profit charity and community company. The WRL activities that BCMA engages in with schools take the form of taster sessions, projects, curriculum teaching by staff and practical work experience. BCMA has previously worked with St Catherine's School for Girls, which is a single-sex school for students aged 11–18.

### Who makes it happen?

Andrew Sayer and Victoria Hatcher founded BCMA in 2004. The company delivers after-school projects, working with youth services and local councils. BCMA's training arm, which focuses on schools and youth organisations, indicates the following points as its primary objectives in a relationship:

- Researching to obtain an understanding of the school's local community.
- Utilising students' imagination and creative skills.
- Encouraging and fostering basic key skills such as reading and writing.

BCMA offers two types of scheme. The 'multi-session media package' is a comprehensive package that covers a range of media skills. It delivers outcomes in research skills, script-writing for radio, production skills, and presenter training – all the elements needed to create and present a good radio programme. The second scheme is a one-day workshop suited to an entire class or youth group. Groups taking part are given the challenge of researching, producing and presenting their own radio show. Both sessions can be conducted either at the radio station or in the schools (the company has its own mobile equipment).

### What are the benefits?

- The young people: young people who participate gain creative skills while also improving their ability to communicate and conduct research. Young people learn skills that are applicable in employment, especially in media. Individuals who take part in the schemes are provided with an opportunity to experience a real-life media environment, which is often difficult to break into.

*"Two of our volunteers have gone on to work for the BBC ... and four are working in community radio."* Andrew Sayer, Station Manager.

- Educational providers: educational providers, such as schools, benefit from links with BCMA. BCMA has worked successfully with schools such as St Catherine's School for Girls. Pupils from the girls' school successfully produced and ran a radio show allowing them to implement all the skills that they had learnt in previous WRL activities. BCMA's relationship with schools is proving to be successful, with people of all ages and backgrounds working together to learn new skills and make real progress.



- The organisation: the organisation benefits from the contribution of fresh ideas and new people in the organisation. Andrew Sayer values this input, indicating that “students are unpredictable and produce things we do not expect”. Young people in the community are also seen as the future of the organisation.

*“Hopefully we can find someone who can offer us support and maybe become a volunteer in the future.” Andrew Sayer, Station Manager*

### **What is the USP?**

The scheme seeks to introduce young people to the world of radio and the principles involved in working in the industry. BCMA shows a real passion towards young people, viewing the youth as the future of the organisation. BCMA is unique in that it has the capacity and resources to take the training to local schools and engage children in the school environment. This allows for a direct link into the curriculum, developing and broadening schoolchildrens’ skills set.

### **A model for the future?**

The WRL offered by BCMA provides an example of good practice that could be replicated and implemented in other local communities. Bexley Community Media is a local charity that receives no funding and still introduces young people to the world of radio and the principles involved. The association shows a real passion towards young people, and is a model of good practice.

Closely linked to these sentiments were personal experiences of the benefits of WRL. One respondent<sup>52</sup> pointed out the difficulty of gaining experience in media:

*“At the start of my career, I had to struggle to find work experience. Once I did, I was bitten by the radio bug and the effects of this will be life-long. This was an opportunity to give young people a chance to have the same passion in their career.”*

Another respondent spoke of the benefits of learning on the job.<sup>53</sup>

*“I didn’t go through the academic route, so a lot of my learning has been work-based. I have a personal belief in the benefits of work experience.”*

Sometimes, the relationship emerged from everyday circumstances, rather than an altruistic goal. These included the third sector organisation being asked, or an existing relationship between the school and organisation that led to WRL engagement, as this example from the survey<sup>54</sup> illustrates:

*“WRL came about through links with a local college – they have supported us on some programmes we set up in the past. We did this as a payback.”*

Benefits for the sector or organisation figured reasonably strongly. A respondent from Space Unlimited offered the following points about the potential benefits of the

WRL relationship from the point of view of the third sector organisation:

*“The most important ingredient in any engagement is the relationship; these only work where there’s a purpose. It will not work where one party does not see the point; there has to be a give and a get on both sides. The get for the business has to be clear. Incentives might include new content for the organisation (transmitted by the young people) on topics they were previously unaware of or had forgotten about. It is also a way for the organisation to have contact with an important community group; the potential of this could be exploited (positively) in the future. Organisations can find the experience a source of learning about their own activities and structure.”*

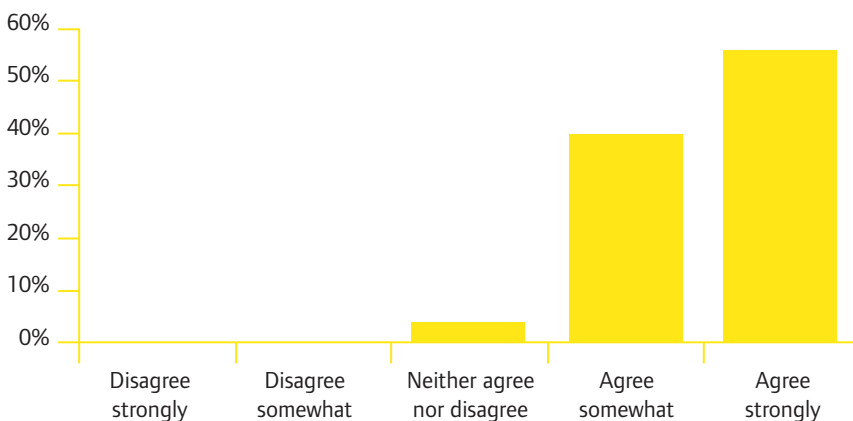
Financial incentives featured in this category of responses:<sup>55</sup>

*“We decided to do the activity because we think it’s important and we’re being paid to do so. It’s important to us as a social enterprise to consider issues of sustainability.”*

**Why engage – the importance**

Figure 7 below illustrates how crucial WRL is to the organisations in the sector and the message is striking.

**Figure 7:**  
**Work-related learning is important to organisations in the third sector**



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008 (Base=55)

52. Interview with Bexley Community Media.

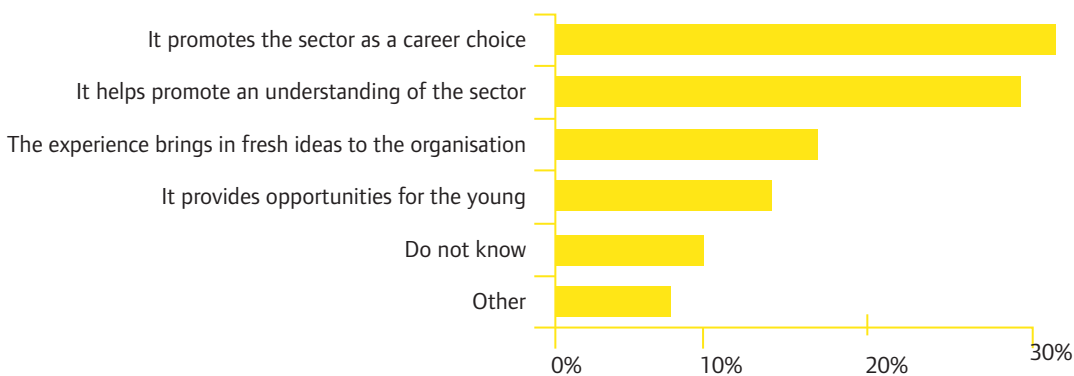
53. Interview with Action Space Community Arts.

54. Interview with Gurnos Health and Resource Centre.

55. Interview with Furniture Matters.

When asked to explain this importance, third sector respondents gave the following set of answers.

**Figure 8:**  
**Why is work-related learning important to third sector organisations?**



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008 (Base=53)

It is clear that respondents are convinced of the need to explain the sector better, and promote understanding of the issues it tackles and the careers within it. The benevolent motive is reduced to a distant fourth, in considerable contrast with the responses to the earlier question regarding motivations for engagement in WRL.<sup>56</sup>

While there were no significant variations between different organisation types in their appreciation of WRL's importance, there were some interesting points of difference regarding the rationale for this importance. For instance, a quarter of charity respondents felt that the experience brings in fresh ideas to the organisation while no social enterprises quoted this reason. Interestingly, half of social enterprises in our sample felt that WRL opportunities in the third sector were important as the activity promoted the sector as a career choice, whereas only a quarter of charities were of that opinion.

'Promoting an understanding of the sector' may, in effect, include the development of

necessary skills, and so might 'Providing opportunities for young people'. However, the fact that respondents did not necessarily phrase it as such shows that skills training is not the most vital item on their WRL agenda. This is certainly a learning to take forward, both in terms of fine-tuning WRL activities and in terms of messages that can be used to market WRL to organisations in the sector.

That said, the skills needs of their own organisation were not totally absent from the agenda, appearing as a driver for a few organisations. One commented:<sup>57</sup>

*"We need certain skills in order to deliver our purpose so we try to train local young people in these; for example, in youth work."*

56. This could be attributable to the phrasing of the questions, one inquiring about respondents' organisations, and one about third sector organisations more generally.

57. Interview with Social Enterprise Training and Support.

## Supply

### Summary

Some highlights from this section include:

- A variety of ways to initiate WRL engagements.
- A wide spectrum of WRL activities are used but work experience is by far the most common method of engagement.
- Interesting 'active' models of engagement based on running charities or social enterprises by learners.

This section explores the ways in which third sector organisations and schools and young people are collaborating to deliver WRL. First, it offers a secondary background to different models of initiating and sustaining engagement, before proceeding to discussing models of engagement on the ground identified in our survey.

### Getting it started: models of initiation

Broader models of initiating engagement in WRL include the following.

#### School arranges WRL by contacting employers

While schools demonstrating proactivity in the context of WRL is a good thing, it may not be the method that creates the most potential; schools may not have complete information about what opportunities are available in their area for young people unless contacted by organisations.

### Employer contacts school

This is of obvious advantage to the school, offering a straightforward way to arrange WRL; employers may, however, find the time and resources necessary to bring the relationship about more difficult to come by than one might think:<sup>58</sup>

*“Some [employers] are huge and have people who work on education projects all the time. Others are really tiny... Some felt it must be an automatic advantage to be part of a big employer with dedicated resources, but others (from large employers) said this did not necessarily follow: a central team doesn't always find it easy to orchestrate activity at a local level.”*

Our survey probed as to who makes decisions about engaging in WRL and it seems that it is by and large a reasonably senior affair (see Figure 9).

58. Edge Foundation (2006) 'Education and employers: working together'. Consultation report. London:Edge Foundation.

**Figure 9:**  
Who makes decisions about work-related learning?<sup>59</sup>



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008 (Base=53)

Several respondents from third sector organisations commented on the difficulties of 'getting through' to the correct contact at schools, or indeed there being a relevant contact at all for WRL.

#### Arranged via schemes (such as Community Engineers or EBPs)<sup>60</sup>

An Education Business Partnership (EBP) essentially acts as a broker between the third sector organisation and the school. Other third parties acting in this capacity include Trident and Connexions,<sup>61</sup> though anecdotally there are around 50 such organisations. Although this can be an efficient way to promote links and bring about engagement, more than one respondent notes that efficiency varies between EBPs. Furthermore, EBPs are moving increasingly toward paid service delivery, which may have implications for the cash-strapped third sector.

#### A pre-existing contact between the parties

Where schools and a third sector organisation have a pre-existing relationship, it can be leveraged for WRL. This appears to be a straightforward and convenient method of engagement, and one that could be increased substantially if more information were made available to third sector organisations and schools about possibilities in this space.

#### Money matters: financial models of engagement

##### School pays employer to offer services to students<sup>62</sup>

This is likely to incentivise employer engagement and may guarantee a certain quality of provision; it may prove an efficient way of obtaining WRL to independent schools or state schools with the resources

59. Most of our respondents were directors, chief executives or senior managers.

60. Linda Miller (2007) 'Why employers engage'. London: Institute for Employment Studies.

61. UK Workforce Hub (2007) 'Brighter futures, positive influences'. London: UK Workforce Hub.

62. Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (2008) 'Creative Opportunities'. London: NESTA.

available. It is, however, unlikely to be attractive to schools with more limited resources, such as state schools where budgets are scarce. There may also be PR considerations for the organisation around being seen to profit from what is arguably already an obligation on them to contribute to the development of young people within their society.<sup>63</sup>

### **Organisation and school develop a project/venture together or form a mutually beneficial financial partnership<sup>64</sup>**

Collaboration from the inception phase could ensure commitment and enthusiasm from both parties, as well as making the activities planned suitable to both.

Financial incentives could be a way to motivate both schools and employers; coming to a mutually satisfactory arrangement may be difficult but worthwhile. If the school were also to benefit, it might remove some of the ethical concerns outlined above.

### **Organisation offers services pro bono (as a form of corporate social responsibility)<sup>65</sup>**

This is a straightforward arrangement that should prove favourable to both parties. The company offers WRL services for free; the benefit the company derives is being able to refer to this work in its promotional literature, which, in turn, may make it more attractive to potential recruits or even clients. Doing work pro bono may, however, mean that less time can be devoted to it than to a paid work arrangement.

## **Frequency of engagement**

### **WRL arranged on a sporadic, ad-hoc basis, or as a single 'block' of time<sup>66</sup>**

This may have the advantage that employers who feel unable to commit to a long period of engagement are able to make some contribution to WRL; for example, giving a presentation within a school, organising a day of workshops, or having learners in for 'one off' visits.

Drawbacks may include that the working relationship between the third sector organisation and learners is less fully developed and that activities are less structured around mutual needs. It may also mean, in the case of learners participating directly in the activities of the organisation (such as through time spent doing administrative support work onsite), that their contribution is less substantial than it would be if a more regular working relationship were formed.<sup>67</sup>

### **WRL arranged as a regular activity**

Learners are able to develop a full understanding of the work of the organisation and, potentially, make a significant contribution towards it. Regular contact would also mean that there is more scope to diversify activities, e.g. not only having the employer give a presentation, but attend the school regularly to give workshops, and/or host students onsite.

Disadvantages could include lack of willingness on either side to commit to a sustained programme of activities, potential insurance or health and safety concerns around having students visit the premises regularly, and concerns on the part of the school that regular activities could interfere with curriculum commitments.

## **Listing the activities**

These methods of engagement were identified in great detail in the survey. Respondents were initially asked to name spontaneously the WRL activities they had been involved in, and these were noted (shown on Figure 10 as unprompted responses). They then had to respond to a list of activities (those from the selection below that had not been mentioned) by saying whether or not they engaged in them (prompted responses).

63. FreshMinds analysis.

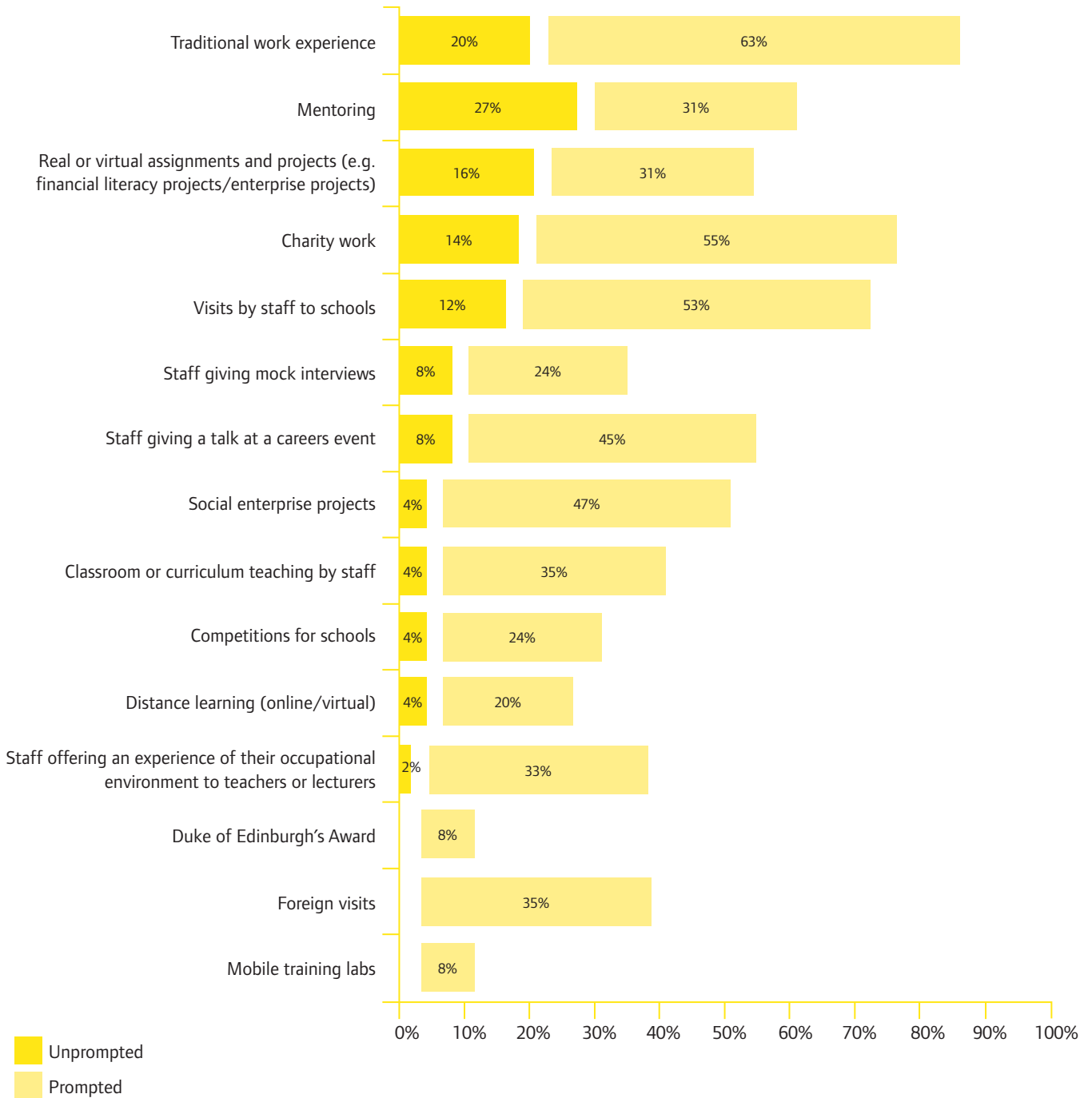
64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. FreshMinds analysis.

**Figure 10:**  
**What activities do you engage in? (Unprompted and prompted)**



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008 (Base=53)



Traditional work experience was the most frequently cited unprompted response (63 per cent). Prompted responses were more evenly spread; figuring significantly among these were charity work (55 per cent), visits by staff to schools (53 per cent), staff giving a talk at a careers event (45 per cent) and social enterprise projects (47 per cent).

This suggests that, although there is a wide range of WRL activities being engaged in with schools and young people, third sector organisations do not necessarily think of them as such. Work experience, the ‘traditional model’ of WRL, remains the most instantly recognisable, although it is very encouraging to see that the ‘active’ models are coming on strongly in the mix.

Social enterprise projects are one example of these ‘active’ models. They involve offering the same business expertise to students as a commercial enterprise project, but with the added dimension of social or environmental benefits as the end result.

One example is ‘Make Your Mark With a Tenner’, an initiative that gives young people £10 with a view to them generating further profits through social enterprise. It

particularly promotes community initiatives, social and moral responsibility, and projects involving political literacy.<sup>68</sup>

Charity fundraising can also take the form of entrepreneurial learning that is valuable for students. Pupils from Kersland School in Renfrewshire raised £1,000 for Con Amore SEN School in South Africa by organising a fashion show for 40 of their classmates, with the help of the local community. A variety of retailers, including Marks and Spencer, Monsoon and Next, provided clothes, while lecturers and students at nearby Reid Kerr College provided make-up and hairstyling, and London-based XS Productions helped to choreograph the children’s display.<sup>69</sup>

### ‘The top three’ – how do things work?

In order to establish the frequency with which activities were engaged in and gather more information on those, survey respondents were asked to name the top three WRL activities and further questions were posed on those. The following picture emerged.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Work experience	Organisations were approached by the school or organisation	Learners: gaining skills and professional experience	Majority: would not do anything differently next time
	A third party (such as an EBP or other broker) also initiated the relationship	Third sector organisation: input from young people	A significant number: we constantly evaluate WRL activities
	Challenging young people was the main reason for engaging in work experience	Third sector organisation: creativity	Increasing the scale and having a more structured programme
	Future recruitment opportunities for young people within the organisation	Overall: expectations met or exceeded	All respondents: we would continue this activity

68. See: [www.makeyourmarkwithatenner.com](http://www.makeyourmarkwithatenner.com)

69. The Scottish Government (2007) ‘Determined to Succeed Three years on: Investing in Scotland’s Future’. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government Publications.

Work experience was mainly initiated by the school (or youth club of similar organisation), indicating that this is a widely recognised (and valued) form of WRL for schools. Third parties such as EBPs were also cited, showing that they too are familiar with this form of WRL. Third sector organisations were motivated by the possibility of challenging and benefiting young people, while future recruitment opportunities for the third sector were another factor. Benefits include the creative input from young people into the organisation.

One respondent commented on the benefits to both parties of a work experience placement:<sup>70</sup>

*“He was very dynamic, and a good worker. I had thought he’d need a lot of babysitting, but he took initiative. It changed his perceptions of the sector and of homeless people – he gained a lot.”*

One example of a specific benefit to the organisation of this activity included the chance to get a fresh perspective on their work, and evaluate accordingly:<sup>71</sup>

*“Contact with young people for work experience enables us to see ourselves through someone’s eyes and find out their views.”*

The majority said that they would not change anything if repeating the activity.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Distance Learning	Reciprocal invitation between the organisation and the school/college	Activity has beneficial aspects for both young people and the organisation	Expanding the scale of the activity
	Another form of initiation was a survey by an organisation that found IT skills lacking	Both parties: flexibility a key advantage	Constant evaluation of all activities
	Being an efficient, sustainable way to deliver WRL was the reason for engaging in this	Third sector organisation: Promoting the organisation/ careers in the third sector	All respondents: we would continue to run activity for a longer period of time
	Very few respondents gave distance learning within their top three activities	All respondents: activity met their expectations	Ensure relevance

Distance learning occurred through reciprocal invitation between the school and organisation; a survey into skills needs was another reason. The IT aspect meant that this was felt to be an efficient and sustainable way to deliver WRL. It also allowed access to WRL in challenging situations, for example for young people in geographically

inaccessible areas (e.g. the Scottish Highlands) who would have to travel a long way to come into face-to-face contact with third sector employers. With online distance learning for WRL, they could experience a variety of sectors remotely.

70. Survey with Streetshine.

71. Survey with Emmaus.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Visits by staff to schools	Most popular form: the school approaching the organisation	Third sector organisation: an opportunity to raise awareness about its work	The majority: we would not do anything differently next time
	Reciprocal approaches or invites by both the organisation and the school	Third sector organisation: an opportunity to raise awareness of third sector	Increasing the scale of the visits
	A belief that this formed part of the organisation's work informed engagement	Organisation: flexibility	Making better use of materials/being better prepared
	The valuable experience for young people this offered was also key	A great majority: this activity had met or exceeded expectations	All respondents: we would continue this activity for some time to come

The school approaching the organisation was the most popular way for the staff visits to be initiated. To a lesser extent, the organisation also played a part in this. The organisations generally felt that it was important for them to offer information and

useful experience to young people as part of their work. Benefits included offering the third sector organisation an opportunity to raise awareness about their work or the third sector. This activity met expectations in significant numbers.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Real or virtual assignments or projects	Collaboration with school and other pre-existing contacts	Young people: learning real or gaining valuable experience	Expanding the scale of the activity
	Intervention/facilitation by a third party (e.g. broker)	Third sector organisation: raising awareness of the sector	Constant evaluations and tweaking as necessary
	Helping learners (including disadvantaged ones)	Mutual benefits for learners and organisations	All respondents: they would continue to run this activity for a longer period
	Part of the organisation's work, drive to share skills	While some said expectations had been met, others said they were unsure or did not know	Some would not change anything

Real or virtual assignments and projects offered organisations a chance to help learners, including disadvantaged groups, gain access to knowledge and skills. This often came about as a natural consequence of the organisation's work, and was frequently initiated through pre-existing contacts with schools or groups of young people. The opportunity for young people

to gain hands-on experience was important to the organisation. Benefits from the third sector's point of view included the opportunity to raise awareness about the sector. Across the board, organisations were relatively circumspect about whether or not their expectations had been met, compared with the resounding enthusiasm ascribed to other activities.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Mentoring	Mentoring came about from a previous relationship with the school or college	Young people: opportunity to learn from others valuable	Majority: would not do anything differently next time
	Or that there was an approach by the school or young person	Third sector organisation: finding future volunteers and raising awareness	However, evaluative suggestions were made e.g. managing learner expectations
	Reciprocal approaches and a third party intervening were ways of engaging	An overwhelming majority: mentoring had met or exceeded its expectations	It was also said that evaluation was constant
	It also arose as a part of the organisation's normal work	Some said it was harder than expected	All respondents said that they would run the activity for a longer period of time

Like assignments and projects, mentoring generally came about as the result of a pre-existing relationship between the school or college and the organisation. Otherwise, schools or young people requested the activity. This also often came about as a natural consequence of the organisation's work. It gave young people the chance to learn from others on a one-to-one basis outside the school system. Benefits for the third sector organisation included finding

volunteers and raising awareness. Most said expectations had been met, a few said they would be more selective about who to mentor or that it was harder than expected.

An interview respondent<sup>72</sup> commented that:

*“Young people need a ‘steer’, a mentor who can point them in the right direction, and mentoring can provide that.”*

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Social enterprise projects	Existing contacts, being part of the organisation's work	Young people: the activity being fun and an opportunity to gain experiences	Most would not change anything
	Reciprocal invitation and PR by the organisation	Third sector organisation: a chance to promote third sector careers as fun and engaging	Many would do more of it, with more learners
	Sharing skills, and work opportunities to young people	All respondents: the activity had met their expectations	A great majority said that they would run the activity in future
	Raising awareness of the issues and the cause	None said it had exceeded expectations	Some: the activity would not be repeated due to financial constraints

72. Interview with Young Enterprise.

Social enterprise projects arose through reciprocal invitation and PR by the organisation, as well as being arranged through existing contacts. Raising awareness of the organisation’s issues was important,

as well as teaching skills and giving young people a chance to learn in a fun way. Increasing the scale of the activity was one suggestion for the future.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Classroom or curriculum teaching by staff	Initiated by a third party	Activity has wide ranging benefits	Two respondents said they would evaluate the activity to bring about improved WRL
	Through schools approaching organisations	The activity introduces young people to the third sector	All respondents said they would continue to run this activity in the future
	A sense that this would benefit/challenge young people	Raises awareness of issues which benefits organisation and the young person	A respondent indicated that they would look to be more prepared in the future
	Part of the organisation’s work	Challenges young people with new ideas	50 per cent of respondents indicated that they would not do anything differently next time

Classroom teaching by staff often occurred where schools approached organisations with a request, or through a third party. The activity was an opportunity to teach

widely about the third sector and to raise awareness of relevant issues. Significantly, all respondents said they would run this activity in future.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Staff giving a talk at a careers event	Reciprocal exchange between the organisation and the school	Benefits to young people: opportunities/teaching	Future strategy: more preparation
	Direct approach by school or young people	Benefits to organisation: raising awareness of the sector	Future strategy: tailoring approach to learner group
	Helping disadvantaged students/lack of opportunities in similar organisations	Benefits to organisation: selling careers in the sector as credible career option	100 per cent of respondents: the activity would be continued in the future
	To promote volunteering into the organisation	Benefits to organisation: young people bringing in fresh ideas	Many: that they would not do anything differently

Giving a talk at a careers event came about as the result of an approach by the school or young person, or through reciprocal approaches. It was important to participating organisations as an opportunity to raise

awareness of the third sector, and particularly third sector careers. Strategies for the future included tailoring the talk to a greater extent to the learners involved.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Charity work	Invitation/approach from schools, youth clubs, broker	Benefits to young people: fun, great experience	A high percentage of respondents: would do nothing differently
	Pre-existing relationships between schools and organisation	Third sector organisations: raising awareness of the sector	Future plan: more structure in WRL programme
	Promotion of good values	Providing opportunities to young disadvantaged people	Future plan: expand WRL
	Natural part of the work of the organisation	All respondents: this activity met their expectations	All respondents: would run the activity for a longer period of time

Charity work frequently came about because of approaches from brokers or schools, or from pre-existing relationships between the school and the organisation. Benefits included the engaging and fun

nature of some activities, opportunities for young disadvantaged people, and the chance to raise awareness of the sector. All respondents said they would run the activity for a longer period.

## Case study: Trust Youth

### What's on offer?

The charity Trust Youth provides opportunities for practical citizenship and spreads awareness of the voluntary sector in schools. It works with schools from different regions, with a particular focus on students aged 14 and over. Schools taking part meet roughly once a week until completion of the project. There is flexibility in relation to when a school would like to complete the project, ranging from ten weeks to the entire academic year, and other durations in between these two. The organisation offers work-related activities through social enterprise projects, role play, and curriculum-linked visiting.



### Who makes it happen?

The present relationship between Trust Youth and schools is one created by John Crossman, who wanted to introduce young people to the principles behind fundraising and general work in the voluntary and community sector. It is a school's own responsibility to initiate their relationship with Trust Youth; and Trust's scheme is limited to a certain number of schools in each region.

Trust Youth helps schools to set up mini-charities within a school, which then raise funds and awareness for a national charity. Trust Youth provide materials and support for their partner schools, putting on training events for pupils and celebration events where young people can win national awards. Pupils are trained by local British Red Cross youth workers through a series of workshops. The skills learned in these workshops include: how to plan and monitor a fundraising event; message communication; and leading and managing a project. Furthermore, pupils take on roles such as chairperson, fundraising officer, and events officer, working together to design, plan and carry out fundraising activities and to evaluate their achievements.

### What are the benefits?

- The young people: the Trust's scheme builds on young people's enthusiasm for fundraising and developing their skills. It also offers the opportunity for a wide range of pupils to demonstrate their achievements and success. The young participants develop and learn a variety of skills including: communication; teamwork; leadership, and campaigning and fundraising skills. At the same time, they also become aware of opportunities that the third sector can offer.

*"It was great fun... It was great working together..."* (Student at Shene School)

- Educational providers: schools benefit from an excellent out-of-school learning opportunity offering new breadth and creativity to the schools' own curriculum. The Trust's scheme can also be used as a practical component for GCSE citizenship coursework and it fits in well with Key Stage 4 citizenship objectives. A further benefit of the scheme is that it fits into different niches in schools – the scheme can be used to include gifted and talented pupils, or those at risk of exclusion.

*“Trust Youth is an exciting new way to promote learning and citizenship.”*

(Tim Brighthouse, Chief Adviser to London Schools)

- The charity: The Trust benefits from an increased understanding of charity leadership. Through the offering of workshops there is an improvement in the understanding of international organisations like the British Red Cross. Furthermore, providing the scheme to young people increases the likelihood of students volunteering in the charity sector.

*“We get fresh ideas from people coming into the organisation.”*

(John Crossman, Director of Trust Youth)

### **What is the USP?**

The scheme looks to introduce young people to the principles behind fundraising and general work in the voluntary and community sector by helping schools set up mini-charities within a school, which then raise funds and awareness for a national charity. This scheme introduces young people into the third sector by offering pupils the opportunity to take roles in a charity. Furthermore, the scheme is very flexible in relation to when a school would like to complete the project, ranging from ten weeks to the entire academic year.

### **A model for the future?**

The scheme offered by Trust Youth provides an example of good practice concerning WRL in the third sector. The case study provides an example of good practice for those involved in or interested in becoming involved in providing and accessing WRL with charities. The model offered by Trust Youth is a good example as it provides a mutually beneficial relationship. Young people have fun, schools have a broader range of experiences to offer young people and more young people learn about the challenges and fun of working within the voluntary and community sector.



Engagement in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award provided an opportunity for the organisation to reach new groups of young people, whether as service users or as volunteers. It was common for the organisation to have initiated the engagement themselves. Students on the programme were reported to be adept at

bringing in fresh ideas, and the environment proved a positive one for young people to learn and gain experience. All respondents said they would continue the activity in future; some stated a wish to promote the activity more efficiently or operate it on a larger scale.

	Initiation and motivation	Benefits	Future and sustainability
Duke of Edinburgh’s Award	Initiation by the organisation	The activity has wide ranging benefits	Better promotion of the activity
	A number of respondents cited ‘other’	Third sector organisation: young people bringing in fresh ideas	Boosting the numbers
	Offering a challenge to young people	The activity creates an environment where people can learn and gain experience	100% of respondents: would be running the project in the future
	Reaching new groups of young people	All respondents said the activity had met their expectations	‘Nothing’

### Last but not least: ‘other’ activities

While the above were the principal forms of WRL cited by survey respondents, a number of other activities emerged (through both

unprompted and prompted questioning), some of which merit attention.

Other forms of work-related learning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer to peer mentoring/youth work</li> <li>• IT/online work</li> <li>• Work connected with NVQs/apprenticeships</li> <li>• Workshops or other practical work</li> <li>• Running qualifications</li> <li>• Internships</li> <li>• Corporate visits</li> <li>• Employability work (e.g. interview coaching/careers talks onsite)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving talks in schools (not at career events)</li> <li>• Creative work (dance/drama/music etc.)</li> <li>• Business/social enterprise simulations</li> <li>• Conservation work</li> <li>• Teacher training</li> <li>• Generating ideas for other organisations/authorities</li> <li>• Corporate visits</li> <li>• Open days</li> </ul>

Specific examples of the more innovative work emerging from both this section of the survey and stakeholder interviews included the following.

**Innovative use of technology:** it was stated that this was a way to give access to WRL in circumstances where this would otherwise be difficult. Forms of WRL that would require prohibitive amounts of health and safety preparation if done in person (an example given was a trip to a refuse disposal plant), can be alternatively facilitated by using video recordings. In fact, more than one organisation pointed to young people's aptitude with technology as a way to engage them and for them to make a real contribution to the life of the organisation. In one organisation surveyed, young people contributed to developing the organisation's website, and this was greatly appreciated.

'Live briefs' is one programme that sets business problems for students online. It was felt by the respondent that this sort of activity in the third sector is currently underdeveloped.<sup>73</sup>

**Tailored creative work:** employers felt that this gave young people an opportunity to express themselves and to make a contribution to the life of the third sector using their own skills and talents. Examples of creative activities during a work experience placement from the survey included students writing radio adverts for the organisation, together with poems and protest songs about the issues the organisation addressed. Another respondent said that creative work with artists and musicians was organised according to the abilities of individual students.

**Generating ideas for other organisations/authorities:** young people in one organisation surveyed spent time coming up with ideas and policy for local grassroots organisations and authorities. These included ideas for getting people to engage in local and innovative approaches to volunteering.

## Conclusions

### Matching demand and supply

It is evident from the survey that the third sector is clear about the sort of skills required for it to flourish. Broadly speaking, these fell into three categories: soft skills, commerciality and specialist knowledge in a particular field, together with passion for the organisation's mission and ethos.

Given the widespread negative view of schools and young people's understanding and aptitude for the third sector uncovered in our survey, it might seem likely that the drivers behind engagement in WRL appearing in the survey would be around developing the necessary skills outlined above in the young people involved.

This negative view of schools and young people's attitude to the third sector is reflected in some of the barriers to third sector WRL that the survey brought to light. These included a lack of coordination in WRL, young people tending towards realism (and material gain) rather than idealism in their thoughts about careers, and a lack of motivation within schools in setting up third sector WRL.

It also might be concluded that promoting careers in the sector would be a priority in WRL, particularly in light of the misgivings set out in our survey relating to general understanding of third sector career options.

### Do drivers and supply match demands?

The drivers behind engagement that the survey highlighted do not, however, entirely match these demands. The main drivers were benevolence (principally allowing young people to gain experience and skills), raising awareness about the organisation's issues or reaching new service users, and promoting the organisation.

73. Interview with Young Enterprise.

Promoting third sector careers or jobs within the organisation only featured minimally within drivers. It could therefore be concluded that addressing the skills needs of the sector is not uppermost in the mind of the third sector in getting involved in WRL. However, there was a slight disparity between charities and social enterprises in this respect – social enterprises are apparently more careers-focused than charities.

It is also significant that many organisations did not immediately cite such activities as mentoring or giving a talk at a careers fair as part of their WRL, but later revealed that they engaged in these when prompted. This suggests that WRL in its complete definition is not necessarily well understood by the third sector. Organisations may be doing more than they recognise to promote third sector careers.

**Does the disparity between demand and drivers/supply matter?**

It could be argued that the motivation for WRL is irrelevant, as long as young people are getting encouragement and support for their chosen career path and receiving information about the third sector that could support a future career. The same could be said for the fact that WRL often takes place in all but name in some organisations; if good education is taking place, the label given to it is unimportant.

There may, in fact, be some more tangible consequences flowing from the above points. Failure to foreground career information within WRL could mean that the quality of delivery is reduced, e.g. that WRL is not properly evaluated in the context of careers information, or that young people do not receive specific enough information for making a decision about a career in the sector.

It is clear from responses to our survey that third sector organisations feel that there is a widespread misunderstanding on the part of schools and young people regarding the third sector and careers within it. Neglecting to make WRL clear where it occurs could mean that organisations are missing out on the opportunities for publicity around the sector as a career choice. It has been clearly identified in the above analysis that there is room for increasing understanding and transforming the attitudes of both schools and young people in this respect.

It is to be hoped that increasing the focus on careers in the third sector and publicising third sector WRL to a greater extent will have a positive impact on shaping the skills needs that the sector appears so keen to address.

## Barriers

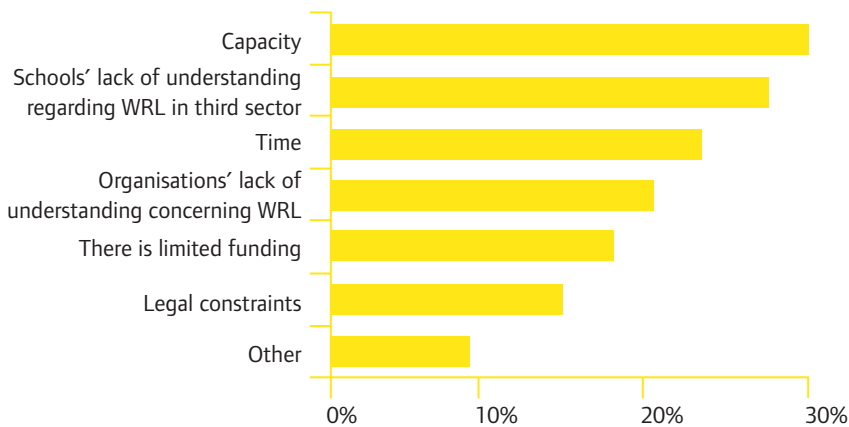
### Summary

There are many barriers to engagement in WRL in the third sector. The most significant of those include:

- Fragmentation of the sector and its implications.
- Lack of coordination.
- Low trust in the system.
- The ‘classics’ – time, money and capacity.

A significant strand of this research has focused on identification of the barriers to engagement in WRL in the third sector. While Figure 11 shows what our survey respondents had to say on the matter, our consultations have identified a wider range of barriers, and this section discusses them thematically.

**Figure 11:**  
Barriers to engagement in work-related learning



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008

## Fragmentation of the sector and its implications

The fragmented nature of the sector has been discussed earlier in this report, but it is worth reiterating because its impact on issues relating to WRL is paramount. Numerous experts who offered their opinions for this study were unequivocal about this matter. A lack of centralised structures and representation, coupled with the ultra-local level on which many third sector organisations operate, results in the lack of nationwide structure that could drive

the third sector agenda and promote its interests. This means that the needs of the sector are not sufficiently articulated, and that the image of the sector as a credible career option is not sufficiently promoted. Research by UK Workforce Hub<sup>74</sup> has shown that young people tend to have very low awareness of third sector careers, and that their perceptions of the sector often boil down to images of elderly ladies re-selling old items in high-street charity shops. Our survey respondents shared this sentiment, with an overwhelming majority (over 70 per cent) disagreeing with a statement that

74. FreshMinds interview with UK Workforce Hub.

young people understand the sector well. It was interesting to see that social enterprises were particularly scathing about young people's understanding of the sector.<sup>75</sup>

Individual responses revealed the rationale for this negative view of young people's understanding of third sector careers and even careers generally.<sup>76</sup>

*“Young people believe that everything is given to them – they are not made to think for themselves, and have inflated ideas about exciting work. They are affected by the ‘X Factor’ culture of immediate fame and reward. They never want to spend time training. To use the example of our radio station, they want to go straight to air on arrival for work experience!”*

## Lack of coordination

Fragmentation of the sector could be expected to impact coordination. Some of our expert interviews provided interesting material in this respect. With regard to ‘joined-up’ activity within the third sector, it was felt that the charity and voluntary sector is reasonably good at communicating between its different organisations because it has a greater tendency towards hierarchy and structure.<sup>77</sup>

This kind of coordinated activity occurs less within social enterprises – they can be seen as more of a movement than a sector. European Social Funding and Regional Development Agency funding are not very well coordinated across social enterprises as a whole. There is a general lack of communication with young people by social enterprises – hence the creation of Make Your Mark.<sup>78</sup> A representative from the National Youth Agency said:

*“There’s generally a lack of coherence in links between education and the third sector. There are a lot of conflicting indications, because third sector activity takes place at, not so much a local level, as a sub-local level.”*

It was also felt that national organisations are failing to make their members at the local level aware of opportunities within WRL.<sup>79</sup>

With regard to funding coordination, one expert respondent<sup>80</sup> said:

*“There’s a lot of support available to third sector organisations in terms of funding and business support – some of it from the government, some of it from private companies – but some of this isn’t very good. There’s a lack of coordination in this regard.”*

## Trust in the system

Our survey has also shown a rather bleak picture of the sector's confidence in schools delivering the goods as regards careers in the third sector. Nearly two-thirds of respondents in our sample thought that schools do not provide young people with the skills necessary to flourish in the third sector. As was the case with the assessment of young people's understanding of the sector, social enterprises lead the way in negative views on this matter.

Although this negative picture does not appear to bode well for working with schools, it could be turned into a motivating factor for wider engagement. The apparent gap in provision could be turned into a selling point in getting more third sector organisations engaged in WRL through using their position of strength and expertise on the relevant skills and issues.

75. It is also interesting to consider this in the light of the fact that social enterprises are comparatively very adept at networking. A recent OTS/Rocket Science report established that there are a total of 79 social enterprise networks in the UK. Interview with a media organisation.

76. Interview with a media organisation.

77. Interview with Make Your Mark.

78. Interview with Make Your Mark.

79. Interview with QCA.

80. Interview with What If? Innovation.

## The 'classic' barriers

As shown in Figure 11, 'capacity' and 'time' featured strongly in our survey as barriers to engagement. This has been echoed in the expert interviews that pointed to the fact that the character of many third sector employers restricts their scope for involvement with schools and young people. Many third sector organisations have no more than a few employees and find engagement in any activities external to their core operations demanding. In addition, organisations in specific sectors (such as health and care, where there is a great deal of third sector activity) face the challenges of exposure to vulnerable people and demanding health and safety procedures.

The 'classic' barriers are very much shared with private sector organisations, particularly small and micro companies, as has been confirmed by previous research studies. A respondent from the Scottish government also said that smaller organisations may have less capacity:

*"A charity that works at a very regional level may just have one person working from home, and so has little capacity to contribute to WRL ... Small sector organisations spend a lot of their time 'fire-fighting' in terms of seeking funding and complex day-to-day work dealing with often difficult and time-consuming groups, such as people with mental health problems. This limits their capacity for contributing to WRL."*

A representative from ACEVO said that, by contrast:

*"Larger third sector organisations will have a large, specific campaign structure, and a dedicated marketing/PR department for 'getting the message out'. This lends itself more naturally to WRL."*

## Awareness

It is not only the schools' and young people's awareness of the third sector that

stands in the way of wider engagement. Third sector organisations frequently have a poor awareness of what kinds of WRL activities are available, and what kinds of benefits they can bring to the table. Our survey is not representative in adequately illustrating this problem as the sample was deliberately targeting organisations displaying signs of good practice in WRL engagement. Most of the expert commentary and indeed some survey results (over 20 per cent of respondents) pointed to the limited awareness of WRL activities and their benefits among third sector organisations.

Such limited awareness can lead to misperceptions about engagement in WRL activities. In our survey, nearly two-thirds of respondents mentioned 'traditional work experience' when asked to list WRL activities, while the next largest category ('mentoring') was mentioned by a quarter of respondents, and the successive 'project work/assignments' by a mere 16 per cent. Equating the concept of WRL with work experience is dangerous as the latter is the most resource-intensive form of WRL and many organisations may shy away from it, and consequently from WRL at large.

## Young people's perceptions

Perceptions of third sector organisations concerning young people's understanding of the sector have been discussed above. Another barrier to WRL in the third sector could be young people's increasing tendency toward pragmatism, rather than idealism, in their attitude to the world of work. NESTA's *Ready for the future* report observes that young people "appear to be realists rather than dreamers: they see a tough world that rewards hard work, but seem less aware of the full set of skills and capabilities that are likely to be important in the future".

This is underpinned by the Zebra Square report, *Young people's perceptions of the voluntary, community and charity sector*, which reports that young people see the voluntary sector (a term which was unfamiliar

to them beforehand) as restricted to unpaid voluntary work, and indistinguishable from volunteering. Some acknowledgement was made of opportunities for paid work within managerial positions, but it was felt that these would be inferior in salary to equivalent positions within the commercial sector. One of our expert interviewees<sup>81</sup> echoed this sentiment:

*“Young people tend to think of the sector as unpaid, and this proves a barrier to their aspirations.”*

What is more, the great majority of young people in the Zebra Square had not even heard of the third sector; some suggested that it might be a synonym for the Third World. There was also limited understanding about the specifics of voluntary sector work. Charity shops were the most well-known sites of activity; however, it was not widely appreciated that these contributed to a wider cause. Charity work was perceived largely to be restricted to projects in developing countries, especially Africa.

There was greater awareness shown in the report that work within the ‘community’, rather than ‘voluntary’ sector, could be paid but even in this case there was confusion between working in the sector and ‘working for the community’.

There were also perceptions that those who did work in the voluntary sector (in their view, as ‘volunteers’) might be difficult to identify with for some groups; as well as being philanthropic, such people were characterised variously as ‘old’, ‘rich’, ‘ill’, ‘female’ and/or ‘white’.

Young people may also have some misgivings about work experience or WRL.<sup>82</sup>

*“WRL can be seen as a ‘sheep-dip’ exercise, with students feeling themselves to be part of a large process, receiving experience in a way that is not relevant to them.”*

## Challenges for schools

Schools’ reticence regarding the third sector or aspects of WRL was also felt to be a problem. One of our expert interviewees said that schools demonstrated a significant ‘fear factor’ and a ‘bottom line myopia’. Underpinning this was a lack of confidence about their potential to meaningfully engage in WRL. Other factors included a failure to generate interest in WRL, and a widespread tendency to focus on business WRL.<sup>83</sup>

There is degree of reticence in schools with regard to young people making money in the context of WRL (e.g. for Young Enterprise or social enterprise projects) because this may encourage a negatively capitalist mindset. This may be because the people who work in education usually have other priorities than profit.<sup>84</sup>

Tied to this is the fact that:<sup>85</sup>

*“Schools can also be risk-averse, and all enterprise (including social enterprise) is about risk.”*

Schools may therefore unwittingly provide barriers to engaging with WRL in the third sector based on the misconceptions of profit and risk. In addition, there are also competing demands on students in terms of curriculum and extra-mural commitments, which can be a source of concern to schools and therefore present a barrier to engaging in WRL more generally.<sup>86</sup>

81. Interview with Space Unlimited.

82. Interview with Emmaus.

83. Interview with QCA.

84. Interview with Young Enterprise.

85. Interview with Emmaus UK.

86. Interview with Time Bank.

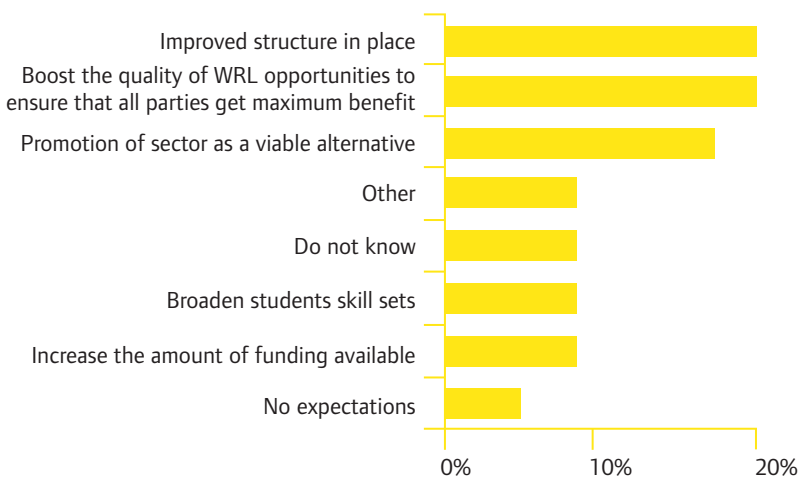
## 4. What next for work-related learning in the third sector – recommendations

### Introduction

This report offers a detailed discussion of current issues surrounding WRL in the third sector. It has also identified a range of practices currently taking place, and highlights areas of good, and less good, practice. What we can conclude at the end of this research is that there are certainly good and effective forms of WRL

happening out there, but they are often isolated, rarely underpinned by a centrally driven and deliberate strategy, and not disseminated widely enough. This final section recommends some ways forward. Our survey asked respondents to consider the following: if they had the proverbial ‘one wish’ to improve WRL in the third sector, what would it be?

**Figure 12:**  
**‘One wish’ to improve work-related learning in the sector**



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008

As the proposed ‘wishes’ cross-cut a number of our recommendations built from the entire research material, they will be discussed within the wider themes rather than individually.

One of the key messages coming from this research is that promoting WRL activities that are known to be very good is only one part of the success. In order to challenge the

current status quo in WRL in the sector, we need to consider a wider picture:

- Getting the basics right.
- Developing suitable packages.
- Fostering innovation.

Our recommendations are grouped under these broader headings.



## Getting the basics right

Getting the basics right is about raising overall awareness of the sector among schools and young people on the one hand, and awareness of WRL and its virtues among third sector organisations on the other. It is also about putting the third sector more explicitly on the government education and skills agenda.

## Identify, promote and disseminate good practice – learning from the best

The research has proven unequivocally that it is difficult to identify and track down good practice in WRL in the third sector. Identifying, rewarding and disseminating good practice is essential to successful stimulation of WRL in the third sector. Doing this can have several benefits:

- Establishing what good practice actually is – setting the bar.
- Highlighting the range of benefits that can be gained from engaging in WRL.
- Raising awareness of these benefits within the sector.
- Dispelling some myths that may exist about WRL.

A lesson in doing this can be learned from successful Education Business Partnerships (EBPs). An overwhelming majority of EBPs run award ceremonies rewarding best practice in employer engagement on a local level, so one potential solution would be to plug a third sector-focused award into existing frameworks.

In addition, there is certainly space for a nationwide campaign promoting the third sector and its careers among schools and young people. There certainly is not a shortage of highly marketable material on what the sector does, which could resonate

extremely well with young people and get their imaginations going. A mixture of web-based campaigns with leaflets, posters and some funding for enhancing careers chats at schools could be useful to achieve this. It would also be extremely useful if such a campaign got the backing from household names in the third sector world as many of those possess extremely powerful brands that could be used to a great advantage for campaigning purposes.

## Get the right balance between local percolation and national structure

Our survey respondents and expert interviewees alike widely lamented the lack of a national structure underpinning the third sector and its operations, particularly in relation to education and workforce development. It is anecdotally known that there are potential plans for a Sector Skills Council for the third sector but it is not immediately clear whether this is a concept that will work well, given that many third sector organisations share more similarities within the industry or activity sectors where they operate rather than through the sheer fact of belonging to the third sector. UK Workforce Hub is currently undertaking efforts to centralise knowledge and management of the sector's skills needs and act as an informal skills council for the sector.<sup>87</sup> Such efforts are indeed justified and all our findings suggest that the sector would certainly benefit from a central body holding knowledge on its needs and capable of lobbying on its part.

What needs to be observed, however, is the local or frequently 'sub-local' level on which third sector organisations operate. This was illustrated by many of our expert interviews as well as responses to our survey, which are unequivocal about the local nature of the sector's mission in the context of working

87. FreshMinds interview with NCVO/UK Workforce Hub.

with schools. Over half of respondents in our sample agreed that third sector organisations should above all work with local schools in order to benefit the local community.

Locality is therefore vital, and this needs to be reflected in any WRL-related strategies. Here is where another lesson can be learned from best practice EBPs – those visited by FreshMinds<sup>88</sup> were extremely keen on maintaining the narrow geographical scope of their activity for several reasons:

- Manageability – avoiding the risk of spreading themselves too thin.
- Knowledge – ability to prospect the locale thoroughly.
- Credibility – working at a local level allows to penetrate multiple local networks (business and local government) and build credibility across the board.

The above EBP experiences highlighted the importance of local networks in carrying out engagement projects, which needs to be taken forward as a key learning for future considerations of any employer engagement projects.

### Developing suitable packages

Developing suitable packages is the next step. It involves learning in detail what works for whom and why and building a blueprint for successful engagement on the basis of this.

### Develop a central information portal on work-related learning in the third sector

The Edge Foundation is currently piloting an employer engagement portal in two regions of the UK. It is a web 2.0 concept aiming to create a virtual marketplace for WRL opportunities. The third sector would benefit from a more basic version of such a portal, the main purpose of which would be to serve as a central information source for WRL in the sector.

The website should contain information on:

- The need to engage in WRL.
- The exciting careers available in the third sector.
- The great range of different WRL activities, their benefits and suitability to different contexts.
- De-mystification of both the third sector and WRL.
- Real-life examples of successful (best practice) engagements.

It would be advisable to create three 'layers' of the website, with information tailored to different user groups: learners, third sector organisations and schools. Information in each layer should be pertinent to that particular user group.

Designing such a website would be a relatively good-value option for giving WRL in the sector a backbone and a sense of coherence. This could be stimulated further by ensuring that the governance of the website is representative of governmental agencies as well as third sector associations and organisations. In addition, it would be advisable to get the buy-in of several household names in the third sector to champion the website.

88. FreshMinds has investigated those for the purpose of our work for the Edge Foundation in late 2007.

## Create a blueprint for successful engagement

In addition to the more generic campaigns and the more focused web portal, there is a strong case for producing guidelines on how to engage in WRL.

- **For schools:** instructional material for schools should discuss the benefits of engaging third sector organisations, and guidelines on how to best approach these organisations regarding WRL. Such packs should ideally be disseminated among school personnel specifically responsible for employer engagement (FreshMinds research for Edge found that over 80 per cent of schools have such a staff member.)<sup>89</sup>
- **For third sector organisations:** the blueprint for the sector needs to be more careful, and should be done in the format that facilitates making informed decisions about WRL. The blueprint pack should contain the following items:
  - Discussion of the generic motivations for engagement in WRL, such as those identified in our survey.
  - Discussion of what tangible benefits WRL can bring into the organisation.
  - A self-completion score-card rating which helps to identify what activities are known to be suitable for organisations with different profiles.
  - A 'getting started' section describing the initial steps in engaging in WRL (including a link to the web portal described above, and potential routes to schools, be it direct or through local brokers).
- **For local stakeholders (such as local authorities or development agencies):** given the third sector's increasing role in delivering public services, local and regional bodies have great potential to work as champions of promoting WRL in the sector. At the very minimum, they could do it passively as distributors of the third sector engagement blueprint described above.

## Convert barriers to drivers – get the messages right in all communications

On the face of it, our findings regarding the third sector's trust in the current education system seem very negative. However, they could well be turned around and used to gain buy-in from third sector organisations to engage. A rationale appealing to an organisation's or individual's expertise and capability to address a systemic problem could be a powerful message and effectively stimulate engagement.

On the flipside, the current curriculum does not do itself justice in building credibility among third sector organisations. Although the skills needs of the sector have been considered during the development of the curriculum<sup>90</sup> and all the right skills seem to be there, the specific references to third sector terminology are very hard to find. This prompts statements such as:<sup>91</sup>

*"I hear that social enterprise education is meant to be somewhere in the new curriculum and Diplomas. I just don't know where exactly it is!"*

What needs to be achieved is a careful balance between putting the third sector firmly and explicitly on the education agenda, while appealing to organisations within it to share their expert skills and fill in the gap in specific provision.

89. Although a QCA 2007 report estimates that figure at 90 per cent.

90. FreshMinds interviews with DCSF and QCA.

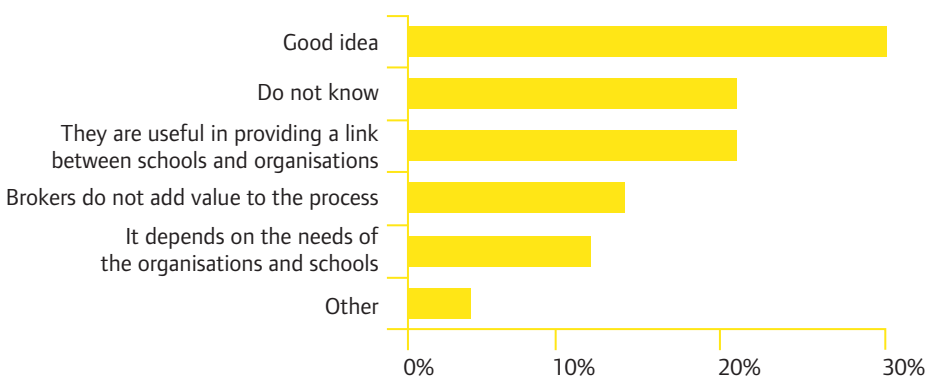
91. FreshMinds expert interview.

## Consider intermediaries

There are currently around 50 organisations out there that broker relationships between employers and schools.<sup>92</sup> The largest and still expanding is the network of 126 Education Business Partnerships. While it is known that quality is not consistent across the board of the network, there are many

high-quality EBPs capable of delivering efficient and targeted services, who could be contracted to engage a number of third sector organisations. This is known to already happen on an ad hoc basis, and our survey respondents have very warm attitudes towards brokers (though many do not have an opinion on the matter).

**Figure 13:**  
Is there a role for brokers in stimulating work-related learning engagement?



Source: FreshMinds survey 2008 (Base=53)

## Foster innovation

Once an adequate structure is in place and issues around poor awareness have been tackled, the next steps can focus on stimulating innovation in WRL in the sector. This can be done through three main strategies described below. A reasonable practical format for promoting these is through:

- Setting up nationwide guidelines and principles for innovative WRL projects in the third sector.
- Opening competition to funding for innovative projects that meet nationwide criteria. This could be open to everyone – brokers, partnerships between schools and third sector organisations, or even local authority services.

92. FreshMinds interview with Young Enterprise.

## Take advantage of technology

The need to create a central web platform for WRL in the sector has been mentioned already, but the potential for applications of technology is much wider. Our findings indicated a relatively low use of technology for WRL purposes in the sector (which is striking given the prominence of the use of IT in campaigning and fundraising). This is something that could clearly be expanded in the delivery of WRL, and could include:

- Simulations.
- Live briefs.
- Online assignments.
- Online mentoring.

Our research came across very few examples of innovative use of IT for WRL in the sector, and there is clearly space for promoting such projects through a centralised scheme.

## Use active models – a Young (Social) Enterprise?

One type of WRL activity that has caught our eye during the research can be described as ‘active’ models of WRL engagement. This approach offers learners a great first-hand experience of running a social enterprise or a charity, and tackling the challenges that are specific to this type of organisation, while at the same time helping develop:

- Softer skills, such as interpersonal, teamwork, leadership or communication.
- Understanding of third sector missions and social/charitable objectives.
- A chance to think creatively and develop drive and aspiration.

The challenge in implementing such a scheme would be around its careful codification in order to make sure that the right skills are acquired and attitudes developed, and around assuring quality of the entire experience. Promoting such activities through competitive tendering according to a

nationwide set of criteria should go some way in addressing this, however.

## Marry the different worlds – get private and third sectors to engage in work-related learning together

One potentially interesting idea to explore would be to promote cross-sector partnerships. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) agendas have been on the rise in the private sector and larger corporations in particular have been increasingly keen to engage with schools, young people and communities in a number of ways. There is a pool of capacity in the private sector that could be utilised for the benefit of third sector organisations.

In principle, the rationale for this is very strong:

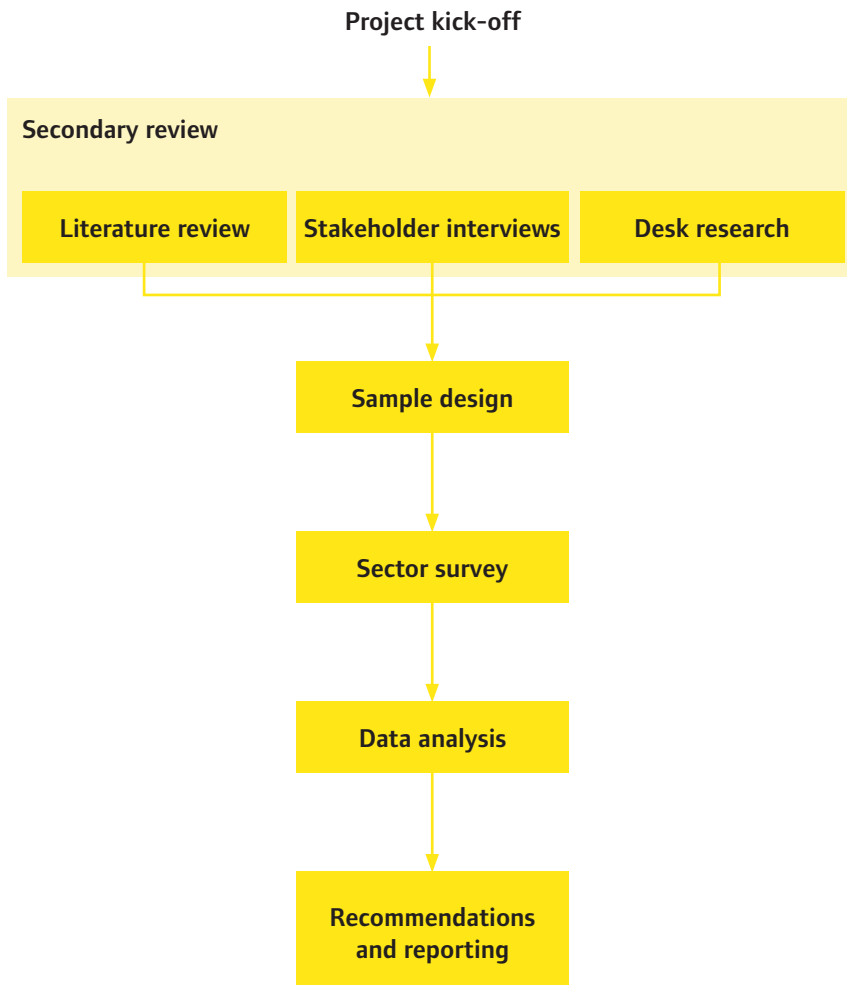
- **Private sector** organisations have many skills and attributes to offer to the third sector, such as core business skills and a commercial, customer-focused attitude. Our findings state clearly that the commercial world fundamentals of profit, loss and risk are immensely relevant to the third sector. Private sector organisations could also further boost their CSR credentials through direct associations with socially-conscious organisations.
- **Third sector** organisations could benefit heavily from these skills, while working to promote their charitable objectives among both young people and private sector employees.
- **Young people** could benefit from exposure to two different kinds of organisations and careers, balancing a commercial approach with social objectives – which is an ideal mixture for third sector WRL.
- **All parties** would benefit from networking opportunities.

In practical terms, this could be run on a project basis and coordinated by brokers. Brokers could tender for the pool of funding described above, and through their networks they could bring schools together with private and third sector organisations. A conceivable format would be to facilitate young people setting up school charities in the aid of a particular third sector organisation, and be mentored and advised by a private sector person on the matters of daily operations, and by a third sector representative on meeting charitable goals. The board of charity trustees, meeting regularly though not necessarily frequently, could consist of representation of all parties and be used for reviewing progress and forward planning.

Our survey showed unequivocally that there is a great extent of goodwill towards such a model among third sector organisations, with over 80 per cent of respondents agreeing that it would be an effective way of delivering WRL.

## Appendix 1: Methodology

Our approach to this project is outlined below



### Secondary review

The secondary review had five broad aims:

- Develop a baseline understanding of WRL in the third sector.
- Identify current models of engagement.
- Identify current issues affecting the WRL in the sector.
- Identify good and innovative practice examples and feed them into sample building.
- Inform survey design.

The review consisted of three strands.

### Stakeholder interviews

We approached and interviewed over 20 stakeholders and experts active in the domain of third sector and education. Our stakeholders represented government agencies, third sector industry associations and third sector organisations. We used the interviews to inform our understanding of WRL in the sector, to identify relevant literature sources and reports on the matter, and to help identify good practice on the ground.

### Desk research

We used desk research to systematically source secondary evidence pertinent to issues in this research, and to identify examples of WRL in the third sector done on the ground.

### Literature review

The aim of the literature review was to lay a stronger foundation for the subsequent phases of our research through developing an understanding of the changing role of the third sector in the public life of the UK, and the extent to which WRL can fit into this picture. We reviewed a range of governmental and independent sources on

the matter, as a body of literature on generic employer engagement in education, and used a snowballing approach to ensure a wide coverage of material.

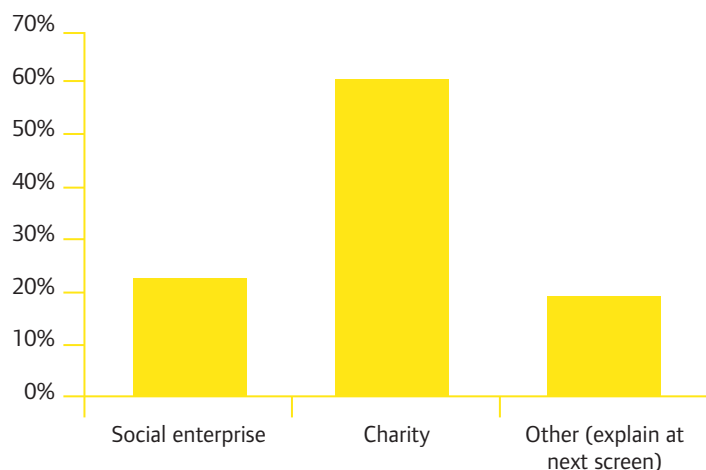
### Sample design

In order to ensure meaningful responses to the survey, we used a purposeful sampling strategy targeting third sector organisations involved in WRL. The sample came from referrals, desk research and snowballing. In order to boost the numbers we also purchased a random sample of third sector organisations and screened for involvement in WRL, and placed an ad on UK Workforce Hub's website. We aimed for the sample to be broadly representative of the UK and different types of third sector organisations.

### Survey of third sector organisations

The survey was primarily qualitative in nature, although it also contained a fair proportion of quantitative questions and attitudinal statements. The fieldwork ran for two and a half weeks and we got 55 complete responses. Figure 14 below shows the distribution of different organisations in our final sample.

**Figure 14:**  
What best describes your organisation?





Most respondents came from England though we managed to secure several responses from Scotland and Wales. Unfortunately we did not manage to secure any responses from Northern Ireland.

## Analysis

We analysed the survey results using frequency analysis as well as cross-tabulations by organisation type. The latter have been only discussed in case of stark differences as the small group sizes allowed for only limited confidence in these breakdowns.

Open-ended responses were coded using retrospective coding, and we have used tag clouds where appropriate.<sup>93</sup> In addition, we used some of the survey responses to build a selection of case studies discussed in this report.

93. Tag clouds are visual tools used to represent recurrent words in a body of text.

## Appendix 2: Consultation list

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### Stakeholders/Experts

Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations  
 Business in the Community  
 Commission for Youth Social Entrepreneurship  
 Department for Children, Schools and Families  
 Determined to Succeed  
 Edge  
 Emmaus UK  
 Make Your Mark  
 National Youth Agency  
 The National Council for Voluntary Organisations/UK Workforce Hub  
 National Education Business Partnership Network  
 Office of the Third Sector  
 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority  
 School for Social Entrepreneurs  
 Social Enterprise Coalition  
 Space Unlimited  
 Time Bank  
 Trust Youth  
 UnLtd  
 What if? Innovation  
 Young Enterprise  
 Young Foundation  
 Youth Net

### Survey of third sector organisations

3Gs (3Gs Development Trust Ltd)  
 Action Space Mobile Community  
 Action Aid  
 Action For Blind People  
 Bexley Community Media  
 Big Issue  
 Bold Creative  
 Bottleford Community Centre  
 Bromley Mytime  
 Bryson Charitable Group  
 Centre For Alternative Technology  
 Chartered Surveyors Training Trust  
 City Gateway  
 Coin Street Community Builders  
 ContinYou  
 Co-operatives Colleges (Young Co-operatives)  
 Create Liverpool  
 Creative Partnerships  
 Creggan Enterprises Limited  
 CSV  
 Emmaus UK  
 Fairfields Materials Management  
 Fifteen  
 Furniture Matters  
 Galeri Caerfon Cyf  
 Gemin-I Org

Leaders Employment Resource  
 Make Your Mark  
 Mentoring and Befriending Foundation  
 Paddington Arts  
 PEACE  
 Prime Timers  
 QWRVS  
 Senscot  
 Shetland Arts Development Agency  
 Space Unlimited  
 Starter Pack Glasgow  
 Streetshine  
 Stride  
 Sustainability  
 The Bridge  
 The Brokerage Citylink  
 The Flame Tree  
 Think Public  
 Time Bank  
 Travel Matters Enterprises Ltd  
 Trust Youth  
 UK Career Academy Foundation  
 UK Workforce Hub  
 Vital Regeneration  
 Volunteer Centre Edinburgh  
 Volunteer Development Scotland  
 Whizz-Kidz  
 Youth Moves



# About FreshMinds and NESTA

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## **FreshMinds**

Founded in 2000, FreshMinds Research is a full-service research consultancy. Combining classic research techniques with a consulting toolkit, the firm helps its clients to understand their stakeholders, competitors and markets. For the last two years FreshMinds Research has been named 'Best Agency' at the MRS Excellence and Effectiveness Awards.

A large proportion of the firm's work to date has been in the public sector, with notable clients including The Treasury, The Department for Education and Skills and the NHS. Recent work includes a large-scale study for UK Online Centres on the digital divide and a published piece for the Department of Culture Media and Sport investigating the demand for culture among minority and lower socio-economic groups.

More information is available at: [www.freshminds.co.uk](http://www.freshminds.co.uk)

## **NESTA**

NESTA is the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts. Our mission is to transform the UK's capacity for innovation. We invest in early-stage companies, inform innovation policy and encourage a culture that helps innovation to flourish.

NESTA's goals are to:

- Build well-evidenced models of how innovation can work.
- Establish NESTA as a renowned centre of expertise in innovation.
- Have NESTA's models adopted by others.
- Make NESTA a highly effective organisation.

NESTA's Innovation Programmes are practical, experimental projects that aim to build a body of evidence about how best to stimulate and support innovation.

More information about NESTA is at [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)

## **About NESTA's Future Innovators programme**

NESTA's Future Innovators programme aims to embed effective approaches to delivering the skills and attitudes necessary for innovation within mainstream education and informal learning. We do this by supporting the professionals and institutions that work with young people, testing new approaches and disseminating ideas and resources about education for innovation.

The objectives of the programme are to:

- Demonstrate ways of stimulating and supporting the development of the skills and attitudes needed by young people in their role as innovators of the future.
- Build the capacity of schools/colleges and the informal learning sector to nurture the innovators of the future.

More information is available at [www.nesta.org.uk/futureinnovators](http://www.nesta.org.uk/futureinnovators)

